

Ronayne’s 510 Employee Surge Added an Estimated \$42 Million to the County Budget & the Deficit

By James M. Trutko, Candidate for Cuyahoga County Council 1

Recently, Cleveland.com had a lengthy article asking whether employment growth in Cuyahoga County government under County Executive Ronayne was excessive. The article did a good job of providing the data and presenting Ronayne’s justifications for the growth, but the article didn’t “do the math” and address the financial consequences of the change. The overall cost is an important factor in evaluating the increase fairly.



The following analysis reorganizes the departments of county government into a functional breakdown to indicate the policy emphasis of the employment growth. The analysis assigns a general estimate of the payroll cost to the moves. The estimate could be improved by using specific payroll data by department, but this analysis demonstrates the need for a detailed review.

Cuyahoga County Government Employment Changes & Estimated Cost (2022-25)						
Department	2022	2025	2022/25 change	2022/25 %chg	Addl Cost @Base \$63,500	Addl Cost Incl Benefits @\$82,500
HHS Total	1,814	2,062	248	14%	\$ 15,748,000	\$ 20,460,000
Sheriff Total	1,077	1,167	90	8%	\$ 5,715,000	\$ 7,425,000
Courts, Prosecutor & Pub Defender	1,694	1,758	64	4%	\$ 4,064,000	\$ 5,280,000
Public Works Total	582	638	56	10%	\$ 3,556,000	\$ 4,620,000
County Exec Administration	221	259	38	17%	\$ 2,413,000	\$ 3,135,000
County Clerk, Law, Pub Safety, Med Exam	274	299	25	9%	\$ 1,587,500	\$ 2,062,500
Board of Elections	89	102	13	15%	\$ 825,500	\$ 1,072,500
County Fiscal Office	337	341	4	1%	\$ 254,000	\$ 330,000
Other Boards and Commissions	202	192	(10)	-5%	\$ (635,000)	\$ (825,000)
Board of Developmental Disabilities	570	552	(18)	-3%	\$ (1,143,000)	\$ (1,485,000)
Total	6,860	7,370	510	7%	\$ 32,385,000	\$ 42,075,000

Note: Median employee cost with and without benefits is based on Gemini & Grok AI estimates.

The conclusions are as follows:

- Cuyahoga County added 510 employees during the Ronayne administration from 2022 to 2025.
- Based on an average cost of \$63,500 per employee, the total cost of the additional employees was about \$32 million. With additional 30% in benefits, the total cost was about \$42 million.
- The most significant change was in HHS with 248 additional employees at a cost with benefits of \$20.4 million. Among other things, the employees helped to remedy a previously terrible performance by the department serving SNAP, TANF and Medicaid applicants.
- The sheriff’s department added 90 employees primarily to staff the jail at a cost of approximately \$7.4 million with benefits. (The article mentions that total staff is still 163 employees below the pre-Covid level in 2019.)
- Administrative functions mostly serving the county executive added the highest percentage (17%) of employees at a cost of \$3.1 million. The estimate is probably low.

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Ultimately, the test of whether hiring the additional employees was warranted should be measured by outcomes. Taxpayers deserve to know not only how much money is spent, but whether the employees actually improved economic development, public safety, services to the needy, and community well-being. Of course, the other question taxpayers need to know is why existing employees couldn't get the same result. Unfortunately, the Ronayne administration is unlikely to answer any of these questions.

