



City of Ashtabula

Ashtabula City Council Work Session Agenda
Tuesday, January 21, 2025 at 5:30 PM
4230 Lake Avenue, Ashtabula, OH 44004

Minutes

Opening of Work Session

Call to Order

The Work Session of the Ashtabula City Council was called to order at 5:30 p.m. by Council President John 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
Absent: Ward 5 Councilor Jane DiGiacomo
Officers Present: City Manager James Timonere, City Solicitor Cecilia Cooper, Finance Director Marie Yvrose Augustin, Clerk of Council Stacy Millberg

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.

Welcome and Acknowledgement of Visitors

Panel Discussion

Ad Hoc Committee - Racism as a Public Health Crisis recommendations

Ward 3 Councilor RoLesia Holman provided an overview of the work the committee has been focusing on. The committee hosted a program titled "In Sickness and in Wealth" at Kent State University Ashtabula Campus that was well attended by the community. There are a lot of social determinants in place that the committee can have an influence on that can improve the health of Ashtabula residents.

Committee member Louis Murphy provided census tract data that broke down various disparities from street to street. A number of different variables are tied together such as the areas that have the lowest household income also have the lowest graduation rates and highest rate of chronic illnesses. All of these different variables have a big impact on different parts of the City. They are all directly connected and have a large impact on persons of color.

Committee member Jessica Leveto discussed social determinants of health and the areas of the City that are being impacted. Twenty six percent of City residents live below the poverty line, but it is not distributed equally throughout the City. The areas that are concentrated with poverty and the lowest median household income also have the largest population of people of color.

Council President John Roskovics stated he recently read that Ashtabula is one of six cities in Ohio that has a median household income of less than \$40,000.

Committee member Louis Murphy stated that Ashtabula County, Erie County and a county in New York of which he could not remember the name, were recently identified as having the lowest life expectancies in the Great Lakes area. A large factor in alleviating some of the disparities are policies passed at the county level. An example would be passing a tax on cigarettes. By increasing the price of cigarettes, less people smoked and therefore, alleviated other issues.

Ward 1 Councilor Kym Foglio asked if the committee has spoken with Judge Albert Campese and worked with him in regards to Ashtabula County Juvenile Court. Ward 3 Councilor RoLesia Holman stated the committee worked with former Juvenile Court Administrator Andrew Misiak before he left. Juvenile Court has also requested data from the Ashtabula Police Department so it can be analyzed. City Manager James Timonere asked if anyone has requested the data and what data are they asking for. Ward 3 Councilor RoLesia Holman stated the next step is to get clarity on what specific data is being requested.

Ward 4 Councilor Jodi Mills asked for clarification on the audit the committee is recommending. Committee member Jessica Leveto stated the first thing needed would be a resolution stating that all departments will participate in an equity audit to ensure resources are being distributed fairly.

Terrence Strawder, of Ashtabula, suggested hiring someone from outside the area to conduct the audit to eliminate any potential bias. City Solicitor Cecelia Cooper agreed from a legal stand-point and suggested hiring an outside agency, firm or individual so the City is protected legally.

Ward 3 Councilor RoLesia Holman state the equity audit will help determine how the City can provide better services to the residents. Committee member Jessica Leveto state the equity audit will show where there are inequities in the services the City is providing. Council President John Roskovics stated the audit will provide insight to where there are disparities in the City and allow officials to eliminate certain things that were presumed to be a problem but are not.

Ward 2 Councilor Terence Guerriero asked if there is specific data City officials should begin collecting prior to an audit. Committee member Jessica Leveto stated the audit is not intended to point out what the City is doing wrong. It is meant to determine the current state of the City and how it can be improved.

Committee member Jessica Leveto suggested shifting the ad hoc committee to a task force so it will be sustainable and become a permanent part of City Council.

Ward 1 Councilor Kym Foglio asked about the cost of the audit. There are a number of City departments that need employees and other things the City needs that City officials have not been able to take care of because of the budget.

Ward 3 Councilor RoLesia Holman stated a council member that was absent wanted to ask how meaningful conversations about race can be encouraged in schools and in the community.

Ward 3 Councilor RoLesia Holman asked what City Council is proposing so the committee can continue working. Council President John Roskovics stated nothing can be determined in a work session but his understanding is that City Council members and administrators are on board with finding a firm to conduct an equity audit.

The committee's presentation is available to view at https://www.canva.com/design/DAGSj-L4oAU/rfwgNRd8d0CruNjCCjwoJg/view?utm_content=DAGSj-L4oAU&utm_campaign=designshare&utm_medium=link&utm_source=viewer.

Questions/Comments

Discussion

Public Comment (at Council's discretion)

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 6:34 p.m. by Council President Roskovics.

DATE APPROVED:

February 3, 2025

ATTESTED BY:

John S. Roskovics
John S. Roskovics, President of Council

ATTESTED BY:

Stacy L. Millberg
Stacy L. Millberg, Clerk of Council