



A NEW LINE FOR VERSE

JARED VERSE, THE BROWNS' NEWEST PASS-RUSHER, SEES HIMSELF FITTING IN WELL ON A YOUNG DEFENSE. "I'M HAPPY TO BE A PART OF THE BROWNS." **C1**



PUBLIC SAFETY COMMITTEE CLEVELAND

Eminent domain is back on the table for controversial property



The vacant CVS at 10022 Madison Ave. in Cleveland has been a political flashpoint since long before Nikki Hudson or Tanmay Shah — backers of the plan to use eminent domain to seize the property — were on city council. *John Pana, cleveland.com*

City is offering \$635K for land it wants for a new fire station; the landowner says it's worth at least \$1.7M.

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Cleveland's fight over whether to seize a vacant CVS isn't over yet.

The legislation initially died in Municipal Services Committee on May 11 after lawmakers rejected Mayor Justin Bibb's plan to use eminent domain for a new fire station. But weeks later, supporters revived it and sent it back to the full council for a vote.

Council's Public Safety Committee voted Wednesday to advance the legislation, setting up what could be a closely divided vote before the entire council at their next meeting July 15.

The move comes even after the property owner provided a new appraisal valuing the site between \$1.7 million and \$2.2 million. Cleveland offered just \$635,000 this year.

"We just want to be treated fairly, but (the city is) just not doing that."

T.J. Weyls, representative for property owner

T.J. Weyls, representing the property's owner Shaker Madison LLC, said they have no problem negotiating a fair sale. But he said the city valued the property as if it were simply vacant, even though the owner has spent years lining up tenants and securing approvals for redevelopment.

He said they fear the city was rushing the eminent domain process for leverage in negotiations, potentially leading to a long, costly legal battle.

And if the price ultimately set by a court lands near \$2 million, the owners worry, the city will walk away — and leave them footing the legal bills.

"We just want to be treated fairly, but

they're just not doing that," Weyls told cleveland.com and The Plain Dealer.

Council members Tanmay Shah and Nikki Hudson, the plan's main backers whose wards contain the vacant drug store and the old fire station needing to be replaced, characterize eminent domain as a needed tool to make negotiations fair.

They'd rather avoid going to court, but they say the mayor needs the ability to use eminent domain as a backup — otherwise, the city risks paying an inflated price and postponing a needed fire station.

"I don't think it is right for the city to write a blank check to developers," Hudson told cleveland.com on Monday.

Hudson and Shah were initially the only two "yes" votes in a 5-2 loss May 11. But they flipped the outcome to a 6-1 win Wednesday after lobbying colleagues in a different committee.

The vacant CVS at 10022 Madison Ave. has been a political flashpoint long before Hudson or Shah were on council.

Former Councilman Danny Kelly, trying to fill one of three vacant drug stores in his ward, had supported a plan by Shaker Madison that would have converted the vacant pharmacy into a shopping plaza that included a gas station.

SEE PUBLIC SAFETY COMMITTEE, A2

DATA CENTERS OHIO

Tech giants promise to do better as legislation looms

Microsoft tells a legislative committee that it will no longer require NDAs with local governments or seek property tax abatements.

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As Ohio lawmakers prepare legislation aimed at the fast-growing data center industry, Microsoft is pledging greater transparency around its Ohio data center projects.

The company told a legislative committee Thursday that it will no longer require

non-disclosure agreements with local governments or seek property tax abatements for new data centers.

"Microsoft has just decided that it's paramount to prioritize transparency and engagement to build trust in communities," said Daniel Brown, a senior director on Microsoft's state government affairs team.

One day earlier, House Speaker Matt Huffman, a Lima Republican, said he plans to pass data center legislation before leaving for summer break later this month.

Huffman said lawmakers are considering a broad package that could address water and energy use, non-disclosure agreements, local land-use issues and state tax incentives.

"Come to the legislature with your plan,

or one of course will be imposed upon you," Huffman said.

Behind the hearing and the legislation is a growing backlash against Ohio's data center boom. Residents have packed public meetings, local governments have passed moratoriums, and a group is gathering signatures to amend the state constitution to block facilities that use more than 25 megawatts of power.

"We all acknowledge we need to do a better job of getting out there," said Liz Schwab, a market development and policy manager with Google Data Centers.

Microsoft's pledge set it apart from the other tech giants that testified Thursday before the legislature's joint data center committee.

SEE DATA CENTERS, A2

HOUSE BILL 6 SCANDAL

Ex-FirstEnergy executives face new charges in bribery case

The new indictment expands the scope of the case for allegedly bribing an Ohio regulator to secure favorable decisions and legislation.

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Prosecutors on Thursday brought new charges against two former FirstEnergy executives accused of carrying out one of the largest bribery scandals in Ohio history.

Former CEO Chuck Jones and ex-top lobbyist Michael Dowling remain accused in the case of bribing former state utility regulator Sam Randazzo with a \$4.3 million payment.

The new indictment, unsealed on Thursday in Summit County Common Pleas Court, expands the scope of the case to include accusations involving scandal-ridden House Bill 6.

It also comes two months after a jury deadlocked on charges against Jones and Dowling, one day before a hearing on defense arguments to toss out all or some of the original charges and three days before Ohio Attorney General Dave Yost's final day in office.

Yost said in a video statement that new charges and facts were added to the case after information surfaced in a civil lawsuit against FirstEnergy.

"The roots of this complex case haven't changed — FirstEnergy was hijacked by two scheming executives who sought to control the regulator that influenced the company's stock prices," Yost said. "I'm confident that Ohio's ratepayers will get justice when the facts are unearthed in the courtroom."

Dowling attorneys criticized the timing of the indictment and said it included accusations and charges that Summit County Common Pleas Judge Susan Baker Ross had ordered excluded from the trial.

Messages left with Jones' attorneys were not returned.

Initially, the attorney general's office focused its case on the payment to Randazzo that came shortly after a December 2018 meeting with incoming-Gov. Mike DeWine and Lt. Gov. Jon Husted, now a U.S. senator.

SEE HOUSE BILL 6 SCANDAL, A2



GUARDIANS Sweep incomplete

The Guardians had a chance Thursday to sweep the Yankees in New York for just the second time since 2009, but came up just short. **C1**

WAR IN THE MIDDLE EAST House OKs resolution

The House of Representatives passed a Resolution to block President Trump from ordering further strikes on Iran. **A6**

