Connally believes that the sheriff should serve for a fixed term of two, four, or six years and, like the county's internal auditor, be removed only by council for cause. And Brady said the concept has merit.

By JAMES W. WADE III
Staff Reporter

With the recent resignation of Cuyahoga County Sheriff Bob Reid, a conflict of ideology about the powers of the Cuyahoga County Executive between current executive Ed FitzGerald and Cuyahoga County Council president C. Ellen Connally.

Recently, some of Cuyahoga County Council members were sworn in for their second term and, again, they elected C. Ellen Connally as the president. The Cuyahoga County Council is an 11-member body elected by residents of each council district. The Council makes policy decisions for the effective functioning of county government and is a link between government agencies and citizens.

It has legislative and taxing authority for the county and is a co-equal branch of the county government with the executive branch. This form of government for Cuyahoga County was established in January 2011, replacing the three-member Board of County Commissioners, when the charter form of government adopted by voters went into effect.

There are four Blacks on the council: Yvonne Conwell, Julian Rogers, Pernell Jones Jr., and C. Ellen Connally. Connall has spoken out about FitzGerald's request for the resignation of Cuyahoga County Sheriff Bob Reid.

Connally and other council members question whether the county executive should have the power to fire the county's top cop. Connally has asked the county's charter review commission to review the issue this year, when the panel reviews the county's governing document for the first time since its adoption by voters in 2009.

"Theoretically, the way it is now, under this charter, the executive could not like an investigation conducted by the sheriff and fire him," Connally said. "It's just the concept that you have checks and balances. When you have a law enforcement position, that person should not be answerable for a matter of time."

Cuyahoga is the only county in Ohio to appoint rather than elect its sheriff and the charter gives that appointment power to the county executive. On Jan. 3, FitzGerald asked for and received Reid's resignation.

Connally and Council Vice President Dan Brady said, last week, that their questions are not in reaction to Reid's removal but rather a long-time concern with the charter. While the charter gives council the right to confirm executive appointments, members don't get a say when the executive fires someone.

Connally also has issues with the legality of an executive being able to make interim appointments, a move that at least temporarily bypasses the council's confirmation powers.

"When an interim treasurer signs a check, is that valid?" she asked. "Could someone come up

and say, 'that's not right,' and challenge that?"

Connally believes that the sheriff should serve for a fixed term of two, four, or six years and, like the county's internal auditor, be removed only by council for cause. And Brady said the concept has merit.

"If he wants to fire the sheriff, there should be confirmation on the part of council," former Reid said. "I believe there needs to be some protections in the system, and that's a good one."