

City Council Application 2020

Reference #	12811838
Status	Complete
First Name	Tony
Last Name	Cuda
Phone Number	[REDACTED]
Cell Phone Number	[REDACTED]
Email Address	[REDACTED]
Street Address	[REDACTED] Fenley Rd
Place of Employment	Fuchs Mizrachi
Position	AP Government Teacher
Length of residence in Cleveland Heights	United States
Are you a registered Cleveland Heights voter?	Yes

What special qualities, abilities, skills, insights or perspectives do you possess which would be of value in serving on Cleveland Heights City Council?

* My teaching, community, campaign, volunteer and other professional experience will enable me to be helpful in guiding the transition to a mayor/council form of government

* Love to work with people on issues important to our community

* My 35 + years in CH gives me perspective on the issues facing our city (lived here since 1961 with 20+ years living elsewhere in between)

* I will lead on issues I am familiar with, and follow the lead of those more knowledgeable on other issues

* I take pleasure in listening to problems people are having, and am motivated to help them solve those problems

* My door to door experience with CEM in 2019 has put me in tune with our community, perhaps more than I ever have been

* Now that I am retired, I have the ability to put in the time to doing the research and community outreach that will make me a successful councilman

* Should I be chosen, I have the campaign skills and base of support that will help to insure I retain my council seat next year

* I have attended many council/community meetings; especially over the past 3 years. This has given me some insight into what is working and what needs improvement.

* I have a very good relationship with neighboring mayors/council/school board members. This would be a valuable tool for collaboration when needed.

* Working for former Cleveland Council President Jay Westbrook has helped develop my problem solving skills by learning to navigate the city government bureaucracy for our constituents

What educational training (formal or informal), employment and other life experiences have helped you develop the qualities, abilities, etc., described above?

- * Heights High Grad ('73) / Attended 1-12
- * CSU, BA Political Science
- * John Carroll, MEd (Masters in Education)
- * Taught Government and Sociology for 15 years; Shaker Hts High School
- * Community Organizer for Heights Community Congress (1988-91)
- * 3 time Big Brother (Big Brothers/Big Sisters)
- * Assistant to Council President Jay Westbrook in Cleveland 1988, Ward Leader 10 yrs
- * Cleveland School Board (1994-95)
- * Faculty Senate Chair, Shaker Hts High School
- * Lived in CH since 1961 for 35+ years (in 4 different neighborhoods)
- * CEM Campaign Manager
- * 12 Years professional campaign experience

Please list your recent community, professional or charitable involvements. List the most recent first.

- *CEM Campaign Chair
 - * Frequent Attendee at Council Meetings
 - * Big Brothers Big Sisters
 - * Faculty Senate Chair
 - * Given money/clothing to many charities
 - * Recently joined the faculty of Fuchs Mizrahi High School
 - * Helped several candidates for CH City Council
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What are your goals for our community and are there areas in which you believe the City needs improvement? How would your service on City Council help achieve those goals and improve the City?

SOME GOALS (there will be more)

1. A smooth transition to a mayor/council form of government
2. Insuring that council will be a co-equal branch of government
3. Shoring up and modernizing the Housing Dept
4. Making sure our waste management is modernized and ecologically sound for the future
5. Economic Development! Solving Severance!!
6. Being user friendly councilman/transparent & responsive
7. Creating a more user friendly city government bureaucracy
8. Listening and acting

MY SERVICE

- 1,2. My experience with the CRC, CEM and teaching government will enable me to make an important contribution to the transition of our city government both in interpretation and implementation. I know the content of the charter amendment, the steps necessary to make council a co-equal branch of government and the unfinished changes needed to the existing charter.
 3. The balance between code enforcement, harassment, tax collection, absentee landlords and property values can only be met by prioritizing this issue. I would first look at the scope of the problem, our budget, best practices of other cities and then move legislation forward to solve the identified deficiencies.....All in conjunction with our current city staff and fellow council members.
 4. Long term planning must be done to insure our waste management serves the needs of our city for many years to come. I would do a lot of listening and research to make sure sound decisions were made going forward on this critical city service.
 5. Economic development is the key to our economic future. This will enable us to grow demographically (we need young people), keep our taxes stable and support our schools. I will be a pro economic development voice on
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council. I will encourage citizen input and be responsive to their objections while still having the guts to move forward and make difficult decisions that need to be made to move important projects forward.

6. I will return phone calls and emails. I will be out and about meeting face to face with constituents. I will follow through on citizen concerns and act as an ombudsman and problem solver whenever possible.

7. I will encourage the elected mayor to select an exemplary city administrator that will run day to day operations; all with goal of creating the most user friendly city services in NE Ohio. I will only vote for a highly qualified CA with the skill set and credentials necessary for delivering excellent city services. I will also encourage the mayor to do whatever she/he can to have the most responsive, visionary administration possible.

