Empowering Voters. Defending Democracy. The League of Women Voters does not endorse candidates or support political parties. It encourages the informed and active participation of citizens in government, works to increase understanding of major public policy issues, and influences public policy through education and advocacy.

General Election Calendar
Oct. 10 – Voter registration deadline. Register to vote or update your registration online at olvr.ohiosos.gov
Oct. 11 – Opening of Early In-Person and Vote-by-Mail / Absentee voting. Schedule for Early In-Person voting at the BOE building can be found at https://bole.cuyahogacounty.gov/voters/vote-early-in-person or https://www.ohiosos.gov/elections/voters/current-voting-schedule/
Oct. 31 – 8:30 p.m. deadline for applications by mail for a Vote-by-Mail / Absentee ballot to be mailed
Nov. 5 – Voting in-person at the Board of Elections ends at 5:00 p.m.
Nov. 6 – All Vote-by-Mail / Absentee ballots mailed anywhere in the U.S. must be postmarked on or before this date and received at the Board of Elections on or before 11/11/23 in order to be counted
Nov. 7 – Election Day - 6:30 a.m. - 7:30 p.m. - Polls open and provisional voting at the Board of Elections
Nov. 7 – All Vote-by-Mail / Absentee ballots returned in person must be received at the Board of Elections by 7:30 p.m. in order to be counted

Resources for more election information
League of Women Voters of Greater Cleveland
Email: president@lwvgreatercleveland.org
Web: lwvgreatercleveland.org
Ohio Secretary of State
(614) 466-2655; SOS-Ohio (877) 767-6446
TTY: (614) 466-0562, TTY Toll-free: (877) 644-6889
Web: www.ohiosos.gov/elections/
Online voter registration: olvr.ohiosos.gov
Cuyahoga County Board of Elections
2925 Euclid Avenue, Cleveland, OH 44115
Web: boe.cuyahogacounty.gov
General Inquiries - (216) 443-8683
Bilingual Information - (216) 443-3233 Ex. 3242
Hearing Impaired - Ohio Relay Service 711

VOTER GUIDE COMMITTEE
Volunteers from the CHUH Chapter of the League of Women Voters of Greater Cleveland (LWVGC) created the candidate questions and provided the information published in this Voter Guide. The committee includes Maryann Barnes, Judith Beeter, Wendy Deuring, Rosemarie Fairman, Barbara Hawley, Robin Koslen, Kathy Petrey, Marilyn Singer, Tanis Swan, Elizabeth Tracy, and Blanche Valancy. Marcia Goldberg (LWVGC VOTE411 coordinator) assisted with candidate information collected through VOTE411.

Go to VOTE411.org to learn what’s on your ballot, your polling place location, and additional information about candidates and issues on your ballot. You may also find links to news articles, candidate forum videos, and other election information.

Go online to VOTEOHIO.GOV to:
• Find information on voting eligibility, ID requirements, and vote-by-mail
• Check your voter registration; change your address; register to vote online
• View sample ballot
• Track your vote-by-mail ballot
• Find your polling location

The material contained in this publication was assembled in the following manner:
Questions were selected by the Cleveland Heights-University Heights (CHUH) Chapter of the League of Women Voters of Greater Cleveland and addressed to the candidates. Candidates were informed that their responses would be printed in their own words, which has been done, and that each would be solely responsible for the contents of the replies. For publication, the order of presentation of the candidates is alphabetical. The League of Women Voters neither endorses nor rejects the views of any candidate quoted and does not and cannot assume responsibility for the contents of the candidates’ reply. We DO NOT and HAVE NOT endorsed any candidates for any offices.

All candidate information has been submitted by the candidates themselves.

