

# Documenters

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## Cuyahoga County Corrections Center Project Community Meeting

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Agency: [Cuyahoga County Corrections Center Project Community Meeting -- hosted by Cuyahoga County](#)

Date: Aug. 25, 2022

[See more about this meeting at Documenters.org](#)

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### Summary

- The purpose of the meeting was to hear from members of the community.
- Several members in the audience came with placards that they held up during the meeting:
  - “If they build it, they will fill it.”
  - “Fund the Future not the Past”
  - “No New Jail”
- One public commenter asked that the county involve the families of those who have died in the current jail in this process.

### Follow-Up Questions

- The group of people who attended this meeting appeared to be vehemently against the construction of the new jail and/or the proposed site for its construction. How will the Justice Center Executive Steering Committee authentically take this into consideration?
- How will the Steering Committee deal with the distrust that appears to have set up among some members of the community?

### Notes

Cuyahoga County Corrections Center Project Community Meeting  
2500 E. 22nd St.  
Cleveland, Ohio

Purpose of the Meeting

The purpose of the meeting is that the Cuyahoga County Corrections Center Project (CCCP) is “seeking public comment on the new corrections center site selection criteria and process.” [Read more](#) about the Steering Committee and the site selection process.

## **Background**

The corrections system is overseen by the [Cuyahoga County Sheriff](#).

The decision regarding the purchase and possible remediation of the site is overseen by the 12 members of the Steering Committee (see appendix).

The size of the jail to be built is still under discussion, although the [estimated cost of this project is projected to be \\$550 million](#). The Cuyahoga County Council has yet to officially vote to build the facility.

The site under consideration is located at [2700 Transport Road](#) next to Cleveland’s Central neighborhood.

There is [controversy](#) associated with the site since the lot housed a Standard Oil refinery from 1863-1966. It was noted that the property “is prohibited from being used for non-commercial and non-industrial uses, due to a standing covenant with the Ohio Environmental Protection Agency.”

An environmental study of the site was released Aug. 17, confirming the presence of toxins lingering in the soil, groundwater and air. A copy of the study can be found [here](#) .

## **Logistics**

The meeting started at 6:08 p.m. and ended after 8:15 p.m.

Approximately 65 people were in attendance, not including officials.

A list of members of the Justice Center Steering Committee present was provided to me by Michael O’Malley, who serves on the committee:

- Brendan J. Sheehan, Administrative Judge, Cuyahoga County Court of Common Pleas
- Michael C. O’Malley, Cuyahoga County Prosecutor
- Steven Hammett, Interim Cuyahoga County Sheriff
- Michelle D. Earley, Cleveland Municipal Court

O’Malley said committee members were not required to attend the meeting.

## **Takeaway points**

The purpose of the meeting was to hear from members of the community. Kenn Dowell (owner and CEO of Strategic Resources LLC, a political consulting firm) welcomed everyone to the meeting.

Several members in the audience came with placards that they held up during the meeting:

- “If they build it, they will fill it.”
- “Fund the Future not the Past”
- “No New Jail”

Michael Dever (chair of the Cuyahoga County Planning Commission and director of Cuyahoga County Department of Public Works) reviewed the agenda for the meeting, provided the history of this project and outlined the process involving the selection of the site. The site at 2700 Transport Road comprises 44.7 acres.

John Garvey (vice president of Environmental Services at Partners, an environmental remediation firm) outlined the environmental issues associated with this tract of land. He briefly explained the protocols that are required to transition an old industrial site to the highest designation for residential use. [VAP \(Voluntary Action Programs\)](#) are part of this process, and Partners is involved in the “brownfield industry” that repurposes historically industrial sites for institutional or residential use.

Scott Maloney of K2M Design spoke about how the location and features of the site met several needs regarding the project. He said the current zoning of the property is “unrestricted industry,” which includes correctional use. Maloney outlined the next steps in the process:

- Solicitation of feedback
- Purchase agreement and financing
- Ongoing considerations of design
- Additional community meeting

Council Member Richard Starr, who represents Ward 5 on the Cleveland City Council, attempted to set the tone for people in the audience to express their concerns and ask questions. His message included his desire for the county jail to not be constructed in another city. When he said that the purpose of the new jail was “not to add more beds,” there was an audible reaction in the audience.

## **Public Questions and Comments**

Microphones were set up at two places across the room and people were encouraged to line up. Many people expressed concern about the environmental clean-up of the property.

George, a preacher, said the money should go to prevention efforts.

Larry asked about the potential liability to taxpayers if the environmental issues are not entirely mitigated.

One member of the audience mentioned his concern about exposure of people in surrounding areas during the construction process and afterwards.

One person asked why all of this was moving forward when the assessment on the current jail was not yet finished. Maloney said at one point that “any metropolitan area in the northeast” will need environmental remediation of some sort.

Matthew, who said that he was a precinct captain, made the point that the new jail is planned to be 800,000 square feet and to house 1,904 inmates. He said that means that each inmate will get 1 ½ parking spaces. The room erupted in applause.

William, a retired engineer, worried about the cost to “methane proof” the site. He said, “once you dig it up, you become a generator.”

Kevin, who lives near the site, mentioned that air quality is already poor in that area due to pollutants from nearby industrial sites and highways. He pointed out that 25 percent of the people living in Cleveland suffer from asthma and that “the area we are talking about is an environmental apocalypse.”

Evan read the names of the 16 people who have died in the Justice Center since 2018, drawing applause from the audience. He asked to “include the families [of these people] in this process,” drawing more applause.

Rosie from Parma started by saying that she was “here to address the cowards who aren’t here.” She noted that she advises on the Cleveland Police Crisis Intervention Team as a member of a committee within the county’s [ADAMHS Board](#) that was created by the Consent Decree and that she was never consulted in this process.

David from Ward 4 said that this “whole process is just insane” and lobbied for bail reform and sentencing reform. More applause.

One member of the audience from Ward 7 mentioned that the State of Ohio broke a contract to buy this tract of land (to build a prison) in 1982 due to the environmental contaminants. She asked why this fact had not been part of the powerpoint presentation. Applause.

A pastor expressed his full support for building a new jail, stating that it was unfair the way inmates are treated and the conditions they currently live in.

Another person made the point that most of the inmates currently housed in the jail are in the pre-trial phase of their legal process.

## **Appendix**

### **Members of the Justice Center Steering Committee**

- The County Executive (Armond Budish)
- The President of the County Council (Pernel Jones Jr.)
- The Administrative Judge of the Court of Common Pleas (Brendan J. Sheehan)
- The County Prosecutor (Michael C. O'Malley)
- The County Sheriff (Steven Hammett)
- The Public Defender (Cullen Sweeney)
- The Administrative Judge of Domestic Relations Division (Leslie Celebrezze)
- The Administrative Judge of Cleveland Municipal Court (Michelle D. Earley)
- The Mayor of Cleveland (Justin Bibb)
- The President of Cleveland City Council (Blaine Griffin)
- The Cuyahoga County Clerk of Courts (Nailah K. Byrd)
- The Clerk of Cleveland Municipal Court (Earle B. Turner)

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