



Cleveland Athletic Club faces financial crisis

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By [Karl Turner, The Plain Dealer](#)

The Cleveland Athletic Club will struggle to reach its 100th anniversary next year.

Officials from the club, which is an institution on Euclid Avenue, estimate that it will run out of money next month. Board members discussed the financial crisis and its \$750,000 debt Monday at the annual membership meeting.

The Board recommended the club file for bankruptcy within two weeks.

"We have debts that are due, some are past due," said Michael Snelling, the club's former president. "We're looking at different options right now. Chapter 11 bankruptcy is one of those options, and Chapter 7 is an option as well."

The club has provided athletic, business and social facilities for Cleveland since 1908. Its feats include selling \$3 million in Liberty Bonds during World War I to support the Allies, providing scholarships to high school graduates, and having one of its athletic directors serve as the coach for three U.S. boxing teams at the Olympics.

In 1922, Olympic swimmer Johnny Weissmuller, who later played Tarzan, set a world record for the 150-yard backstroke in the club's pool. Cuyahoga County Commissioner Peter Lawson Jones and former Cleveland Browns Lou "The Toe" Groza and Hanford Dixon have also been club members.

"The club has been an important part of Cleveland history," said member Klarc Snowden. "If it were allowed to just go away, I think that would speak very poorly for the city."

The club has 544 members down from 750 in January. The drop in membership has worsened the club's financial straits but is not the primary cause.

Most of the club's debts were obtained prior to Nov. 1, 2006, while the club was under different management. The club's finances have also been hurt by a decline in revenue from its once-profitable catering business. Construction from the Euclid Corridor Transportation Project -- a complete reconstruction of Euclid Avenue for a new transportation system -- has forced road closures and turned off some of the club's catering customers.

"We've been hurt by the Euclid Corridor construction project," Snelling said. "What bride would like to walk through all the dust and construction to get to our club for their wedding reception?"

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