8. All of the above.

Do you have other responsibilities which would prevent you from participating in City Council and Council Committee work during certain hours or on certain days?	No. I am retired (I teach 4 hours a week) and will devote as much time as possible to this very important job at this critical, transitional time.
State any additional information you would like to have considered.	I would truly look forward to working with each and every one of you. It would be an honor to serve my community and be part of the decision-making process during this transitional phase of our city government. This is the right time in my life to do this job. Like all of you, I love our city and want to be part of its future success.
Would you like to upload a Resume?	No
Item # 23	I agree to electronically sign this form.
Signature	Tony Cuda
Last Update	2020-03-10 15:33:54
Start Time	2020-03-10 12:33:45
Finish Time	2020-03-10 15:33:54
IP	

Browser	Chrome
OS	Windows
Referrer	https://www.clevelandheights.com/1085/City-Council-Application

Tony Cuda At-A-Glance Resume

EDUCATION

SCHOOL

John Carroll University
Cleveland State University
Berklee College of Music (Boston)
Cleveland Heights High School
Roosevelt Junior High School
Boulevard Elementary School

DEGREE

Masters, Education
Bachelors, Political Science
Completed 6 Semesters
Graduated
Graduated
Graduated

CIVIC INVOLVEMENT

ORGANIZATION

YEARS

CAPACITY OF INVOLVEMENT

Citizens for an Elected Mayor	2018-2019	Campaign Manager
Fenley Rd Block Party	2010-2020	Co-Organizer
Rape Crisis Center	2004-2020	Volunteer Musician/Fundraising
Shaker Hts Teachers Union	2000-2020	Member/Chair, Faculty Senate
Cleveland School Board Member	1994-1995	Chairman, Education Committee
Heights Community Congress	1988-1991	Community Organizer, Cleveland Hts
Cleveland Race Relations Forum	1988-1991	Organized Race Relations Forums
Big Brothers of America	1981-2000	Three Time Big Brother
Massachusetts Fair Share	1979-1981	Community Organizer

WORK EXPERIENCE

BUSINESS

YEARS

POSTION

Fuchs Mizrachi	2019-Present	Teacher, AP Government
Shaker Public Schools	2000-2020	Retired HS Teacher, Government/Sociology
Blue Cross/Blue Shield	1995-1996	Medicaid Division/Sales
Political Campaign Consultant	1991-1998	Field Director/Several Candidates
Cleveland Tenants Organization	1991-1992	Landlord/Tenant Law Counselor
Heights Community Congress	1988-1991	Community Organizer

COMMITMENT TO SUPPORTING DIVERSITY IN CLEVELAND HTS

- * Taught mostly African American students for more than 20 years
- * Big Brother to two African American children
- * Organized race relations forums for Heights Community Congress
- * Currently teach at an Orthodox Jewish High School
- * Supported numerous women currently and formerly holding public office
- * Lived on Greyton, Desota and Woodview. Currently own my home on Fenley Rd. (off Quilliams)

Tony Cuda Resume Details

EDUCATION

- **I am a product of the Cleveland Heights public school system.** My mother was a very rare, but wonderful single parent who moved our family to Cleveland Heights in 1961 so my brother and I could get a good education. We not only ended up being the first ever in our family to graduate from college; we both ended up with Masters degrees and professions. I owe so much to our public education system. My best friends are still the kids I grew up with. We always say to each other that “we have a Cleveland Heights soul.” Growing up in a richly diverse community prepared me to take leadership roles later in life that charted my path towards furthering my education and later becoming a teacher and a community activist.
- My **political science degree from Cleveland State** enabled me to do an internship on a real political campaign. My **Masters degree from John Carroll** gave me the opportunity to learn and practice real life pedagogical skills at Brush High School before being hired at Shaker. **Berklee College of Music** gave me the foundation to get more out of music than I ever dreamed possible. I’m still playing, writing and enjoying music.

