


City Council Application

First Name	Addison
Last Name	Caruso
Phone Number	
Email Address	
Street Address	
Place of Employment	Fair Shake Environmental Legal Services
Position	Staff Attorney
Length of residence in Cleveland Heights	3 years
Are you a registered Cleveland Heights voter?	Yes
What do you think would be your role as a member of City Council? What are your priorities 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?	<p>As the legislative body of the City of Cleveland Heights, my role as a councilmember would be governing on behalf of residents of Cleveland Heights, making sure implemented policy has proper oversight, collaborating with the administration, fiscal responsibility, and long-term planning. I will strive to work collaboratively with fellow council members, city staff, and residents to help set policy direction, oversee its implementation, and ensure the responsible use of public resources.</p> <p>I have three priorities I would focus on as a member of our city council: (1) walkability, (2) sustainability and (3) housing.</p> <p>I reside near the Cedar Fairmount neighborhood in Cleveland Heights, and one of the drawing factors to the neighborhood is its walkability. All the amenities that one could need are located within walking distance from my residence. When my car broke down for a month, it was helpful</p>

having all the things one could need within a nearby walking distance. As a city councilmember, I would strive to have more areas similar to Cedar Fairmount within walking distance from residents, while preserving the important neighborhood characteristics of the city. This is through thoughtful zoning updates that balance neighborhood character, housing, with accessibility, while working with collaboratively residents. This also means making sure pedestrians feel safe walking or riding their bikes through the streets of Cleveland Heights. This is something I would like to encourage in Cleveland Heights through thoughtful zoning while making sure to protect the unique character of Cleveland Heights.

As an environmental attorney, sustainability is at the top of mind. As a renter, there are several...

... opportunities I see for improvement in the Cleveland Heights community regarding sustainability. For example, my apartment building does not recycle. I would want to implement policies that incentivize and encourage landlords to start recycling programs so that we can become a more sustainable and green community. With the recent cutbacks in solar panel funding, I see an opportunity for Cleveland Heights to become a leader in helping residents obtain solar panels and encourage other sustainability measures, like urban gardens and rainwater collections. This could also help tenants, such as myself, through programs implemented to work collaboratively with property owners to install solar panels on multi-home buildings. This would reduce energy costs for residents who are directly benefitting from solar panels on their roofs while lowering stress on the

grid.

My third priority would be housing. One thing that brought me to Cleveland Heights was the cost of living, in a safe and easy to navigate neighborhood. I envision more residents coming to Cleveland Heights, attracted by the same qualities that brought me to the city. I want our community to welcome all, but make sure existing residents are still able to remain and contribute to the city. By supporting housing development, whether it be affordable housing, market rate housing, senior housing, single family housing, it allows for all to remain in Cleveland Heights, while bringing in new residents who can contribute to our city and grow our tax base. Supporting both renters and homeowners is essential to our city's growth and success.

I commit to continuing to listen to and work with the community, recognizing that we are in this together....

... I seek to represent residents thoughtfully and will strive to work collaboratively with my fellow council members to ensure Cleveland Heights continues to thrive. I am excited to serve and learn from fellow council members, city staff, and residents.

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

I bring a combination of legal training, a passion for public interest and experience, and a familiarity with municipalities that would be of value while serving on council.

Professionally, I work regularly with individuals, community groups, nonprofits, and government officials across a while range of backgrounds as

a public interest environmental attorney. This work has required me to listen carefully to, sometimes, competing interests. I must then translate those concerns into legally and practicable outcomes. It has also given me a strong understanding of cities can use their authority, particularly in a home rule state like Ohio, to advance resident priorities through tools such as zoning, legislation, and policy oversight.

I also gained strong public facing and deliberative skills. During my 2022 campaign for State Representative, I spoke with residents who both agreed and disagreed with me at block club meetings, door-to-door conversations, phone calls, and public forums. That experience reinforced the importance of standing by core principles while always remaining open to learning from constituents and peers and adjusting one's perspective based on community input.

I am familiar with the structure and operation of city councils. I have attended Cleveland Heights City Council meetings and am familiar with the City's charter and ordinances. Previously, I attended city meetings in Oakwood, Ohio, observed City Commission meetings while interning with the City of Dayton, and attended Youngstown City Council meetings. While working at the Case Western Environmental Law Clinic, ...

