



City of Ashtabula

Ashtabula City Council

Community Development/Economic Development/Parks & Recreation Committee Meeting

Wednesday, October 1, 2025 at 5:30 PM

Council Chambers

4230 Lake Avenue, Ashtabula, OH 44004

Minutes

Opening of Committee Meeting

Call to Order

The meeting of the Ashtabula City Council Community Development / Economic Development / Parks & Recreation Committee was called to order at 5:30 p.m. by Committee Chair Jane DiGiacomo.

Roll Call

Members Present: Chair: Ward 5 Councilor Jane DiGiacomo, Vice Chair: Ward 4 Councilor Jodi Mills, Member: Ward 3 Councilor RoLesia Holman

Absent: None

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

Parks and Recreation Board Members Present: Ken Vanyo, Tim Dibble, Blake Hinkle

Visitors: Julie Wayman of My Neighborhood Collaborative, Ryan Lencil

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

Chelsea Romanowski - Buckeye Pace

Chelsea Romanowski, of Buckeye PACE, provided an overview of the services offered through the organization. PACE, or Program for All Inclusive Care for the Elderly, provides all-inclusive care for individuals over the age of 55 so that they may remain safe, healthy, and independent in their homes for as long as possible. Some of the services offered through Buckeye PACE include transportation to and from medical appointments; activities at the day center; physical and occupational therapy; a full-functioning clinic with an on-call nurse that is available 24-hours a day; wound care; medications, including both over-the-counter and prescription; and, eyeglasses, hearing aids and dental care. The organization also staffs its own dietitian to provide in-home meals, supplements and any type of adaptive equipment, if needed. The staff physical and occupational therapists provide in-home services as well as at the day center. Durable medical equipment such as wheelchairs, walkers and canes are provided. Buckeye PACE also has social workers on staff to help individuals connect with services in the community. The Buckeye PACE clinic and facility is in-network with all local hospitals. The organization also works with local primary care physicians to help individuals get to their appointments, get their medications, and implement care plans. Buckeye PACE also provides home

care to assist individuals with things like light housekeeping and meal preparation. Mrs. Romanowski stated that if individuals qualify for Medicare or Medicaid, there is no out-of-pocket cost for any of Buckeye PACE's services. To be eligible for Buckeye PACE, individuals must be 55 years or older, nursing home facility eligible, safe in their home or can be safe in their home with Buckeye PACE's services, and they must live within the service area. Mrs. Romanowski explained the nursing home level of care as having two deficiencies in activities of daily living. For example, difficulty managing medication or getting to medical appointments. An enrollment specialist will visit individuals in their home to determine eligibility.

Ward 3 Councilor RoLesia Holman asked about the in-home services available through Buckeye PACE. Mrs. Romanowski stated that all the services offered at the day center are available to individuals in their homes.

Ward 4 Councilor Jodi Mills clarified that the Buckeye PACE day center is entirely different from the Ashtabula Senior Center. Buckeye PACE offers medical services while the Senior Center offers more social activities for seniors.

Individuals interested in getting more information about Buckeye PACE can call 1-800-469-0785. The day center, located at 2148 Lake Avenue in the former Rite Aid building, is open Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.

City Manager's Report

City Manager James Timonere provided the report. Next year at the beginning of the year, Opportunity Zone 2.0 will be released in Ohio. This is where companies are incentivized to locate within certain census tracts that meet eligibility requirements. The last Opportunity Zone that came out did not benefit the City due to the location of the census tract. City officials advocated, at the time, to have additional census tracts put in; however, they did not meet the eligibility requirements. City Manager James Timonere stated that this next round lessens the so-called strings that were on the first one. The City is working with Growth Partnership and the Lake to River economic development group to try to get more of the City's census tracts added, including Main Avenue. If a company invests money within an Opportunity Zone, it is eligible for income tax credits through the state.

Ward 3 Councilor RoLesia Holman asked what types of opportunities would exist. City Manager James Timonere stated, as an example, if a company remodeled a building within an Opportunity Zone, it would be eligible for income tax credits down the road that would offset its construction costs. Any kind of investment within an Opportunity Zone would be eligible for income tax credits through the state.

Ward 3 Councilor RoLesia Holman asked if the moratoriums would impact businesses wanting to invest in an Opportunity Zone. City Manager James Timonere stated he does not believe the moratoriums would be an issue. With the length of the program, the master plan and zoning should be complete by that time.

City Manager James Timonere stated that officials were notified by the state and Eastgate that there have been some changes to the Appalachian Community Grant program. The biggest change is that the individual business owners cannot hold the contracts with the entities that will be doing the work on the buildings. Those contracts must be held by the City or another government entity, such as Eastgate. This means the City would have to hold contracts for 24 businesses and manage all the projects. He stated that there is no admin money with this grant, so it would be extra work that City staff would be taking on. City Manager James Timonere stated that officials are still working through all the details and hope to have it resolved within the next month.

The first meeting of the Master Plan Steering Committee was a success. Officials are working on setting dates for future meetings as well as those involving the public. Community surveys will also be sent out in the future.