CIVIC INVOLVEMENT

- Being **campaign manager for Citizens for an Elected Mayor** was one of the greatest honors of my life. Leading a campaign to change a 100 year old charter was not an easy task; but it sure was a lot of fun. I recruited a group of 10 volunteers to serve on a committee. None of us knew each other previously, but we all believed in the cause. I drew up a campaign plan and we executed it. We recruited more than 500 volunteers; got 4000 petition signatures; went door to door in every precinct in CH; put up 1300 yard signs; organized more than 25 house parties; organized and participated in city-wide forums and debates; earned the endorsement of the PD and JVote; executed a city-wide lit drop; did 2 mailings; purchased many social media buys; raised \$48,000; and won an overwhelming victory, 64% to 36%.
- **Volunteering for the Rape Crisis Center** has been a gratifying, eye-opening experience. Every other year, we put together a musical extravaganza to raise money for abused women and children. We have performed at Cleveland Playhouse, The State Theater and Severance Hall and raised millions of dollars over the 16 years I have been involved. My job is to play bass guitar and help arrange the music for the rhythm section. I have learned so much about the horrors of sexual abuse and the healing work the RCC does to comfort and counsel women who otherwise might suffer in silence.
- As a member of the Shaker Teachers Union, I **chaired the Faculty Senate** which guided school climate policy at Shaker Heights High School. During my tenure, we were able to implement a tardy policy that made sense, get teachers to stand outside their doors between periods and weigh in on crucial personnel decisions previously made without our input. I also designed and carried out the first ever Faculty Senate survey to gather statistics regarding our school climate.
- In 1994, I was appointed to the **Cleveland School Board**. The school board president assigned me to **chair the education committee** where I facilitated discussions regarding curriculum and parental concerns regarding their child’s education. My most important accomplishment as a board member was passing a resolution that allowed the district to partner with the police department to implement a community policing plan to insure the safety of our students to and from school.

- Being a **Community Organizer for Heights Community Congress** was a turning point in my life. HCC has a deep history in Cleveland Heights as the first fair housing advocacy organization on the East side of Cleveland. My job was to lead an effort to empower the grassroots neighborhood groups and give them direction and support. When I started my job in 1988, there were 3 active neighborhood groups in Cleveland Heights. By 1991, because of our intensive outreach efforts, there were 8! Together, we were able to accomplish the following:
 1. We printed and distributed a monthly newsletter to keep our various neighborhood groups informed, and we shared ways in which we could improve our community
 2. We organized a group of rental property owners who were able to speak to the city with one voice about their concerns
 3. We were able to negotiate a much needed greenspace park in the Caledonia neighborhood
 4. We organized race relations forums that allowed residents to come forward and speak their minds about sensitive issues by listening and then addressing their concerns with guidance from professional facilitators
 5. We put together the Heights Housing Tour every year to show off our great homes and landscapes to our neighboring communities
- As a **3-time Big Brother**, my life became much more fulfilling. I owe it all to my mother and Mr. Callahan. When I was 12 years old, my mother decided that my 10 year old brother and I needed a Big Brother due to the fact that we had no male role model. Mr. Callahan was wonderful. He introduced me to the Cleveland Orchestra (he sang in the choir) and encouraged me to pursue my education and my passion for music. Tragically, he died at only 49 years old, but we remained close right up until the day cancer took him from us. Mr Callahan inspired me to become a Big Brother. And because of him, I have had the honor of having three wonderful children in my life.

WORK EXPERIENCE

- I was recently recruited to **teach an AP government class at Fuchs Mizrahi**; a private Orthodox Jewish High School. I had just retired from Shaker Hts High School in January, 2020, but they made me an offer I could not refuse. I am having a ball! I have 13 students for 45 minutes a day, 5 days a week. Their faces pop up on my video screen every weekday morning at 10:30 am and we prepare for the AP exam coming up on May 11. They are bright, funny and ask a million questions about everything from federalism to the country's response to the Corona Virus. I can't think of a better way to spend my mornings.
- **Teaching government and sociology at Shaker Heights High School** was the best career decision of my life. The staff was professional and supportive. The students were amazing and often, quite surprising. Running in to them on the street and having them tell me stories about moments we had in class all those years ago makes me almost burst with joy. When they tell me what they are doing now and thank me for inspiring them, I am reminded that we teachers do make a difference. These encounters always end with a hug, and often tears. Coaching baseball, chairing the Faculty Senate, being a Team Leader, and serving as the Faculty Advisor for the Model UN Club for 14 years have all made for a rich, fulfilling experience. I do miss it. Especially those trips to Montreal to compete with schools from around the world. There is nothing like bringing home a gavel when you are competing with some of the best high schools in North America!

- I never set out to be a **political campaign consultant**, but when the opportunity presented itself, I jumped at it. During my years as a paid campaign staffer (I volunteered on several campaigns previously, and dozens since), I worked for presidents, senators, governors and city councilmen. The political campaign skills that I learned in college were finally being put to use. Managing field campaigns means organizing people to do voter contact such as: organizing rallies; going door to door; covering events; putting up yard signs; executing direct mail campaigns and anything else asked of us. There are so many highlights, but getting the James Gang to reunite for the 1996 Clinton campaign and perform at the Wolstein Center was certainly a thrill. Because of my work on presidential campaigns, I was able to work on several overseas elections including two as an election supervisor in Bosnia, and the 1997 Tony Blair campaign in England where the Labour Party picked up nearly 300 seats in Parliament!
- Working in the **health care** industry and doing **landlord/tenant counseling** rounded out my 1990's experience. I learned how corrupt the health care industry could be when I saw our competitors cheating and the company I worked for doing nothing about it. Long story.....
- Landlord/tenant counseling was quite different. I learned the law according to the ORC and local ordinances. I learned the issues confronting both landlords and tenants and counseled them on how to solve most of their disputes without going to court.