...I assisted Youngstown City Council with drafting and passing a resolution and moratorium related to pyrolysis facilities. These experiences gave me firsthand exposure to legislative procedure, collaboration with staff, and the pace

and constraints of municipal government.

I would also bring several lived perspectives to city council. As a renter I understand issues that uniquely affect tenants in a city with a sizable rental population. Additionally, as a younger resident, I am positioned to engage with and communicate the concerns of younger Cleveland Heights residents, while respecting and learning from the experiences of longtime community members. As someone who did not grow up in Cleveland Heights, but chose to make it home, I also bring both an appreciation for what makes the city special and a fresh perspective informed by experiences in other communities.

Finally, I value empathy and inclusion in public service. Cleveland Heights is a diverse community, and effective leadership requires understanding how policies affect residents differently and ensure all voices are heard in local decision-making. I am committed to approaching council service with openness, respect, collegiality, and a focus on strengthening community connections.

I believe these skills, experiences, and perspectives would allow me to contribute meaningfully and collaboratively as a member of Cleveland Heights City Council.

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

My education, professional work, and lifelong civic engagement have collectively shaped the skills and perspectives I would bring to service on Cleveland Heights City Council.

I received a liberal arts education at Miami University, where I earned my bachelor's degree in political science and history. That foundation

gave me a broad understanding of government systems, policy development, and historical context. I further developed this understanding while earning my law degree at Duke University. At Duke, I studied government-related coursework, and interned at the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, gaining an insight into how public institutions and interact across different levels of government.

From a young age, I have also been actively involved in civic life. Beginning in sixth grade, I volunteered at Carillon Historical Park, in Dayton, Ohio. As a volunteer, I gave tours and communicated local history to diverse audiences. This experience helped me build confidence while public speaking and how to tailor information to different audiences. I later became involved in political organizing and public service, including internships with a national campaign's local office and campaigning for state representative. This strengthened my ability to engage with constituents, organize volunteers, and listen respectfully to differing viewpoints and work to build consensus.

Since moving to Cleveland Heights, I have also intentionally sought out opportunities to engage with the community by visiting numerous small businesses and join local groups. I chose Cleveland Heights because of its values, walkability, and...

... sense of community, and am committed to continuing to build my life here and remain actively engaged in the city.

My professional career has further developed these skills. As a legal aid attorney, I provided

pro bono legal assistance to tenants facing unjust evictions. At the Case Western Reserve University Environmental Law Clinic, I similarly provided pro bono legal assistance to communities across Northeast Ohio experiencing environmental harms, with a focus on environmental justice. In my current role at Fair Shake Environmental Legal Services, I provide sliding scale legal representation to individuals and communities across Ohio who otherwise lack access to counsel. Through my work at Fair Shake, I also advise communities on organizing and civic engagement through our free Community Democracy Program.

Across these experiences, I have developed skills in listening, problem-solving, collaboration, collegiality, leadership, and navigating complex systems. These qualities are directly applicable to effective service on City Council. I believe this combination of education, hands-on legal and non-legal work, and long-standing civic involvement has prepared me well to contribute thoughtfully and responsibly to the governance of Cleveland Heights.

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

I am currently involved in a wide range of professional, civic, and community-oriented activities, including:

- Co-Chair, Environmental Law Section, Cleveland Metropolitan Bar Association
- Mentor, Environmental Law Section, Ohio State Bar Association
- Member, Steering Committee, Our Cleveland Public Power (“OurCPP”), a regional resident group working collaboratively with Cleveland Public Power on responsiveness, reliability, and clean energy initiatives

- Chief Impact Officer, Global Shapers Cleveland, a local chapter of the World Economic forum – affiliated network of young leaders focused on community-based projects and civic engagement
- Member, Sustainability Committee, Jewish Federation of Cleveland
- Member, Community Relations Committee, Jewish Federation of Cleveland

I am also a regular mentor to law students, particularly at Case Western Reserve University Law School and Cleveland State Law School, participating in their career development programming focused on public interest and public service careers.

Through these roles, I have worked collaboratively with professionals, community members, and emerging leaders on initiatives related to environmental sustainability, civic participation, and community engagement.

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? Please note, having a full time job will not disqualify any applicant, and Council works hard to accommodate all members schedules when scheduling meetings.

