



City of Ashtabula

Ashtabula City Council Work Session Agenda
Monday, September 15, 2025 at 5:30 PM
4230 Lake Avenue, Ashtabula, OH 44004

Minutes

Opening of Work Session

Call to Order

The work session was called to order at 5:30 p.m. by 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, Ward 5 Councilor Jane DiGiacomo

Absent: None

Officers Present: City Manager James Timonere, City Solicitor Cecilia Cooper, 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

Discussion: Moving Beyond Racism as a Public Health Crisis declarations

Ward 3 Councilor RoLesia Holman titled the work session "Strengthening Ashtabula Through Evidence-Based Governance and Positive Organizational Impact."

She stated that after the George Floyd murder, a number of municipalities circulated a declaration claiming that racism is a public health crisis. At least 18 municipalities in the state of Ohio also signed those same declarations. She stated that the Ad Hoc Committee: Exploring Racism as a Public Health Crisis went a little further and explored health disparities around Ashtabula and collected data. She stated that the data would help City officials to be proactive in protecting the health and wellbeing of City residents.

Committee Member Louis Murphy provided data regarding specific health inequities around each ward. Using a public database, he was able to separate the City into "block groups" and break the information down into a smaller data set rather than one large city. Data collected include life expectancy; highest poverty rates within the area; highest rates of childhood poverty; highest rates of chronic illnesses like cancer, heart disease, asthma, and obesity; highest rates of people with one or more disabilities; highest rates of students in an individualized education program; highest rate of business addresses vacant in the third quarter; highest rates of 16 to 19-year-olds not enrolled in school or unemployed; highest rates of depression; and, the highest rates of sleeping less than seven hours. Mr. Murphy also provided data pertaining to the highest rates of opioid claims for Medicare; highest incarceration rates; highest population density within various sectors; lowest high school graduation rates; lowest life expectancy of birth; lowest rates of access to the internet; and,

the lowest rates of self-rated health. Mr. Murphy stated that alleviating a few of the various metrics can cause other ones to benefit from that.

City Manager James Timonere asked for clarification on how the data was being compared. Mr. Murphy stated the data reflected was compared within Ashtabula County.

Mr. Murphy stated that some of the data may not seem like they are directly related or have a correlation or a cause and effect; however, many of the metrics have significant impacts on one another. He stated that if one or two of them are alleviated, it can consequently alleviate three or four others.

Ward 2 Councilor Terence Guerriero stated that the data indicates a low life expectancy for people living in his ward. He asked Mr. Murphy if environmental factors such as chemicals being released from the manufacturing facilities in the area or coal dust from the docks could play a role in why the life expectancy in Ward 2 is low. Mr. Murphy explained that there are different environmental variables that are factored into certain metrics. For example, things such as asthma rates and cancer rates could be higher for those that live in industrial zones, which could result in a lower life expectancy.

Ward 4 Councilor Jodi Mills discussed free cancer screening being offered by the Ashtabula Regional Medical Center through the Cleveland Clinic. She suggested collaborating with ARMC to provide these screenings to individuals that may not have access to them due to cost barriers.

Committee member Jessica Leveto, discussed social determinants of health, or the nonmedical factors that influence health outcomes. She stated that housing and food security, education access and quality, economic stability, healthcare access and quality, and neighborhood and built environment all impact how long people live and how healthy of a life they live. There are fundamental causes, such as poverty, racism and structural factors, that all impact how long people live. She recommends conducting a study to find data that shows the good work the City is doing and how people are coming in contact with the services the City provides. She stated that previous data presented showed disparities in various communities that are in line with the data presented today. She stated that not taking action leaves the City at risk, which could result in costly legal fees. The study would focus on four key areas: service delivery and community outcomes, personnel practices and organizational health, resource allocation and financial stewardship, and community engagement and public trust. Dr. Leveto stated that the study would also look at appreciative inquiry, which is what the City is doing well and how it can improve. She suggested starting with a pilot study by beginning with one City department to test methodology and demonstrate value by looking at service delivery, personnel practices, resource allocation and community engagement. Dr. Leveto recommends doing the study in phases. The first phase would be the pilot study, the second phase would include data collection, the third phase is stakeholder engagement and the final phase is analysis and reporting. The pilot study would be a 20 to 26 week process, from planning through final presentation and action planning.

Ward 1 Councilor Kym Foglio raised concerns about who would conduct the audit, where the results would be reported and what they would be used for.

Ward 2 Councilor Terence Guerriero also raised concerns about conducting a study on City employees as the data would not be a fair representation of the City as a whole. He stated that the City offers health insurance for all of its employees and feels City employees are taken care of. City Manager James Timonere clarified that the study the committee is speaking of would determine if the City is doing what it needs to do for its residents to prevent inequities and help bring the health

data up or down depending on what data is being studied. Dr. Leveto stated the study will help determine what services are not reaching certain areas of the City. It will ensure City residents are receiving the services they are paying for.

Dr. Leveto discussed various funding sources for the study, including The Auditor of State, federal grants, local partnerships, Kent State University Collaboration, healthcare systems, and private sector sponsors. She recommends transitioning the ad hoc committee to a standing entity such as an advisory committee.

A draft ordinance to establish "The Ashtabula City Thriving Communities Commission" was presented.

Ward 3 Councilor RoLesia Holman stated that the ad hoc committee members are looking for a platform to continue the work of the committee. Ward 1 Councilor Kym Foglio asked why the ad hoc committee could not continue as it has been. Dr. Leveto stated that creating a more permanent entity would ensure continuity.

Ward 1 Councilor Kym Foglio expressed her concerns about the financial implications that could result from creating the advisory board. Dr. Leveto stated that the data collected by the ad hoc committee that has been presented reflect inequities throughout the City. By doing nothing, the City will be at risk of a lawsuit.

Ward 3 Councilor RoLesia Holman stated that Ashtabula Regional Medical Center has expressed interest in partnering with the committee to continue the work. In October, the committee will conduct a Racial Wealth Gap Simulation with ARMC employees.

Joleen Sundquist, chief clinical officer at Community Counseling Center, spoke via video about the importance of the Racial Wealth Gap Simulation. She stated that it is a valuable resource for the community. The simulation is not about placing blame or creating further silos within the community, it is about creating a shared understanding of how disparities happen between races and how systemically it continues to be an ongoing factor in society. She stated that the simulation provides an opportunity for discussion and further awareness and understanding. It gives data to recognize that disparity does exist and is systemic. She stated that having that knowledge provides an opportunity to identify ways to reduce that impact and promote further decision-making, both locally and within the greater community. She encouraged everyone to participate in the simulation.

President John Roskovics stated that Council will review the proposed ordinance and discuss it at a future meeting.

The Strengthening Ashtabula Through Evidence-Based Governance for Positive Organizational Impact presentation can be viewed at <http://bit.ly/4nxpfb8>.

Revisiting previous recommendations

A Framework for an Equity Study

Ward Data

Answers to Questions / Q&A

Next Steps

Public Comment (at Council's discretion)

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 6:33 p.m. by Council President Roskovics.
Ashtabula City Council will meet again on Monday, October 6, 2025 in Council Chambers. The Pre-Council meeting will begin at 6:30 p.m. followed by the Regular Council Meeting at 7:00 p.m.

DATE APPROVED:

October 6, 2025

ATTESTED BY:

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

ATTESTED BY:

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