Recordings of Candidate Forums
Candidate forums are recorded and posted on the League of Women Voters of Greater Cleveland YouTube channel (search for “League of Women Voters of Greater Cleveland” on the YouTube site)
• September 20—Cleveland Heights City Council race
• September 26—University Heights City Council race
• October 5—University Heights charter amendments information session

In this Guide: Candidates and Issues On the Ballot
Cleveland Heights City Council (p.2)
University Heights City Council (p.4)
Cleveland Heights–University Heights Board of Education (p.7)
East Cleveland Board of Education (p.7)
Cleveland Heights Municipal Judge (p.7)
Shaker Heights Municipal Judge (p.7)
University Heights City Charter Amendment proposals (p.8)

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All candidate information has been submitted by the candidates themselves.
Jon Benedict
Cleveland Heights  Age: 49
E-mail: jon@beneffectcitycouncil.com
Website: www.jonbenedictforcleveland.com
Facebook: www.facebook.com/people/Jon-Benedict-for-Cleveland-
Fax: City-Council
Campaigns HQ Address: 1386 Woodward Ave., Cleveland
Heights, OH 44118

BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION:
Education: BA from Cleveland State University Qualifications: 8+ years of service in Cleveland Heights and have lived here nearly all my life. I have the professional background in local governance and civic engagement to be a new, experienced voice on Council. For decades, I have worked to promote civic engagement and responsive governance, ensuring every citizen has equal access to city services.

What do you see as the top two or three issues or opportunities facing Cleveland Heights, and how should council address them? Every issue is an opportunity. We need our streets to be safe, and we need our sidewalks to be. Crime, violence, youth development, and neighborhood revitalization (new residential options alongside community building activities that strengthen neighborhoods) are the top three issues/opportunities in our city. I am currently working on revisiting the diversion program I created when I previously served on council. The program impacts both youth development and crime in our community. Council members can use their legislative power to create programs that have a meaningful impact on how we address the unique needs of each neighborhood.

How do you define the roles of council member vs. mayor vs. staff? How could council promote collaborative working relationships among council members, mayor, and city staff? When our city charter will benefit from the work of the Charter Revision Commission, it is clear how the roles of Council and the mayor. The council is charged with the legislative responsibilities for the city's government, while the mayor is charged with the executive and administrative powers. In short, the council's role is legislative, and the mayor's role is administrative and operational. While this balance of responsibilities and roles is new to Cleveland Heights, it is not a novel form of governance, as drafted by the Mayor's office, Council for Council positions, or the Charter. One of the most important aspects of a strong mayor form of government is to ensure that citizens in every neighborhood are afforded the same treatment and access to services.

How can the city become a better environmental steward, considering energy, sustainability, climate change, and nature protection? What actions and support would you support? We ensure that citizens in every neighborhood are afforded the same treatment and access to services.

Jeanne V. Gordon
Cleveland Heights  Age: 57
E-mail: mail.jvgordon@gmail.com
Website: www.jegordonforclehts.com
Facebook: www.facebook.com/jeannegordonforclehtscouncil
Instagram: www.instagram.com/jeannegordonforclehts/
Campaigns HQ Address: 2256 Stillman Road, Cleveland Heights, OH 44118

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Jon Benedicte
Cleveland Heights  Age: 49
E-mail: jon@beneffectcitycouncil.com
Website: www.jonbenedictforcleveland.com
Facebook: www.facebook.com/people/Jon-Benedict-for-Cleveland-
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Melody Joy Hart  

Cleveland Heights  Age: No response  
E-mail: melodyjoyhart@gmail.com  
Campaign HQ address: 2976 Monmouth Rd, Cleveland Heights, OH 44118  

BIographies Information:  

Education:  BA in Social Service and Policy from Keller Graduate School, Chicago, IL; BS, Bradley University, Peoria, IL; Certified Public Accountant (CPA); Certified Treasury Professional (CTP); Financial Planning & Analysis (FPFA)  
Qualifications:  Member of Council for 4.5 years prior to running. I have a strong financial background. I have been elected and served as town trustee in Lemont, IL, in the past. I am familiar with legislation and have brought a number of legislations forward for passage.  

How would you define the role of council member vs. mayor vs. staff?  
How could council promote collaborative working relationships among council members, mayor, and city staff?  
What specific actions would you support?  

Jim Petras  

Cleveland Heights  Age: 33  
E-mail: petrasjim@yahoo.com  
Facebook: www.facebook.com/profile?ids=100009532205725  
Campaign HQ address: PO Box 18150, Cleveland Heights, OH 44118  

BIographies Information:  

Education:  BS in Psychology, Bachelor Voter Reserve University  
Qualifications:  IT Project Director, CWRU; Principal, Bellflower Consulting; Secretary, Cleveland Heights Democrats  

How would you define the role of council member vs. mayor vs. staff? How could council promote collaborative working relationships among council members, mayor, and city staff?  
What specific actions would you support?  