City Manager James Timonere stated he met with the Ohio Environmental Protection Agency and the Ashtabula County Solid Waste District to discuss ways to expand the City's recycling program to include the rest of the City. Applications for grant funding will open up this month for next year's funding. The application review will take place in November and the final application will be due in December. The maximum amount the City can apply for is \$200,000. There is also a 20 percent match. City Manager James Timonere stated that the cost of the trash and recycling totes will exceed \$200,000.

Ward 3 RoLesia Holman asked if obtaining grant funding is the only way the program will move forward. City Manager James Timonere confirmed that the City does not have the money in the budget to fund the project if it does not receive the grant funding. The City will be looking at raising sewer and trash rates regardless.

Ward 3 Councilor RoLesia Holman asked if, in the wards that recycling is offered, residents could purchase a second recycling bin. City Manager James Timonere stated that residents are only able to purchase a second trash bin if they continuously exceed the amount of trash allowable each week; however, there is a rate increase. Ward 3 Councilor RoLesia Holman asked if trash bins were provided for residents that have recycling. City Manager James Timonere stated that the trash bins were provided as part of the initial recycling program and will be provided to residents with the expansion of the program.

Ward 5 Councilor Jane DiGiacomo asked the City Manager to explain the three charter amendment issues that will be on the November ballot. City Manager James Timonere stated that currently the City is not permitted to expend anything over \$10,000 without Council approval. The majority of the ordinances presented to Council are between \$10,000 and \$50,000. The charter change would increase that spending limit to \$50,000 so many of the day-to-day projects can be completed without having to wait for Council's approval. The second charter amendment would allow the City Manager to enter into change orders without Council's approval as long as it doesn't exceed \$50,000. The third charter amendment would allow for a 10 percent variance on contracts if they come in slightly higher than the engineer's estimate.

Parks & Recreation Committee Report

Blake Hinkle, of the Parks & Recreation Board, discussed a proposed ordinance that would provide uniformity for tree replacement in City parks when they are cut down. He stated that the hope is that any time a tree is removed, that two would be planted in its place. The Parks Board also presented a Master Action Plan for City parks that outlines future goals and projects for each of the City's 13 parks.

Ward 4 Councilor Jodi Mills thanked the Parks Board for their work. She recommended working with a professional to determine the types of trees that are best suited for the City. City Manager James Timonere stated the goal would be to find trees that are native to the area. He wanted to clarify that there is no harvesting plan in place to take down trees. The four trees that were removed that prompted this proposed legislation were diseased and needed to be removed. He asked that any legislation be placed within the codified ordinances so it can be easily located.

City Manager James Timonere suggested reaching out to the Ohio State University Extension Office, the Nature Conservancy, and the Western Reserve Land Conservancy for assistance.

Ward 3 RoLesia Holman thanked the Parks Board and INEOS for the upgrades recently made at West 38th Street Park. She also asked if overpopulation was a concern, especially since the proposed legislation asks for two trees for every one that is removed. Mr. Hinkle clarified that the two trees do not necessarily have to be planted in the same place as the one removed. One could be planted in a different park.

City Manager James Timonere also acknowledged the work completed by the Parks Board and INEOS at West 38th Street Park. There is still additional work to be completed, including new playground equipment. He asked Council to present a resolution to INEOS when the project is completed.

City Manager James Timonere also discussed the invasive spotted lantern fly and reminded residents to report any sightings.

Julie Wayman, of My Neighborhood Collaborative, updated the committee on the organization and the community garden at Clifford Kaden Presidential Park. She stated that membership and volunteers of the organization had declined, and the group could no longer maintain the garden in the park. Members have been discussing various options, including reducing the size and using it as a teaching garden or removing the garden completely. Committee Chair Jane DiGiacomo suggested she attend the next Parks & Recreation meeting on October 27 to discuss it further.

Ryan Lencl, of Main Avenue, asked if residents that live outside the wards with recycling have the option to drop off recycling at the transfer station or other locations. City Manager James Timonere stated that City residents can drop recycling off at the transfer station or at the recycling drop-off at the Saybrook Township Offices on Route 45. Mr. Lencl asked if recycling outposts could be created in each ward if the grant funding for the recycling program falls through. City Manager James Timonere stated that those sites are operated and funded by the Ashtabula County Solid Waste District. He stated that similar sites have been shut down in other municipalities due to abuse. He stated it is something the City could look into. Mr. Lencl asked about the City's mechanism for removing graffiti from public areas in the City. City Manager James Timonere stated City staff tries to get graffiti removed as quickly as it can. It is not something the staff is out looking for. As it is reported, staff takes care of removing it. He stated residents can report graffiti to the City Manager's Office. Mr. Lencl asked why the parking deck on Main Avenue is not secured to keep individuals from sleeping in there or vandalizing it. City Manager James Timonere stated that financially, it is not feasible. The police department patrols it regularly. City Manager James Timonere stated that given the future plans for the downtown area and the condition of the garage, he believes the City would be better off razing it and replacing it with a parking lot with landscaping.

Julie Wayman stated that the Ohio State University Extension Office will host a Sustainability Summit at Kent State University - Ashtabula Campus on October 24 from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Parks Board September Meeting Minutes

Unfinished Business

New Business

Next Meeting

November 5, 2025

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 6:51 p.m. by Committee Chair Jane DiGiacomo.