COMMITMENT TO SUPPORTING DIVERSITY IN CLEVELAND HEIGHTS

- I have a **lifetime commitment to the Cleveland Heights way of life**. My wife and I own our home on Fenley Rd. I was a community organizer in Cleveland Heights working on neighborhood issues, including race relations. I taught in a majority African American public school district, and now in an Orthodox Jewish private school. My experience as a Big Brother to two African American children has made me a more culturally aware person. My support of women for public office has grown more and more as I have seen the tremendous benefit of having qualified women replace unqualified officeholders. I will be a strong voice on council that promotes the diversity that makes Cleveland Heights such a great place to live and raise a family.

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Qualified – I have the educational, public policy, political campaign and community service background to serve as an effective Cleveland Hts City Councilman. (see resume)

Vision – I envision our city with an economic development plan that: attracts young professionals, does not overburden our seniors with taxes, and appeals to the needs of the vast majority of our citizens while paying particular attention to the neglected areas of Noble and Taylor Rds; Has housing that is affordable for seniors and working class people (including our taxes); Has a modern, ecologically sound waste management system; A top notch public education system; Adequate housing for all income groups; an accountable, responsive government with a shared vision; Has parks and recreational activities that appeal to residents and support the local arts community; Retains our commitment to the diversity that makes our city so special.

Ideas – As with all ideas/proposals, they must be vetted by the law department and agreed upon by a majority on council. Here are some ideas I believe are worth exploring:

1. Form a CH Health Advisory Committee that gives guidance in the event of another health crisis (we have many doctors living in CH). Along with that, non-professionals can volunteer to do wellness checks on seniors and those with disabilities.
2. Check with Metro Health (Severance) regarding the feasibility of using the vacant WalMart in the case of emergency.
3. Check the local deer population for ticks. They thrive in climates like ours; especially this past year.
4. Make sure our succession for mayors who can no longer serve fits the possibility of what would happen during a pandemic as well as special powers that may be triggered by such emergencies.
5. Modify the charter to improve the process for replacing vacant council seats. Include a reasonable time limit and background checks.
6. Hire a specialist that does nothing but track down tax delinquent landlords.
7. Have one person on council specialize in handling landlord/tenant disputes.
8. Create a student mentoring program that enlists members of the community not currently involved with the schools. Homework centers at Shaker schools are run after school, and can be staffed by qualified mentors under the supervision of staff security.
9. Make CH website more user friendly. (Too many changes to put in this space)
10. Use some of the CRC recommendations and those brought forth by a select committee consisting of council members, CEM alum, CRC alum and interested/qualified citizens to revise our city charter. I have a 2 page plan for this that I will share.

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Committed – I have lived in four different homes in Cleveland Heights since 1961 (with about 20 years in the 80's and 90's living in Boston and Cleveland). My wife and I currently own our Fenley Rd home free and clear. I am a product of CH-UH schools. I worked for Heights Community Congress in the late 80's and early 90's as a community organizer working with 8 neighborhood groups on a variety of issues including the betterment of race relations. I also led the Issue 26 campaign in 2019 to change the city charter to include an elected mayor. I have also attended many city council meetings over the past 3 years in order to familiarize myself with the current issues facing our city.

Ready – I am ready to serve my community as a city councilman. My years of teaching government, serving on the Cleveland School Board, working with former Cleveland Council President Jay Westbrook, and managing the Issue 26 campaign have prepared me to be a major contributor to the smooth transition to a mayor/council form of government. My experience also prepares me to fill the vacant vice-chairmanship of the CH Administrative Services Committee that deals with governance issues such as our City Charter. I am also prepared to fill the vacant chairmanship of the Housing and Public Safety Committee. As a homeowner of property in CH, South Euclid and at one time, Scottsdale AZ, I have some experience working with housing departments. I also have done landlord/tenant counseling with the Cleveland Tenants Organization which has given me some insight into both sides of rental property issues. I would also look forward to filling the vacancy on the Planning and Development Committee to contribute to moving our city's economic development projects forward. And I am ready to help lead the transition to a mayor/council form of government – the most important change to our governmental structure in 100 years. My goals would be to create an inclusive process that results in making council a co-equal branch of government that provides a clear separation of powers while providing the checks and balances necessary for proper oversight. I also believe we need to modernize our city charter and implement an ethics clause that holds our elected officials to the highest ethical standards.