Cuyahoga County Government Employment Changes & Estimated Cost (2022-25)						
Department	2022	2025	2022/25 change	2022/25 %chg	Addl Cost @Base \$63,500	Addl Cost Incl Benefits @\$82,500
County Executive	4	12	8	200%	\$ 508,000	\$ 660,000
County Council	22	21	(1)	-5%	\$ (63,500)	\$ (82,500)
County Executive - Communications	4	8	4	100%	\$ 254,000	\$ 330,000
County Executive - Regional Collaboration	2	3	1	50%	\$ 63,500	\$ 82,500
County Executive - Sustainability	3	5	2	67%	\$ 127,000	\$ 165,000
Development	26	17	(9)	-35%	\$ (571,500)	\$ (742,500)
Housing and Community Development	0	10	10	100%	\$ 635,000	\$ 825,000
Innovation and Performance	4	4	0	0%	\$ -	\$ -
Human Resources	54	66	12	22%	\$ 762,000	\$ 990,000
Information Technology	102	113	11	11%	\$ 698,500	\$ 907,500
County Exec Administration	221	259	38	17%	\$ 2,413,000	\$ 3,135,000
Fiscal Office	223	218	(5)	-2%	\$ (317,500)	\$ (412,500)
Fiscal Office - Real Estate Assessment	78	83	5	6%	\$ 317,500	\$ 412,500
Fiscal Office - Treasury	36	40	4	11%	\$ 254,000	\$ 330,000
County Fiscal Office	337	341	4	1%	\$ 254,000	\$ 330,000
HHS Administration	50	65	15	30%	\$ 952,500	\$ 1,237,500
HHS Children & Family Services	633	694	61	10%	\$ 3,873,500	\$ 5,032,500
HHS Cuyahoga Job & Family Services	700	865	165	24%	\$ 10,477,500	\$ 13,612,500
HHS Cuyahoga Support Enforcement Agency	252	239	(13)	-5%	\$ (825,500)	\$ (1,072,500)
HHS Family & Children First Council	7	10	3	43%	\$ 190,500	\$ 247,500
HHS Invest in Children	8	12	4	50%	\$ 254,000	\$ 330,000
HHS Office of Homeless Services	5	7	2	40%	\$ 127,000	\$ 165,000
HHS Office of Reentry	5	7	2	40%	\$ 127,000	\$ 165,000
HHS Senior & Adult Services	154	163	9	6%	\$ 571,500	\$ 742,500
HHS Total	1,814	2,062	248	14%	\$ 15,748,000	\$ 20,460,000
Clerk of Courts	79	87	8	10%	\$ 508,000	\$ 660,000
Law Department	20	21	1	5%	\$ 63,500	\$ 82,500
Public Safety & Justice Services	68	76	8	12%	\$ 508,000	\$ 660,000
Medical Examiner	107	115	8	8%	\$ 508,000	\$ 660,000
County Clerk, Law, Pub Safety, Med Exam	274	299	25	9%	\$ 1,587,500	\$ 2,062,500
Sheriff Total	1,077	1,167	90	8%	\$ 5,715,000	\$ 7,425,000
Public Works - County Airport	6	8	2	33%	\$ 127,000	\$ 165,000
Public Works - Dog Kennel	17	20	3	18%	\$ 190,500	\$ 247,500
Public Works - Facilities Management	322	337	15	5%	\$ 952,500	\$ 1,237,500
Public Works - Road and Bridge	106	133	27	26%	\$ 1,714,500	\$ 2,227,500
Public Works - Sanitary Engineer	131	140	9	7%	\$ 571,500	\$ 742,500
Public Works Total	582	638	56	10%	\$ 3,556,000	\$ 4,620,000
County Prosecutor	421	432	11	3%	\$ 698,500	\$ 907,500
Court of Common Pleas	486	484	(2)	0%	\$ (127,000)	\$ (165,000)
Domestic Relations Court	85	85	0	0%	\$ -	\$ -
Juvenile Court	475	525	50	11%	\$ 3,175,000	\$ 4,125,000
Probate Court	76	77	1	1%	\$ 63,500	\$ 82,500
Public Defender	151	155	4	3%	\$ 254,000	\$ 330,000
Courts, Prosecutor & Pub Defender	1,694	1,758	64	4%	\$ 4,064,000	\$ 5,280,000
Board of Elections	89	102	13	15%	\$ 825,500	\$ 1,072,500
Board of Developmental Disabilities	570	552	(18)	-3%	\$ (1,143,000)	\$ (1,485,000)
ADAMHS Board	53	46	(7)	-13%	\$ (444,500)	\$ (577,500)
Board of Revision	23	21	(2)	-9%	\$ (127,000)	\$ (165,000)
County Law Library Resource Board	3	3	0	0%	\$ -	\$ -
County Planning Commission	18	21	3	17%	\$ 190,500	\$ 247,500
Department of Internal Audit	6	6	0	0%	\$ -	\$ -
Inspector General	9	9	0	0%	\$ -	\$ -
Personnel Review Commission	21	21	0	0%	\$ -	\$ -
Soil & Water Conservation	15	17	2	13%	\$ 127,000	\$ 165,000
Soldiers' and Sailors' Monument	3	5	2	67%	\$ 127,000	\$ 165,000
Solid Waste Management District	7	7	0	0%	\$ -	\$ -
Veterans Service Commission	34	36	2	6%	\$ 127,000	\$ 165,000
Workforce Development	10	0	(10)	-100%	\$ (635,000)	\$ (825,000)
Other Boards and Commissions	202	192	(10)	-5%	\$ (635,000)	\$ (825,000)
Total	6,860	7,370	510	7%	\$ 32,385,000	\$ 42,075,000

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