

Peter Lawson Jones
Cuyahoga County Commissioner

Peter Lawson Jones presently serves as President of the Board of Cuyahoga County Commissioners (BOCC). Jones, the only African-American county commissioner in the State of Ohio, also serves as President of the Cuyahoga County Planning Commission and Vice Chairman of the Cuyahoga County Solid Waste District. He is a member of the Executive Committee for the Northeast Ohio Areawide Coordinating Agency and Chairman of the Urban Counties Committee for the County Commissioners Association of Ohio. Jones previously served five years in the Ohio House of Representatives, where he was the ranking minority (Democratic) member of the House Finance and Appropriations Committee and second vice president of the Ohio Legislative Black Caucus.

Jones is a partner with the law firm of Roetzel & Andress, as part of the public law group. A graduate of Harvard College (Magna Cum Laude in Government) and Harvard Law School, he was formerly the Vice Mayor and a Councilman in the City of Shaker Heights, Ohio. He was also the first African-American ever nominated to run for Lieutenant Governor in the history of the State of Ohio.

18th Annual Western Reserve Studies Symposium:
 “Land Use and Prosperity in the Western Reserve – A Call to Action”
 November 5, 2004

I. Introduction

- A. Appreciate the invitation to share a few thoughts at what is, at least as regards the economic and development future of NE Ohio, one of the most important meetings that will take place this year in our area
- 1) Intellect and influence reposited in this room
 - 2) Thinking big picture, regionally about how we might achieve sustained, sustainable and balanced growth

II. Laying the Foundation

- A. Two major prerequisites for adoption and implementation of sound land use policies in our region and state that address challenges of urban sprawl and farmland preservation
- 1) Appreciation of consequences of inaction – the educational effort
 - 2) Building of the coalition necessary to influence the public policy decision-makers
 - 3) Building the coalition impossible without relationships
- B. We witnessed on Tuesday the hardening of a new political partisan dialectic: urban/inner ring suburbs vs. exurbia/small towns/rural areas
- C. Urban sprawl/farmland preservation coalition offers one opportunity cut across new political alignment
- D. First Suburbs Consortium has coalesced inner ring suburban communities here, stimulated such coalition formation elsewhere in Ohio and linked with similar organizations elsewhere in state
- E. Although smart and balanced growth not always their primary objective, there are organizations in Western Reserve who are thinking large scale, regionally and building relationships
- 1) Team NEO
 - 2) Western Reserve Resource Conservation and Development Council
 - 3) Fund our Economic Future

- 4) Cuyahoga Valley Initiative
 - a) 75 square miles, 10% of county's total area, 15 municipalities
 - b) Objective: take a polluted, rusted-out industrial valley and transform into an environmentally, economically, residentially and culturally vibrant area through ecologically based redesign and application of principles of sustainability

III. Public Sector Response

- A. Before I go further, my categorization of regionalism typologies
- B. Regional Economic Development Summit
 - 1) The motivation: NE Ohio's economic problems demanded multi-jurisdictional, bipartisan approach that transcended increasingly more irrelevant political boundaries . . . the questions is not if Cleveland can best Lorain . . .
 - 2) Who came
 - 3) Outcomes
 - a) Agreement that region at economic crossroads and must work together in a sustained effort as we share a common destiny
 - b) Formed task force of members from each of the 8 counties to identify appropriate models for intergovernmental cooperation
- C. Regional Cooperation Summits ultimately yielded Northeast Ohio League for Leadership and Advocacy
 - 1) Before formal existence had trial run in spring '03
 - a) NASA, Lorain, Medina (June '04)
 - b) Agreement reached that at economic crossroads, must work together and must be sustained effort
 - c) Task force of members from each of 8 counties working – identify appropriate models and vehicles for intergovernmental cooperation
 - 2) Lobbying Columbus
 - a) Met 3 times in early '03 to impact state legislature's budget deliberations. Realized limits of Cuyahoga County leaders in GOP – dominated legislation
 - b) Position/Response

- i) Urged that LGF not be cut or eliminated. Was left untouched.
 - ii) Expansion of sales tax base, presentation of property tax credits. Tax base narrowly expanded and property tax credits unchanged.
 - iii) Local revenue sources to remain exclusively local. Recorder's fees used for OHTF.
 - iv) Opposed elimination of APS mandate and funding. Won that battle.
 - v) Restore food bank line item. Done.
 - vi) Maintain previous CHIP and daycare eligibility funding. Though not returned to earlier 185% of poverty levels, frozen at 165%, not lowered further.
- 3) Medina meeting last summer (we move our regional summits around, the second was in Lorain County)
 - 4) Next step: adoption of NOLLA resolutions by all counties, municipalities and townships in NE Ohio
 - 5) Next test: state FY '06-'07 biennial budget and to leave impact on economic development decisions of the OGA

IV. Conclusion

- A. Represents only a few of the ways the county is involved in promoting regionalism and balanced growth.
- B. County Brownfield Redevelopment Fund
 - 1) Investment of \$11.5M in 20 projects leveraging \$154M in additional investment, creating/retaining 1400 jobs
 - 2) \$2M BEDI grant for Tinker's Creek Commerce Park
 - 3) Joint application with First Suburbs Consortium and City of Cleveland for Brownfield \$'s from the feds
- C. Cuyahoga County is fully built-out, the first county in the state . . . enshrining smart growth, regionally-based policies is imperative . . . we need your intellect and efforts to make our proposals realities.