



City of Ashtabula

Ashtabula City Council

Public Works / Public Utilities / Cable / Schools Committee Meeting

Tuesday, February 25, 2025 at 8:30 AM

Council Chambers

4230 Lake Avenue, Ashtabula, OH 44004

Minutes

Opening of Committee Meeting

Call to Order

The meeting of the Ashtabula City Council Public Works/ Public Utilities/ Cable/ Schools Committee was called to order at 8:40 a.m. by Committee Chair Jodi Mills.

Roll Call

Members Present: **Chair:** Ward 4 Councilor Jodi Mills, Vice Chair: Ward 2 Councilor Terence Guerriero, Member: Council President John Roskovics

Absent: None

Officers Present: City Manager James Timonere, Clerk of Council Stacy Millberg

Ashtabula Department Heads Present: Water Pollution Control Superintendent Mark Verzella

Visitors: Assistant Solicitor Catherine Colgan

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

Guest Presentation

Mrs. Lisa Newsome, Ashtabula Area City School Superintendent

Mrs. Lisa Newsome provided an update on the Lakeside High School roof collapse. Mrs. Newsome recently traveled to Columbus to request a waiver for the three days the district had to shut down, during the snowstorm in December, so it would not negatively impact the district. The Ohio House Education Committee unanimously voted to waive the three days the school district was requesting. The request will have to go through the proper channels before a final decision will be made, but Mrs. Newsome is optimistic the bill will be passed.

The significant amount of snow the area received caused the roof of the high school to collapse, resulting in the school being closed. School administrators developed a relocation plan in three days to avoid remote learning. Grades 10 through 12 are housed in the Huron Primary building. The preschool was moved to the Ontario building. Erie Intermediate students do not report until 9:15, so band, art, orchestra and choir are housed there for the first three hours of the day with 120 students. Ninth grade students are housed in the former Mother of Sorrows school building on W. 6th Street, which the district purchased. The Central Office moved to the transportation building and several other administrative offices are housed in the Junior High building.

In the days following the storm, students were learning remotely for seven days and then began their Christmas break three days early so administrators could prepare for the relocation and ensure students could return to in-person learning in January. The district hired a moving company to move everything into five buildings in three days. The Huron building was painted to look like the high school to make the transition easier for students. The weight room was relocated to the YMCA and discount memberships were purchased for students. Area high schools offered their gymnasiums, so Lakeside has a place to play home games.

The roof is being completely removed from the building and then the walls will be assessed to determine if there is any structural damage. The first floor has also sustained water damage. The district has a projected re-opening date of August 2026.

Mrs. Newsome stated that educationally, the students and staff have adjusted very well. The district is operating as normal. Discipline has gone down.

Dr. John Patterson - Fair School Funding Plan discussion

Dr. John Patterson provided an update on the Fair School Funding Plan. Dr. Patterson worked with State Representative Bob Cupp to design the funding plan along with several other legislators. Under the current funding plan, 4/5 of the districts were either on the cap or the guarantee. The cap implies districts are not receiving their fair share of funding from the state. The guarantee means the districts will get the same funding from the state. Districts do not want to be on the guarantee. They want more of a cushion.

The Fair School Funding Plan defines what it will cost to educate every child and operate a district; ensures all students can achieve their greatest potential, regardless of their economic circumstances or their school district's property wealth; provides a fair and stable funding formula that does not favor one district over another; and, funds directly where students are educated. The FSFP is made up of three essential steps: base cost, state and local share, and categorical aid.

The base cost determines adequacy. The FSFP approach is centered on the student. The base cost breakdown is 60 percent direct classroom instruction, 20 percent building leadership and operations, 15 percent instructional and student support and 5 percent district leadership and accountability. Every component of educating a typical student in a typical town is in the base cost.

The previous funding formula was based on property values. If a district is wealthy, it gets less state funding, but Dr. Patterson stated that property values don't always give you a full representation of what a district's true wealth is. The FSFP uses both property values and resident income to identify each community's capacity to pay their fair share. A district's state and local share will be determined by its capacity to generate local funding.

