

**\*\*\* FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE \*\*\***

Press Release  
City Council  
The City of East Cleveland, Ohio  
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Unity. Objectivity. Transparency. Today, City Council has taken action to advance these goals and to seek the best possible outcome for East Cleveland's citizens.

East Cleveland is suffering. Her citizens are suffering. For months, all of us heard comments from the press and elsewhere that the City might file bankruptcy, as Detroit did and as some other cities have done. Late last year, the Mayor announced that bankruptcy will not work for our city. More recently, the administration appears to have decided that our citizens have only one alternative left -- to be assimilated by our neighbor, The City of Cleveland.

The Mayor has touted "annexation" or "merger" as a solution to East Cleveland's financial woes. And he has made several speeches about why he believes that East Cleveland cannot survive as an independent city and why "annexation" or "merger" is the only avenue available. But in all of those speeches, the Mayor has yet to give our community or even Council a truly comprehensive explanation of the basis for his analysis and his conclusion. Instead, he is urging citizens to sign a petition to commence the "annexation" process. He says that "studies" will be conducted in the future regarding annexation, but he has not explained precisely what annexation issues will be studied. He has not named who will conduct the studies. And he has not identified by name who will pay for the studies. On these points, he has offered only generalities and vague promises. Thus far, his approach lacks transparency.

City Council believes the Mayor has put the cart before the horse. Council perceives that the Mayor has made his decision, that his decision is for annexation, and that he will be commissioning "studies" to justify a decision he already has made.

City Council thinks there is a better way. City Council believes that all of the City's available options should be examined systematically by legal and financial professionals who are qualified, who have no pre-conceived notions of which option or options to prefer, and who can provide an objective, reliable explanation to City Council and to the citizens of East Cleveland regarding which options will work for East Cleveland and which ones will not. In this way, City Council believes our community -- and our government -- can come together, united behind a single course of action to achieve the best outcome for East Cleveland's citizens. That is why, today, City Council has acted.

In an effort to help our community better assess all potential options, City Council has engaged the law firm of Buckley King -- at no cost to the City's current budget -- to advise and guide City Council in seeking the analysis of qualified, municipal finance professionals who can provide the information that City Council and East Cleveland's citizens need to decide our City's future. City Council intends that the process of selecting those financial professionals, and the arrangements to pay for their analysis, will be transparent and known to East Cleveland's citizens.

The report City Council envisions will be clear and understandable. It will be made available to all citizens of East Cleveland, so they can understand what the City's available options really are and which of those options are or are not reasonably achievable. With this information, City Council and East Cleveland's citizens can make a more fully informed decision.

By taking this action today, City Council's intentions are to:

- allow the citizens of East Cleveland to receive a report that has been prepared by disinterested, objective experts, who have no political "ax to grind" and who are not motivated by any self-interest and whose opinions are not tainted by any pre-conceived notions;
- obtain a report that provides a fair and unbiased portrayal of the fiscal issues East Cleveland faces, a realistic examination of the possible solutions, and a recommendation on which solution or solutions to pursue – and why;
- allow our citizens to finally have an understandable presentation of all of the City's options;
- allow an opportunity for our citizens to be heard;
- allow City Council to understand the wishes of East Cleveland's citizens; and
- do all of this in a fully transparent process, in plain view of our citizens.

East Cleveland's citizens deserve nothing less than this. The time has come to give them the information they need to decide which course of action our city should take.

**EAST CLEVELAND CITY COUNCIL**

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Mansell Baker, Councilor Ward 4  
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