



City of Ashtabula

Ashtabula City Council Public Hearing
Monday, December 9, 2024 at 6:00 PM
Council Chambers
4230 Lake Avenue

Minutes

Opening of Public Hearing

Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 6 p.m. by Council President Roskovics.

Roll Call

Members Present: President John Roskovics, Vice President Russell Simeone, Ward 1 Councilor Kym Foglio, Ward 2 Councilor Terence Guerriero, Ward 3 Councilor RoLesia Holman, Ward 4 Councilor Jodi Mills, Ward 5 Councilor Jane DiGiacomo

Absent: None.

Officers Present: City Manager James Timonere, City Solicitor Cecilia Cooper, Clerk of Council Ashley Bell

Sunshine Law Certification

A quorum was established as defined by the Ashtabula City Council Rules of Order. The meeting met the requirements of the Ohio Sunshine Laws Open Meetings Act.

Purpose of Public Hearing

Finance Director Augustin provided the purpose. The City of Ashtabula's budget is crafted with the intention of ensuring that our operational costs are effectively managed. By utilizing historical data, assessing the reasonableness of anticipated expenses, and focusing on achieving essential projects and desired outcomes, we demonstrate our commitment to serving the community. This budget not only details our past expenditures and revenues but also provides an estimate for the fiscal year ending 2024, along with anticipated revenues and proposed appropriations for fiscal year 2025. The Fund Summary, found on the first page of the estimated budget, reveals a projected deficit of **\$335,936.36** in the general fund for 2025. **This deficit will be covered by carryover funds, but it highlights a critical challenge we face:** the operating costs associated with the Municipal Court are set to almost triple their expected revenues. To address this substantial increase in expenses, it is imperative that the Court actively seeks new revenue streams. By doing so, we can ensure the City's financial sustainability while protecting our reserves for unforeseen expenses in the future.

The 2025 Budget includes

- A 2.5% wage increase for employees, as negotiated with the three city unions. Non-union employees will also receive a 2.5% wage increase.
- Various hourly rate increases for the court and probation employees
- A 2% increase in medical insurance for the second half of 2025.
- **Increase in account 101.117.5320** - The projected cost for professional services at the solicitor's office will rise to cover half of the expense of a full-time victim advocate. This cost

will be shared between the City of Ashtabula and Ashtabula County. The victim advocate will be located at the solicitor's office for half of the week.

- **Increase in account 101.124.5101** - The fire department's projected salary for 2025 is expected to increase compared to 2023-2024 due to a change in scale, as some employees will be moving to higher tiers.
- **Decrease in account 101.140.5817** - According to the City Manager, the City's claims settlement account is expected to decrease, as shown in the 2025 budget.
- **Fund 205** - The salary for the Public Works Department has increased due to the addition of a new position, as well as upgrades to existing salaries.
- **Fund 208** - The health department salary portion fluctuates between 2023 and 2025. This variation is due to the COVID factor up to 2023, while in 2024, the funds were drawn out, and salary expenses began to reflect figures prior to 2020. The projected increase in 2025 is attributed to the hiring of the Health Commissioner in Training (HCIT), a position that will be fully funded through a WF23 grant. The health department plans to fill this position from October 2025 to December 2025.
- **Fund 216.214** - The court accounts for a decrease in the salary budget line because the court charged salaries to the general fund more heavily than in previous years.
- **Fund 225** - In Sanitation, Landfill costs are continuing to rise. According to the manager's office, there may be a rate increase to address the ongoing demand on this budget line. Additionally, there is an increase in the projected salary expenses due to the addition of a new laborer to the team.
- **Fund 261** - Local Fiscal Recovery Fund: All capital outlay will be fully obligated and liquidated at FYE 2024.
- **Fund 290** - The remaining \$460,000 from the CDBG Capital Improvement Funds is expected to be spent in 2025.
- **Fund 412** - The Permanent Improvement Fund projects a significant decrease in spending on lands and buildings, while police equipment is expected to see an increase in 2025.
- **Fund 504** - The increase in the WPC Capital Fund is due to outfall replacement costs for vehicles, equipment, and improvements. Additionally, under the sewer system improvement line, we have carried over the remaining budget from last year.
- Payment of 50% of the total amount owed to our confirmed retirees, with the remaining balance scheduled for payment in the next budget year.
- The General Fund will cover the deficits in the following areas:
 1. Police Levy
 2. Street Lighting
 3. Food Service
 4. Public Works
 5. Public Health Nursing
 6. Parking Deck Fund
 7. Police & Fire Pension
 8. Housing Code Enforcement
- The city has also included provisions for interest payments on a new Vehicle and Equipment loan obtained in 2023 from Andover Bank, amounting to \$860,000. This loan will partially finance the purchase of a fire ladder truck, which costs \$1,860,000. The remaining \$1,000,000 is provided by a grant from the Department of Homeland Security (FEMA). The loan is structured for ten years, with interest payable only in the first year, allowing us to manage other debts effectively. The City will take delivery of the new ladder truck in 2026.
- If we successfully receive all estimated revenues and maintain current expenditure levels (**though the expenses are likely to increase due to recent weather conditions**), we anticipate significant carryover balances into 2025 from the end of 2024.

In summary, this budget is based on a thorough analysis, considering:

- One-time revenue and expenses factored into projections for FYE 2024 and are excluded from the 2025 revenue/expenditure projections.
- Actual financial data as of November 20, 2024, along with the projected amount needed through the fiscal year-end.
- Requests from department heads are vetted and approved by the City Manager.
- Historical data from the past three years.
- Final revenues and expenses for specific line items as of November 20, 2024

While we are optimistic about our financial outlook for 2025, it's important to note that this budget does not factor in potential inflation resulting from changing economic conditions. We remain committed to transparent, responsible financial planning to ensure a thriving future for our City.

The City Manager added there are a lot of expenses from last week's snow storm that will need to be paid out of this year's budget. Reimbursement is not expected until 2025. The City is projecting an increase in healthcare and will see numerous retirements in 2025, which will also impact the budget. Overtime costs could be affected if several vacancies in the Police Department are not filled. Various contract negotiations will take place next year as well.

Council is requesting to see the Municipal Court's spending history for the past four years. Council also noted an inconsistency in pay increases for court employees.

There will be a Special Meeting on December 19, 2024 at 6 p.m. to approve the budget.

Public Hearing Notice

**ORDINANCE NO. 2024 - _____
AN ORDINANCE TO PROVIDE FOR APPROPRIATIONS FOR THE CURRENT EXPENSES AND
OTHER EXPENDITURES OF THE CITY OF ASHTABULA, OHIO FROM JANUARY 1, 2025
THROUGH DECEMBER 31, 2025**

Welcome and Acknowledgement of Visitors

Discussion

Questions/Comments

Closing Remarks

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 6:40 p.m. by Council President Roskovics.

DATE APPROVED: December 16, 2024
ATTESTED BY: John S. Roskovics
John S. Roskovics, President of Council
ATTESTED BY: Stacy L. Milberg
Stacy L. Milberg, Clerk of Council