



Government that Works – White Paper

Introduction

The citizens of Cuyahoga County have made it clear in the voting booth and at public transition meetings that county government needs to change how it operates.

Our cities have some of the highest tax rates in the state, but each year, those cities struggle more and more to provide residents with quality services. Cuyahoga County taxpayers deserve both lower tax bills and a better return on their hard-earned dollars. Building a strong, economically competitive future for our county requires us to succeed at creating these efficiencies.

A new form of government alone, however, is no guarantee of success — or even change. Our success as a county depends on an executive and a council who will not only commit to provide the best constituent services, but also:

- leverage all possible financial efficiencies;
- maximize operational efficiencies; and
- keep government open and accessible to the public.

Financial Efficiencies

Cuyahoga County's 59 communities make up the largest population base in the state of Ohio. Many of these communities already collaborate to provide their residents better, more efficient services. However, most of these collaborations have been limited to one or two isolated projects, such as sharing public school systems or libraries. It is time to realize that our strength as one county is greater than the sum of our individual communities and bring these types of collaborations to scale.

Banding together and operating in a holistic fashion when it makes sense will make Cuyahoga County a more economically competitive place to live and work. Additionally, this approach will allow our various municipal governments to provide better services at a lower cost. Given that the state faces an estimated \$8 billion deficit, local governments may receive fewer funds for municipal services, meaning county-wide, inter-governmental collaborations are essential to our county's economic competitiveness. In these tough economic times, where both household and governmental budgets are tighter, the need for efficient and effective performance is greater than ever.

Phil Robinson, as councilperson, will promote efficiencies by working with many groups: the federal government, state government, county governments, private businesses, non-profits and foundations, as

well as our local cities, towns, and townships. Phil will seek opportunities to build partnerships within District 11 and throughout the county to help both county and city governments take advantage of financial efficiencies.

Phil will explore promoting financial efficiencies through various measures including:

- Encouraging cities within District 11 to cut personnel costs by opting into MetroHealth's Select Health Plan for municipal employees.
- Pushing for the new administration to make it a priority to fund projects that include two or more cities working together.
- Advocating for county departments to begin utilizing the same accounting software, purchasing programs and IT services.

Depending on the opportunity, these partners may work with the county or among themselves. Phil will work to make sure they always provide Cuyahoga County residents with the best services in the most efficient manner possible.

Operational Efficiencies

Not only will Phil promote the types of partnerships that make sense for the region, but he will also ensure that Cuyahoga County itself operates as efficiently as possible. With the county possibly facing a \$20 million deficit next year, it is imperative that this new government work in a better way. The best partnerships will prove ineffective if the county is not positioned to effectively and efficiently provide services to its constituents.

This situation requires the county executive, council, and department heads to engage in continuous evaluation of county operations.

In assessing whether our government is working, Phil will ask:

- Are we providing our residents with the highest quality services?
- Are we paying what other counties of similar size and makeup are paying to perform these services?
- Do all our residents have access to these services when/if they're needed?
- Are residents aware of the services available to them?
- Are we engaging in any activities that are not providing a benefit to the residents of District 11 and Cuyahoga County as a whole?

Our ability to answer these questions will rely on a robust and fluid process designed to assess the county's operations and identify areas of need and success. Given that one of the primary functions of our county government is health and human services, this important work must be continued as the new executive and

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council assumes office.

The process should be revisited annually to ensure that we are making progress, and allow the executive, council, and department heads to adjust county priorities and operations when needed. This data is indispensable as we seek to create an agile, 21st century government that can respond to evolving community needs efficiently and effectively.

Open Government

Sunshine is often the best disinfectant—and that rings truer in government than anywhere else. One of the greatest checks against governmental abuses and inefficiencies is citizen access to information regarding governmental activities. In addition to providing an environment in which an educated, informed citizenry can exist, a government that operates openly builds civic trust.

As councilperson, Phil will advocate for the creation of a Web page where any resident of Cuyahoga County can access all public records. All government-related documents will be digitized and made available to the public. Also, Phil will advocate for a strong ethics code within the government and push for council meetings to be videotaped and streamed live over the Internet. To repair Cuyahoga's wounds, and prepare it for future success, it is critical to have an engaged citizenry that trusts its representatives.

By ensuring our government is open and accessible to citizens, efficient in the way it operates, and smart about how it uses its budget, we'll build the foundation on which our future success depends.

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