

EDWARDS RESIGNS AS CITY MANAGER

An era ended Friday, January 6th with the resignation of Robert Edwards as City Manager of the City of Cleveland Heights. Mr. Edwards, who had been City Manager since 1975, submitted a letter of resignation which cited policy differences with City Council as a reason for his exit. He will remain in office until January 22, and on February 1, he will assume new duties as Service Director of the City of Akron.

Mr. Edwards succeeded William Lahman, who had been City Manager for many years. Mr. Lahman resigned to join the new Greater Cleveland Regional Transit Authority (GCRTA). However, rumors persist that Mr. Lahman left under some pressure. A 4 to 3 "liberal" majority of City Council had the votes (and perhaps the determination) to fire Mr. Lahman at any time. After the Lahman resignation, a Council search committee, headed by Councilman Oliver Schroeder, interviewed candidates for City Manager. Mr. Edwards was the enthusiastic choice of the committee. At the time, Mr. Edwards was chief administrative officer for Prince Georges County, Maryland.

Ultimately, Robert Edwards was the announced "unanimous" choice of City Council. This evinced an apparent attempt by the two political factions on Council to depoliticize the office of City Manager. By contrast, Mr. Lahman had been closely associated with the so-called "conservative" faction, which had lost its Council majority in 1973. Mr. Edwards' appointment occurred only months before the Council election of 1975, in which the "liberal" majority suffered a catastrophic defeat and a 5 to 2 "conservative" majority replaced it. Mr. Edwards was not an issue in that election and he remained Manager when the new Council took office in January of 1976.

The City Manager form of government was a novel experiment nationwide when introduced to Cleveland Heights in the 1920s. It was based on the assumption that a division could exist between political policy-making (Council) and non-political, professional administration (City Manager). Political scientists who studied this system in many cities have noted that a Manager can exercise a de facto policy making role when a Council delegates much authority, or when it is weak, or when it fails to act. Certainly, a strong Cleveland Heights City Manager had considerable authority. Amendments to the Cleveland Heights Charter voted by the electorate assured the City Manager complete control over every branch of City administration.

City Council retained only one basic option--it could hire or fire a City Manager. Mr. Edwards had originally been offered a contract for term. He declined tenure security, however, stating that he preferred to serve at the will of Council and only so long as he retained its confidence. Sources indicate that this position deeply impressed Council members with Edwards' sincerity and dedication. Edwards was also chosen for his strong commitment to citizen involvement and openness in government.

(continued on page 2)

\*\*\*\*\*

*The next meeting of Coventry Neighbors, Inc. will take place on Tuesday, January 17, 1978, at 8:00 p.m. at the Unitarian Society on Lancashire Road, across from Musicians' Tower.*

\*\*\*\*\*

City Manager Resigns (continued)

Bob Edwards began his term with a symbolic act. He had the door to his office taken off to dramatize the new openness he sought to bring with him. His wall prominently featured a copy of a City Manager code of ethics and a sign reading "Illegitimi Non Carborundum" (Latin for "Don't let the bastards grind you down!") Under Edwards, the City opened up more than his office. Reports handed out at Council meetings listed recent developments in each and every City department. City services operated on schedule and Edwards proved a master of detail and routine in the performance of his duties. City staff people are shocked and stunned by the resignation of a man who they had come to greatly respect.

There were problems to be sure. Community development funds went unspent for two years. Firemen struck over Mr. Edwards' proposal to use some of them to conduct exterior and interior housing inspections. The municipal court chose to close when it ran out of operating funds. Robert Edwards sat in the hot seat, and he had some responsibility for these crises. But in general, he seems to have done a capable job. He leaves office with good marks for energy, efficiency, and openness.

Several nagging questions remain. What "policy" differences led him to resign? Is this resignation so soon after the seating of a new Council coincidental? Will his replacement be the "unanimous" choice of the new Council? The answers to these questions may be of crucial importance to the entire City of Cleveland Heights.

Meanwhile, Robert Edwards moves on to other tasks. He will take a pay cut by going to the City of Akron. Once there, however, he will supervise 1,700 employees and face what he says will be an exciting and challenging job. He leaves behind a town which had been designated an All-American City during his tenure. And he leaves behind memories of a strong administrator who definitely made his presence felt.

- Alan Rapoport

XX

A Bit of Culture in Coventry Village!

The Coventry Neighbors, Inc. will sponsor an art show at THE ART GALLERY, INC., 1364 Coventry Road. Four Coventry area artists will exhibit their works. Barbara Angell will show oils and watercolors. Herbert Abraham and Ben E. Berkey will present realistic paintings. Marvin Rosenberg, proprietor of Peewee's Bicycle Shop, will exhibit sculptored forms. Barbara Angell and Ben Berkey are poets as well as artists.

Tentative date: first week in February. Watch for further details in local newspapers.