Gail Larson  

Cleveland Heights  Age: 74  
E-mail: gail@faithministrycleveland.org  
Website: gail@faithministrycleveland.org  
Facebook: www.facebook.com/gail@faithministrycleveland.org  
Campaign HQ address: 3797 Monte vista, Cleveland Heights, OH 44121  

BIographies Information:  

Education:  BA Speech Pathology and Audiology Moorhead State College; Certificate of Accounting Pacific Lutheran University  
Qualifications:  I was appointed to the Cleveland Heights City Council February, 2022 and elected for the unexpired term November 2022. My work experience and community consciousness and activism help me every day as I navigate this journey of public service.  

How do you define the roles of council member vs. mayor vs. staff? How could council promote collaborative working relationships among council members, mayor, and city staff?  
What specific actions would you support?  

How can the city become a better environmental steward, considering energy, sustainability, climate change, and nature preservation? What specific actions would you support?  

LWV Voter Guide 2023 3  www.heightsobserver.org
How would you define the roles of council vs. mayor in governing University Heights? What can be done to facilitate a good working relationship between council and mayor for the benefit of the community? The mayor is the full time employee in the equation, so practically (and statutorily) most of the daily decision making needs to be made by the mayor. Council, however, has a broad mandate to guide rules on the mayor’s decision making through commissions and the power of the purse. Communication is key to good working relationship. In my field of engineering project management process, we have a saying “address the problem, not the people.” For our government to work well, we should follow that same rule and focus on the business of running a city and not harboring individual grudges that seem to be dominating the discourse currently. There are ways to disagree productively, as we should follow that same rule and focus on the business of running a city and not harboring individual grudges.

The role of ensuring equitable treatment and opportunities for all its residents? What is that role? The role of ensuring equitable treatment and opportunities for residents is vital. The city should create an inclusive environment that values diversity and promotes community engagement, safety, equity, and sustainability. All voices should be heard and considered in decision-making processes. Economic development efforts should focus on creating jobs within the city and supporting local businesses. By investing in social programs, recreational facilities, and community initiatives, the city can enhance the well-being of all residents. Ultimately, the city’s role is to foster a sense of belonging and ensuring that everyone can enjoy a high quality of life within their community.

How can the city become a better environmental steward, considering energy, sustainability, climate change, and nature preservation? What specific actions would you support? To help reduce air pollution from fossil fuel. To preserve nature, we can reduce our water consumption. For example, every resident is allowed to receive larger amounts of revenue for UH and engage in redevelopment projects that benefit the city financially. Once UH reaches an agreement with Macy’s, Target, and a developer on the University Square redevelopment project, the potential apartments and retail businesses can be built. This will give us the opportunity to generate more revenue for UH as we work towards growing our finances.

Awareness campaigns and community engagement can educate residents about conservation, recycling and responsible resource use. Collaborating with local businesses to adopt sustainable practices can also make a substantial impact.

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John P. Rach  
University Heights  Age: 39  
E-mail: paulrach@gmail.com  
Website: www.KeepCouncilmanRach.com  
Facebook: www.facebook.com/CouncilmanRach  
Campaign HQ Address: 2683 Fernway Rd.  
University Heights, OH 44118

**UNIVERSITY HEIGHTS CITY COUNCIL RACE – CONTINUED**

**WHAT DO YOU SEE AS THE TOP TWO OR THREE ISSUES OR OPPORTUNITIES FACING UNIVERSITY HEIGHTS?**  
How would you address them?  

I have past experience working with local government (I was heavily involved in local government advocacy as a college student in WI), I currently serve the community as a member of the CHUH Chapter or donate by credit card online at the City Hall. Two surveys went out to elicit feedback; both had overwhelming support for maintaining backyard pickup with only 1/3 wanting curbside automated. Despite hearing from our residents that curbside automated is not the right move for the community, the City Engineer to also be the design engineer. We discovered this conflict of interest as the City Engineer to also be the design engineer. We are the representative for the people, and the Mayor is the executive for our local government. Both branches keep each other accountable and together we have checks and balances, keeping the city on the right track.