The FSFP also factors in categorical aid such as preschool, special education, English Language Learners (ELL), and transportation, among others. These costs are in addition to the base cost. The plan also includes several guarantees, including a transportation guarantee.

The FSFP has led to significant funding increases. There has been an approximate \$1.5 billion increase in state funding since FY 2022 and a 12.1% increase to traditional PK-12 school funding in the latest budget. The FSFP raised the base cost from \$6,020 per student to \$8,240 per student. Dr. Patterson stated the FSFP is being phased in over six years. The plan is currently in its fourth year. Years five and six are currently under consideration. Dr. Patterson stated Governor DeWine has indicated his support for the phase-in of years five and six, but the inputs need to be updated as well. The base cost is being determined by numbers from 2022. If the state does not increase the inputs, school districts will still have to pay the remainder of what is not covered by state funding.

Committee Chair Jodi Mills asked about the Truth in Guaranteed Tax Rate Act being introduced. The act would ensure levies are counted towards the minimum guaranteed tax rate that public schools receive. Dr. Patterson stated if legislators are going to look at recalculating the 20-mill floor, and fairly fund schools, as well as other entities such as parks and fire departments, a constitutional amendment will be necessary as well.

Dr. Patterson stated public education affords students the opportunity to dabble in courses and experiences they may never be able to do again.

Committee Chair Jodi Mills asked that the committee vote to have a resolution drafted in support of the FSFP, to be presented for Council's consideration at the March 3, 2025 meeting. Dr. Patterson stated three important elements should be included in the resolution. It should state that Council supports fully funding the FSFP, including the phase-in and the updates to the inputs, and it embraces the studies that are about to come.

Motion: Committee Chair Jodi Mills moved for a resolution in support of the Fair School Funding Plan; Council President John Roskovics seconded.

Discussion: None.

ROLL CALL VOTE

Yeas: Committee Chair Jodi Mills, Committee Vice Chair Terence Guerriero, Council President John Roskovics

Nays: None

Motion passed.

City Manager's Report

City Manager James Timonere stated officials have been watching the snow and ice situation and doing pothole patching during the nicer days. The City has gone through its 125% allotment of salt. There is still salt on hand and officials are working with different vendors to get more.

Committee Chair Jodi Mills informed City Manager James Timonere of potholes at Morton Drive and W. 9th Street and at State Road and E. 42nd Street.

Water Pollution Control Report

WPC Report

Water Pollution Control Superintendent Mark Verzella provided the report. Mr. Verzella stated he would like to request a four-way stop at the end of the driveway of the WPC facility at Woodland Avenue and E. 5th Street. A WPC employee was involved in an accident last week and there is a lot of traffic in and out of the facility. City Manager James Timonere stated he would ask the Police Department to look at it.

The overhead door was delivered and will be installed soon. Officials received approval from the Army Corps of Engineers for the outfall relocation efforts. Mr. Verzella stated the permit is 62 pages. Officials reviewed it and are asking for clarification on some things as there were contradictions in the report.

WPC staff completed confined space training on February 5. Training is done semi-annually and covers accessing manholes, structures and pump stations.

Maintenance Mechanic Matthew Copeland passed his Class II Wastewater Treatment Exam on February 12. There are only 753 people in the state with this level of certification.

Chaltron Company will be working to install atmospheric monitoring for the Digester Building to check for LEL and methane and to make sure there is sufficient oxygen in the building in case of a leak.

The lab scale and thermometer calibrations are scheduled for March 19th. Lateral repair projects are currently on hold due to the weather and the Ohio Avenue Extension sewer project is ongoing.

Committee Chair Jodi Mills stated she and Clerk of Council Stacy Millberg toured the facility on February 21 with LEADERship Ashtabula County. The tour was very informative.

Public Works Report

New Business

Next Meeting

March 25, 2025

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 9:57 a.m. by Committee Chair Jodi Mills.