I do not have responsibilities that would prevent me from participating in regular City Council or Council meetings. While my primary working hours are Monday through Friday, 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., I am able to adjust my schedule accordingly to attend meetings, committee work, and related obligations, including those that are held during evenings or outside standard business hours.

Please upload your CV or Resume (5 MB Limit)

[Addison_Caruso_CH_City_Council_Resume.pdf \(123 KB\)](#)

Do you agree to electronically sign this form?

Yes

Signature

Addison Caruso

EDUCATION

Duke University School of Law, Durham, NC

Juris Doctorate

Honors: Duke Environmental Law & Policy Forum, *Managing Editor*; Duke Law Mock Trial

Summer Internships: U.S. District Court, S.D. Ohio; Taft, Stettinius & Hollister, LLP (Dayton, OH)

Activities: Duke Environmental Law Society, *Member & Pro Bono Volunteer*

Duke University Mock Trial, *Undergraduate Coach*

Jewish Legal Students Association, *Vice President of Events and Communication*

1L Orientation Fellow

Miami University, Oxford, OH

Bachelor of Arts in Political Science and History, *magna cum laude*

Honors: Phi Beta Kappa; Howard White Award (for excellence in scholarship and leadership)
18 of the Last 9 Award (annual award to 18 distinguished alumni of the last 9 years)

Internships: City of Dayton Mayor's Office; Democratic National Committee

Activities: Miami University Student Court, *Associate Justice*

Hillel: Association of Jewish Students, *Social Action Vice President*

Miami Apiculture Society (Beekeeping Club), *Member*

EXPERIENCE

Fair Shake Environmental Legal Services, Cleveland, OH

Staff Attorney, May 2024 – present

Representing nonprofits and low-income individuals in environmental lawsuits across the State of Ohio. Filed a lawsuit on behalf of residents that led to Ohio EPA having to reissue a permit. Litigated before the 10th District Court on zoning that set positive precedent for agritourism operators in Ohio. Leading community education workshops and free brief legal advice clinics on topics such as data centers, zoning, and public commenting on agency actions.

Case Western Reserve University School of Law, Kramer Environmental Law Clinic, Cleveland, OH

Inaugural Postdoctoral Fellow, March 2023 – May 2024

Led analysis on various environmental and energy justice issues in Northeast Ohio, such as moratorium research resulting in Youngstown City Council passing a one-year moratorium on pyrolysis plants. Prepared and hosted a free brief legal advice clinic in East Palestine, Ohio in response to the train derailment. Wrote and filed a brief challenging Ohio H.B. 507, permitting fracking in state parks. Planned and taught environmental law classes.

Advocates for Basic Legal Equality, Dayton, OH

Staff Attorney, December 2021 – February 2023

Counseled and represented in court low-income clients in eviction proceedings. Negotiated settlements with landlords. Wrote and filed answers and successful injunctive motions on behalf of clients, such as one that restored a client's utility service. Researched and advocated for systemic change to the housing system in various municipalities by planning and hosting panels on housing rights and creating infographics for the public.

Ohio Environmental Council, Columbus, OH

Post-Graduate Bridge to Practice Fellow, September 2021 – December 2021

Researched potential 5th Amendment challenges to Ohio S.B. 52 that permitted individual counties to ban large scale wind and solar development. Drafted a memorandum on administrative deference standards. Attended and documented numerous state committee hearings on redistricting of state and congressional district lines.

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Water Enforcement Division, Washington, D.C.

3L Spring Semester Extern/Law Clerk, January 2021 – April 2021

Recommended enforcement actions through consent decrees through researching industrial pretreatment violators and the Safe Drinking Water Act. Participated in transition planning from previous administration.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION AND CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

Civic Engagement: Democratic candidate for Ohio Statehouse Representative in 2022 in House District 36. Member of Voter Outreach Committee of Cleveland Heights Democrats. Co-chair of Cleveland Metropolitan Bar Association's Environmental Law Section. Member of Our Cleveland Public Power ("OurCPP") Coalition Steering Committee. Chief Impact Officer of Global Shapers Cleveland Chapter. Member of Jewish Federation of Cleveland's Community Relations Committee and Sustainability Committee.

Hobbies: Reading, hiking, dungeons and dragons, Caves games, playing with my three cats.