Qualifications:  
- Bachelor of Science in Architecture  
- M.A. in Public Administration  
- City Manager & Senior Steering Committee Member, 2014-2015 - NOACA Planning Steering Committee Member, 2014- 
- New Zoning Code Committee Member, 2012-2016 Board of Zoning Appeals Member

**HOW WOULD YOU DEFINE THE ROLES OF COUNCIL VS. MAYOR IN GOVERNING UNIVERSITY HEIGHTS?**  
How would you address them?  

How can the city become a better environmental steward, considering energy, sustainability, climate change, and nature preservation? What specific actions would you support?  

**WHAT SPECIFIC ACTIONS WOULD YOU SUPPORT?**  
According to the EPA, buildings themselves are among the largest contributors to greenhouse gases. In my practice of architecture, we strive to improve efficiency, reduce water consumption, and when work is not completed on time, on budget, or in accordance with the documents.

Qualifications:  
-Juris Doctor from CWRU Law School  
-BA in Sociology from Case Western Reserve University  
-PhD - Geography, Kent State (2021), Master’s Labor Relation & Human Resources, Cleveland State (2014), B.A. Spanish, CSU (2010), Master’s Public Administration, CSU (2007), B.S. Criminal Justice, NCCU  

**BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION:**  
Education:  
Juris Doctor from CWRU Law School  
Qualifications: I have been involved with a few civic groups in University Heights including Charter Review Commission and the Juneteenth Celebration Committee. Outside of University Heights, I have worked with different governmental organizations that I have worked with. I believe in being open-minded and understanding of the fact that everyone has different opinions can help a great deal when dealing with different groups. The city is a place where we all can live together and have fun.

**DO YOU SEE AS THE TOP TWO OR THREE ISSUES OR OPPORTUNITIES FACING UNIVERSITY HEIGHTS?**  
How would you address them?  

I am highly educated. I have been involved with a few civic groups in University Heights including Charter Review Commission and the Juneteenth Celebration Committee. Outside of University Heights, I have worked with different governmental organizations that I have worked with. I believe in being open-minded and understanding of the fact that everyone has different opinions can help a great deal when dealing with different groups. The city is a place where we all can live together and have fun.

**How can the city become a better environmental steward, considering energy, sustainability, climate change, and nature preservation? What specific actions would you support?**  

I think University Heights is a wonderful place and the council should be the city's most privileged. Society. This means never being complacent to judge our progress by the conditions enjoyed by those most privileged.

**WHAT ARE YOUR THOUGHTS ON THE ROLE OF THE CITY ENGINEER POSITION IN UNIVERSITY HEIGHTS?**  
How would you address them?  

I support living within our means. This means never being complacent to judge our progress by the conditions enjoyed by those most privileged.

**WHAT SPECIFIC ACTIONS WOULD YOU SUPPORT?**  
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Winifred J. Weizer
University Heights   Age: no response
E-mail: winfd4u@gmail.com
Website: win4uh.com
Instagram: https://www.instagram.com/win4uh
Facebook: facebook.com/winfd4u
Campaign HQ Address: 2177 Jackson Blvd. University Heights, OH 44118

BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION:
Education: BA Urban Studies, Master of Public Administration, concentration Public Works Management Qualifications: 25 years management experience. Intimate knowledge of city operations as a volunteer on Finance Advisory, Futures, Memorial Day, Community Improvement, Stormwater Management, Committee Chair for the Redevelopment Commission. Also served on the CH-UH School Lay Finance Advisory Committee.

How would you define the roles of council vs. mayor in governing University Heights?

What can you do to facilitate a good working relationship between council and mayor for the benefit of the community? By charter the Mayor is the administrative head, the council has legislative powers, including approval of budget. All should work together as a team for the benefit of the community.

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The expansion of private school vouchers will negatively impact the University Heights City School District, the board seeks to represent the best interests of the community and to provide an enriched learning environment so that all students realize success.

Two candidates, both residents of Cleveland Heights, are running to fill the two open seats on the Board of Education. They are Gabe Crenshaw and Phil Trimble. Incumbents Beverly R. Wright and James Pouc are not running for reelection. The Board of Education is composed of five residents who serve overlapping terms of four years. As the governing body of the Cleveland Heights-University Heights City School District, the board seeks to represent the best interests of the community and to provide an enriched learning environment so that all students realize success.

