



pork (pôrk, pōrk) *n.* – 1. The flesh of a pig or hog used as food. 2. Government funds, appointments, or benefits dispensed or legislated by politicians to gain favor with their constituents.

pork barrel (pôrk bār'əl) *n.* – 1. A barrel in which pork is kept. 2. Government projects or appropriations yielding rich patronage benefits; a metaphor meaning a supply of money that is provided to various supplicants who ask for it. The same practice is often called patronage and describes government spending that is intended to benefit constituents of a politician in return for their political support, either in the form of campaign contributions or votes.

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(Cleveland) – The more closely we look at the plan to knock down the Ameritrust Tower and build a new County Administration Building, the more pork we find.

The timeline: Back in 2001, Cuyahoga County paid **\$250,000** for a study to decide if a “new” County Administration Building was needed. The study pegged the size of the proposed project at **600,000 square feet**; and, though the results of the study were mixed, the decision was made to proceed.

In May 2004, six proposals were received from prominent developers interested in handling the project. According to media reports at the time, the County’s preferred method of financing the building was to have a developer build new or convert existing space, which the developer would then own, and which the **County would lease** long-term with an option to buy. (*Plain Dealer*, May 3, 2004). At that time, Jimmy Dimora said cost would be “the most important factor.” That “cost” was estimated at the time at **\$100 Million**.

Then in 2005, the County changed course and decided to **purchase** the Ameritrust complex and pay for the development with public funds. (*Crain’s* September 1, 2005). The costs were already rising by that point, though the Commissioners said “the cost will not add to the county budget.” But, why were costs rising? Perhaps because now the County would be in charge of the project – **and all the contracts that go with it...**

The following year Jimmy Dimora, up for reelection at the time, played coy about project costs and the decision of whether or not the Breuer Tower would be knocked down to make way for the project. However, it has since come to light that the Commissioners, in evaluating the three finalists for the architectural work, instructed the firms to **only submit proposals involving the destruction of the tower**.

Only after the County had purchased the building did they get a taste of the project’s actual cost, now estimated to be **\$196 Million**, involving at least \$20 Million in unnecessary cost by tearing down the tower. Commissioner Peter Lawson Jones, at a [Meet the Bloggers](#) forum just this week, placed the dollar amount of this wasteful destruction at \$35 Million – How does he get from \$20 to \$35 Million?: \$15 Million in historic preservation tax credits only available if **a private developer owns the project**, rehabs the tower, and leases the complex long-term to the County.

The fate of not only the project, but of literally millions of taxpayer dollars, could be decided at the **June 1st Cleveland Planning Commission meeting**. If the Planning Commission refuses to grant a demolition permit, Jimmy Dimora has stated that he may put the building up for sale. Hey Jimmy, that’s not a bad idea! Whose idea was it to buy the thing in the first place?

– Oh and by the way, the size of the project is now targeted at 390,000 square feet. How is it that we’re getting **two-thirds** of a building for **twice** the cost? Sounds like Jimmy Dimora is firing up the grill and using the taxpayers’ hard earned dollars this Memorial Day to cook a heaping helping of pork!