



## City of Cleveland Heights Charter Review Commission

### Second Interview – Jack Boyle Thursday 8 March 2018

This is the second of several interviews of former councilmembers and Mayors of Cleveland Heights. The interviews were broad ranging and covered both the history and views on current issues. The interviews varied in length but all these summaries are focused on concerns of the Charter Review Commission. All interview reports were submitted to those interviewed before submitting them to the Commission.

Jack Boyle and I had a very unusual path to actually meeting. The first interview was cancelled when Dr. Keller was sick and the next one cancelled as Jack was sick. Then Jack underwent double by-pass surgery, which I am certain was not a way to avoid talking. On Thursday, 8 March, we met in the Atrium of the College of Urban Affairs at Cleveland State University. We also exchanged several E-Mail messages. I had worked with Jack as a member of the CSU Strategic Planning Committee.

After his career in Cleveland Heights he came to Cleveland State and served in several roles, starting with appointment to the Board of Trustees in 1989. He served on the Board until 1998. After retiring from being the CFO with United Agencies, Inc., in 2000, he served as an Interim Vice President of Finance and Administration at Cleveland State University followed by appointment as Special Assistant to the President. From 2003 until 2011 he was Vice President of Finance and Administration. He is now a Senior Fellow and Loaned Executive in residence with the College of Urban Affairs.

In our discussion, Jack focused on the political landscape and his views of what it means for political structures. He was elected to council in 1971 and became Mayor in 1973 when the Democrats came to power. Wards were an issue in 1971 as representation was an issue. He noted the current wards have no value as they are based on precincts which are not a good basis for wards. He perceived that geographic representation was corrected over time with members of the current council coming from all parts of the city. In fact, he saw representation as self-regulating over time.

Previous charter review had two main issues. One was to remove the prohibition of government employees from serving on council. Jack did not see the reasoning behind such a prohibition. As a result of the charter change, only employees of the

city and the Cleveland Heights-University Heights School District cannot serve on council.

The second issue was to change the percentage of signatures for an initiative petition. This was also changed in the last charter review.

Upon becoming mayor, Jack and the Council dramatically changed both personnel and policies. As he noted:

Well, the first thing we did was fire the City Manager who was basically oblivious to what the role of government needed to be in an integrating older inner ring suburb. With the replacement (a former county administrator of Prince George County MD) we worked well with weekly meetings to set [the] agenda[.] [W]e met every two weeks as a Committee of the Whole to delve into issues. We were dealing with block busting; a declining image in the broader community; falling apart [of] commercial areas; and the need for pre-sale inspection for an aging housing stock. All of this had gone untreated by the previous administration and city manager.

Jack perceived the subsequent city managers as effective. For the most part, council had no problems working with the city manager and setting the agenda. City managers are accountable as attested by the firing of the city manager when Jack became mayor.

An elected mayor was not an issue during his service in Cleveland Heights. He noted he served with very good city managers. There was no need for a full-time mayor. He perceives that having a full-time office of mayor may attract two types of candidates. He summarized the outcome of having a mayor in Cleveland Heights in the following words:

My biggest problem with a “strong” mayor is either you get a second stringer who creates a mess or you get someone with a long resume who is too busy to devote full time. I think in either scenario you end up hiring an administrator (like Shaker’s) that just doubles the cost and fuzzes up the org chart. CH too big for a part time “strong” mayor.

He continued:

In a nutshell, the issue of governance structure arises whenever the part time Mayor decides he/she should be full time, and there is less than enthusiasm for the City Manager (my opinion). Over the last thirty years there have been relatively good City Managers and the Council was pretty diverse racially and geographically.