Grey text:

Describe the most important policies you think the board must undertake to address equity and pandemic learning loss? Expanding our equity policy to all functions of the district, especially our teaching staff, is of the utmost importance to me. Research has consistently shown that when Black students are taught by Black teachers, students are more likely to graduate from high school and be successful. This is a holistic approach necessary to effectuate large changes in our policy and move towards a more equitable system.

In view of reported assaults on staff in the schools, what should the board do to ensure student safety in instances of students harassing other students, sexually or in any other way? What tools can the board provide to staff to respond appropriately in these situations? The Board should be responsible for providing support and to staff education. They should have access to resources and training to respond appropriately to situations of harassment. Equally, the board should develop a comprehensive plan that includes policies and procedures for addressing harassment.

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Are there particular State of Ohio educational policies, in effect or proposed, you would like to comment on? The expansion of choice voucher programs dramatically reduces public school funding. The reality is that many charter and parochial schools would not be operational without vouchers. Vouchers are detrimental to our public school systems. The method of funding public schools was deemed unconstitutional in Ohio for decades. This led to a 56% increase in classroom disruptions compared to pre-pandemic years. Our board must maintain full staffing across all district positions to ensure students have proper educational and social/emotional support and increase partnerships with organizations that provide wrap-around support services.

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Voter Information

VOTER REGISTRATION

To vote in the November 7 General Election you must be registered to vote by October 10.

- If you have voted recently you are probably already registered, but it is a good idea to verify your registration, especially if you have moved recently. You can verify your registration on either the Cuyahoga County Board of Elections (BOE) (boe.cuyahogacounty.gov) or the Ohio Secretary of State (VOTEOHIO.GOV) websites.
- Voters can register or update their registration online at VOTEOHIO.GOV if they have been issued an Ohio driver's license or state ID.
- Check the Ohio Secretary of State website for requirements for voter registration (www.voteohio.gov) or call the BOE at (216) 443-8683 for assistance.

VOTER ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

To vote you must:
- Be a citizen of the United States.
- Be at least 18 years old on or before the day of the General Election.
- Be registered to vote at least 30 days immediately before the election.
- Be a resident of Ohio for at least 30 days immediately before the election.
- Not be currently incarcerated (in prison) for a felony conviction under the laws of the United States, Ohio, or any other state of the United States. Those who have served their terms can vote.
- Not have been declared incompetent for voting purposes by a probate court.
- Not have been permanently disfranchised for violating the election laws.
- Confirm or update your registration, or register to vote at www.ohiosos.gov.

VOTE BY MAIL (VBM)

Voting by mail, also referred to as absentee voting, is available and no excuse is required. VBM is convenient and can be requested online.

- To apply for a ballot from the County Board of Elections (BOE) either by calling the BOE at (216) 443-8683 or by applying through their website (boe.cuyahogacounty.gov). An application will be mailed to you. When you complete the election ballot, return it by mail or in-person to the BOE. See the election calendar of this guide for relevant deadlines.

More information about Voting by Mail (VBM)

- Return your voted ballot in person to the BOE by 7:30 p.m. on Election Day, OR by mail (must be postmarked no later than the day before Election Day and received by the BOE no later than the 4th day after Election Day).
- A drop box for returning ballots and VBM requests is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week at the board of elections building at Euclid Ave and 38th Street in Cleveland.
- Under Ohio law, you may deliver only your own ballot and those of your spouse, child, or a near relative (go to Ohio.gov for a list of qualifying near relatives) to the BOE drop box. You can deliver anyone's VBM application.
- Identification for VBM is either the last four digits of your SSN or your Ohio driver's license or state ID card number. Or voters can provide a copy of other current photo IDs: interim ID form issued by the Bureau of Motor Vehicles; US military, Ohio National Guard, or US Dept. of Veterans Affairs ID card; US Passport book or card.
- If your voter eligibility is questioned, you may vote a provisional ballot. You will receive follow up instructions from a poll worker to have your vote counted.

PHOTO ID NEEDED FOR IN-PERSON VOTING

To vote early in-person or on Election Day you need one of the following types of photo ID, which must be unexpired but does not require a current address as long as the voter's current address has been updated by the Board of Elections.

