



City of Ashtabula
Ashtabula City Council
Safety Forces Committee
Thursday, September 11, 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 Safety Forces Committee was called to order at 8:30 a.m. by Committee Chair Terence Guerriero.

Roll Call

Members Present: Chair: Ward 2 Councilor Terence Guerriero, Vice Chair: Ward 1 Councilor Kym Foglio, Member: Council President John Roskovics

Absent: none

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

Ashtabula Department Heads Present: Police Chief Robert Stell, Fire Chief Shawn Gruber, Lt. Geoff Cannon

Visitors:

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

Special Guest Presentation

Police Department – Chief’s Report

Chief Rob Stell provided the report. Calls for service were higher than usual in August, though nothing unusual stood out. Staffing is down one officer after an officer left for a school resource officer position. Additional retirements are expected next year. An entrance exam is planned for late fall. Committee Chair Terence Guerriero asked if the recent hires have been doing well. Chief Rob Stell stated that all the new hires are doing extremely well. President John Roskovics asked if the police department was involved in the recent pursuit with the Ashtabula County Sheriff’s Office. Chief Rob Stell stated that the department was contacted for mutual aid but only assisted with evidence collection and traffic control, not direct engagement. President John Roskovics asked if there have been requests for golf cart licenses. Chief Rob Stell stated that the police department has not issued any licenses to date. He suggested possibly scheduling a registration day in the spring at a central location where residents can bring their golf carts to be registered.

APD August 2025 Stats

Fire Department – Chief’s Report

Chief Shawn Gruber provided the report. The stats are right in line with previous years. Fire losses are slightly down, while overall activity is about average. Mutual aid calls are up, especially to Ashtabula Township, but the amount of mutual aid given and received is balanced. Chief Shawn Gruber stated that he has been working closely with Lt. Geoff Cannon, who will take over as Chief when he retires in March, and expects the transition to be smooth. Additional staff was hired to cover overtime and upcoming retirements. Four people are expected to retire next year, including the chief. Promotional and entrance tests are scheduled for early next year. A new certified investigator, who had been shadowing Capt. Steve Chase, has transitioned into that position. He is already experienced, including working with the state fire marshal. Chief Shawn Gruber stated that with the current staff, the fire department should be set for the next 15 years. He has also been working with Lt. Geoff Cannon to update procedures.

City Manager's Report

City Manager James Timonere provided the report. The City is testing a roving speed limit sign borrowed from OHP and considering purchasing a pole-mounted version that would connect to existing speed limit signs. The cost is estimated to be between \$4,000 to \$5,000. The traffic light at West Avenue, Carpenter Road, and Lake Avenue has issues possibly tied to the recent accident at Perry Automotive. The pedestrian head was replaced; however, there may be some faulty wiring underground sending a signal to the pedestrian head, as if someone is pressing the button, and causing the "no right turn" arrow to light up. The City is looking to make upgrades at the intersection, possibly to a radar-based system. The estimated cost for the upgrades could be anywhere from \$12,000 to \$30,000. The radar-based system will be more reliable and eliminate ground loops. City Manager James Timonere stated that the first corrections officer for the jail has been hired, with more hires expected soon.

City Solicitor's Report

Unfinished Business

President John Roskovics asked Chief Rob Stell how often the police department deals with homeless people. Chief Rob Stell stated that the police deal with homeless individuals daily, usually for low-level nuisance issues rather than serious crimes. Ward 1 Councilor Kym Foglio asked if the homeless population is more or less prevalent than in previous years. Chief Rob Stell stated that the homeless population has declined over the past couple of years. City Manager James Timonere stated that the City has formed its own committee within the police department that has actively been going down to the Gulf and talking to people and helping them develop a plan. He stated that the City staff is actively working to keep people in their homes and to help those who are homeless, but it takes time. The lack of affordable, permanent housing remains a major challenge. The City has also intervened in unsafe housing situations, sometimes vacating properties due to poor conditions. He stated that local shelters are full with families, not just individuals.

Ward 1 Councilor Kym Foglio stated she was pleased with the improvements at South Park.

New Business

Committee Chair Terence Guerriero asked about security and police presence for organized events in the City, in light of the recent shootings around the country. City Manager James Timonere stated that unless it is a City-sponsored event, the entity hosting the event is responsible for paying for security. He stated that when a group applies for a permit, he will discuss the event with the police chief and decide if the event requires security.

Committee Chair Terence Guerriero stated speeding remains an issue on Bridge Street. City Manager James Timonere stated that the roving speed sign is currently placed on Bridge Street and the police patrol the area as time allows. He stated that City officials are having discussions with the Ohio Department of Transportation (ODOT) to determine whether the semi-truck traffic can be re-routed.

Next Meeting

October 9, 2025

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 8:59 a.m. by Committee Chair Terence Guerriero.