XX

*Dial Your Schools: 371-7370: The Cleveland Heights-University Heights schools have installed an information line which is a daily report on the events and programs in the schools. It will also be used as an emergency network in the event of school closings because of inclement weather or other emergency situations.*

+++++

COUNCIL LIBERALIZES FAMILY DEFINITION FOR ROOMMATES:  
WEIGAND VOTES "NO"

In a piece of legislation partly mandated by a Supreme Court decision and partly responsive to complaints of Coventry apartment dwellers, Cleveland Heights City Council enacted a new legal definition of the family on December 19, 1977, with only Councilmember Richard Weigand in opposition. Besides the basic "nuclear family" definition that has held for many years, a family may include either 1) the spouse and / or dependent children of not more than one dependent child of the head of household or spouse of head, or 2) not more than two additional persons of whatever relationship to the rest of the family. Alternative (1) has been part of the definition in recent years. Alternative (2) is new, and covers the adult roommates situation. If the extra persons under alternative (2) are under 18, a member of the core "nuclear" family must be in legal guardianship. This answers the Supreme Court finding earlier in 1977 that a definition excluding two minor grandchildren, first cousins to one another, from their grandmother's legal family is unconstitutional.

The legislation revokes the "roomer permits" formerly issued by the Building Department for up to two roomers. Demands on apartment roommates to apply (and pay) for such permits sparked opposition to this old provision. Permits for roomers in addition to the expanded family definition or for foster children must now go before the Board of Zoning Appeals, as did permits for three or more roomers or foster children formerly. In such proceedings, testimony as to the impact on local schools is to be taken into account as offered by a School Board representative.

Council heard testimony from foster-child agencies that revocation of the old administrative roomer permit would make it harder to place foster kids in Cleveland Heights homes because of the increased bureaucratic hassle. In response, Council added to the legislation a provision that a foster home can get approval as such from the Zoning Board before any children are placed in it.

Weigand's objections centered on the situations of foster and adoptive children, to which he is understandably alert, being an adoptive parent himself. He noted that children placed pre-adoptively in a home, before transfer of guardianship, had the demeaning technical status of "roomer"; that the legal-guardianship requirement created a special pressure on those caring under provision of parents' wills for minor children who have lost both parents; that additional red tape is created for foster parents and children under the new set-up; and that the School Board is not appropriate as a consultant as to who may legally reside in the City, since that is the City's responsibility.

Lee Chilcote, sponsor of the legislation, responded that in the first two instances, the same was true under the old law and that the City in fact has an excellent record of not exercising its right to create a hassle in such cases; that the foster-child provisions were exactly what the foster-child provisions were exactly what the foster-child agencies had requested, and that the School Board's role would be advisory only, with the Zoning Board making the final decision. In addition, the Council had just passed on the same evening an admonition to the School Board about closing schools, acknowledging some mutual interest between the two local government units.

(continued on page 4)

Family Definition (continued)

In your reporter's view, what Weigand fails to see is that the City has used its powers in the past to create a hassle for one class of residents--apartment dwelling roommates--and that the new formulation protects them. This, one would think, counts for more than any substantial changes in the theoretical vulnerability of people whom the City prides itself on not hassling. Weigand might also reflect that the roommate issue was first raised under the liberal majority, of which he was a member, and they botched it. If the liberals had dealt with this question promptly and competently, the definition of family innovations might have taken a different form.

The best summarization was made by Chilcote: "This is not a finished product." As the demographics of the U.S. and of Cleveland Heights change, so will the typical family structure--and so, eventually, will the Cleveland Heights legal definition of the family.

- Dave Burwasser

=====

The Way I feel somtimes

somtimes I feel sad  
somtimes I feel mad  
somtimes I feel glad  
I feel Diffrent ways at diffrent times.  
But it Dosen't stop Me from  
liking limes.  
I Love limes. But I Hate Crines.

Amy Lucier  
Age 6

\*\*\*\*\*

Editor's Note: The following are parts of a letter sent to Frank Obernyer, Chair, Coventry Village Business Association, copy to Dominic Tomaro, Director of Public Works, City of Cleveland Heights.

Dear Frank: I have been asked by the membership of Coventry Neighbors, Inc. to call to your attention two matters which are of substantial concern to our organization. We would appreciate your placing these two items on the agenda for discussion at the next meeting of the Coventry Village Business Association.

SIDEWALK SNOW REMOVAL

An overwhelming majority of the Coventry merchants and property owners did a commendable job of keeping their sidewalks free of snow and ice during the season's first blizzard. However, some individuals seem to have lost sight of their legal and moral obligations in this matter of public safety. It is our hope that no pedestrian will need to suffer serious injury in order to make shop-owners and landlords aware of their responsibilities.

MISUSE OF PUBLIC TRASH CONTAINERS

Mr. Dominic Tomaro, Director of Public Works for the City of Cleveland Heights, informs me that at least two of the public trash containers in the Coventry area

(continued on page 5)