- Ohio driver's license or Ohio state ID card or interim identification form issued by the Bureau of Motor Vehicles
- US military, Ohio National Guard, or US Dept. of Veterans Affairs ID card
- US Passport book or card

If your voter eligibility is questioned, you may vote a provisional ballot. You will receive follow up instructions from a poll worker to have your vote counted.

RESOURCES FOR FURTHER INFORMATION:

League of Women Voters of Greater Cleveland
Email: president@lwvgreatercleveland.org
Web: lwvgreatercleveland.org

Cuyahoga County Board of Elections
2925 Euclid Avenue Cleveland, OH 44115
Web: boe.cuyahogacounty.gov

Ohio Secretary of State
(614) 466-2655, Toll-Free: SOS-Ohio (877) 787-6446
TTY: (614) 466-5962, TTY Toll-Free: (877) 644-6889
Web: www.ohiosos.gov/elections
Online voter registration: absvote.ohio.gov

Do you like this printed guide?

If so, please support the production of future printed Voter Guides with a tax-deductible donation. Mail a check to LWV of Greater Cleveland Education Fund, P.O. Box 5310, Cleveland OH 44101 (please direct your contribution to the CHUH Chapter) or donate by credit card online at lwvgreatercleveland.org.

UNIVERSITY HEIGHTS PROPOSED CHARTER AMENDMENTS BALLOT ISSUES

Amendments to the Charter of the City of University Heights will be on the ballot. Below are summaries of the proposed amendments.

The wording and numbering of the ballot issues are available online at VOTE411.ORG. Attend the information session on the proposed charter amendments to be held on October 5, 2023, 6-8 p.m. at the University Heights Library. Watch the recording of the information session posted on the League of Women Voter of Greater Cleveland YouTube channel (search “League of Women Voters of Greater Cleveland” on the YouTube site).

Gender Neutrality and Non-Substantive Changes

The proposed amendment replaces gendered terms and language throughout the City’s Charter with gender-neutral and gender-inclusive terms and language. It also permits Council, by unanimous vote, to make non-substantive corrections and revisions to the Charter without going through the lengthy Charter amendment process.

Department Name Modernization

The proposed amendment changes the titles of City administrative officers and names of City administrative departments to be consistent with the titles and department names currently used by the City and prohibits Council from eliminating the Division of Public Safety.

Recall Elections

The proposed amendment changes the process for recall elections so that the removal of an elected office by recall election results in a vacancy. The current process places an elected official who is subject to a certified recall petition on the ballot in a special recall election as a candidate for that same office along with any other nominated candidates. If no other person is nominated as a candidate for the office in the recall election, the elected official will win by default and remain in office. The proposed amendment instead results in a vacancy upon a successful recall election, which is to be filled under applicable provisions of the existing Charter.

Initiative and Referendum

The proposed amendment changes the number of signatures required on petitions for an initiative or referendum from a percentage of registered voters of the City to a percentage of the total ballots cast in the City’s last regular municipal election and increases such percentages.

Council’s Presiding Officer

The proposed amendment changes the official who is to preside at all meetings of the Council. It relieves the Mayor of this responsibility and provides that the Vice Mayor is to preside at all meetings of the Council. Under the Charter the Vice Mayor is a member of the Council, the legislative body, whereas the Mayor has an executive role. The Charter Review Commission determined that the Council should have the responsibility of conducting its own meetings. The proposed amendment also provides that the Mayor and department directors are entitled to non-voting seats at Council’s meetings so that the executive branch may communicate its interests to Council.

Anti-Discrimination

The proposed amendment prohibits discrimination by the City based on a person’s membership in certain protected classes or groups unless reasonably necessary to normal operations and having a substantial relationship to job function and responsibilities.

Attention: University Heights Voters

PROPOSED AMENDMENTS TO THE CHARTER

PHOTO ID NEEDED FOR IN-PERSON VOTING

To vote early in-person or on Election Day you need one of the following types of photo ID, which must be unexpired but does not require a current address as long as the voter's current address has been updated by the Board of Elections.

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Cuyahoga County Board of Elections
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Web: boe.cuyahogacounty.gov

Ohio Secretary of State
(614) 466-2655, Toll-Free: SOS-Ohio (877) 787-6446
TTY: (614) 466-5962, TTY Toll-Free: (877) 644-6889
Web: www.ohiosos.gov/elections
Online voter registration: absvote.ohio.gov

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