



City of Ashtabula
Ashtabula City Council
Safety Forces Committee
Thursday, November 13, 2025 at 8:30 AM
Council Chambers
4230 Lake Avenue, Ashtabula, OH 44004

Minutes

Opening of Committee Meeting

Call to Order

The Ashtabula City Council Safety Forces Committee meeting was called to order at 8:30 a.m. by Committee Chair 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, City Solicitor Cecilia Cooper, Clerk of Council Stacy Millberg

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

Visitors: None

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

Police Department – Chief’s Report

October 2025 Stats

Chief Rob Stell reported that calls for service were higher than usual for the month of October, with approximately 1500 calls compared to the normal range of 1200 to 1300 calls. City Solicitor Cecilia Cooper attributed this increase to the warmer weather, noting that when temperatures are higher, people tend to stay outside longer, leading to more incidents including fights and disturbances.

Committee Chair Terence Guerriero asked about the department's winter preparedness, specifically regarding the patrol vehicle fleet. Chief Rob Stell explained that not all vehicles are four-wheel drive, as the department currently has a mix of SUVs and Dodge Chargers, which are rear-wheel drive. The department has been gradually replacing the sedan fleet with SUVs during recent purchasing cycles. Chief Rob Stell clarified that while V6 Dodge Chargers can be ordered with all-wheel drive, the department's current models are not equipped with this feature.

President John Roskovics expressed concerns about citizen complaints regarding speeding through the City, including Bridge Street, West 58th Street and West Avenue. Chief Rob Stell explained that manpower limitations make it difficult to dedicate officers solely to traffic enforcement. He noted that officers do write tickets when time permits, but calls for service take priority.

Fire Department – Chief’s Report

October 2025 Stats

Chief Shawn Gruber reported that call volume for the year was in line with previous years. He noted that fire loss for the year was down compared to previous years. Chief Shawn Gruber also mentioned that EMS billing revenue had already exceeded the expected amount for the year with two months remaining.

Committee Chair Terence Guerriero asked about the possibility of Community Care Ambulance relocating, which had been previously discussed. City Manager James Timonere stated that the building that they were originally looking at is no longer in play, so they are staying at their current location for the time being.

President John Roskovics asked about nursing homes' impact on EMS services, noting frequent ambulance visits to facilities. Chief Shawn Gruber confirmed that nursing facilities consume a lot of EMS services. He stated that calls can range from genuine emergencies to situations like abnormal lab results from the previous day suddenly being treated as emergencies requiring hospital transport.

Chief Shawn Gruber reported they were proactively working with Country Club Retirement Center to categorize non-emergency transports differently to ensure ambulances remain available for true emergencies. He stated it is an expensive way to handle patient care and confirmed they are actively working to address the situation.

City Manager's Report

City Manager James Timonere reported that a civil service test for entry-level police officers was scheduled for the weekend in Council Chambers, with only three applicants signed up. He explained that the test was cost-neutral to the City, as each applicant pays a \$25 fee that covers the cost of the test and grading. City Manager James Timonere also stated that promotional and entrance exams for the fire department were planned for next year.

City Manager James Timonere also noted that the Washington Avenue study for a "No Parking" sign between Bunker Hill and W. 58th Street (on the same side as the fire hydrant) was underway, with results expected to be presented by the next meeting.

City Solicitor's Report

City Solicitor Cecilia Cooper followed up on the speeding enforcement discussion, asking Chief Rob Stell if all patrol cars were equipped with radar guns. Chief Rob Stell confirmed they were not, with only two or three radar units available per shift.

City Solicitor Cecilia Cooper commended Captain Dennis Page of the Fire Department for his excellent testimony as an expert witness at a preliminary hearing, noting his impressive performance despite not being formally qualified as an expert.

City Solicitor Cecilia Cooper raised a concern regarding building vacation procedures. She explained that when the City determines a building is uninhabitable, a vacate notice is posted giving occupants 24 to 48 hours to leave before the structure is boarded up. She noted that the City housing inspector will not board up buildings until they are confirmed empty for safety reasons, but when he recently requested police assistance with a building evacuation, law enforcement declined to assist. City Solicitor Cecilia Cooper emphasized the need to clarify protocols, as building inspectors should not be sent into potentially dangerous situations without proper support. She requested a separate meeting with the Police Chief, the City Manager, and Fire Chief to address the issue.

Fire Chief Shawn Gruber raised concerns about homeless encampments, particularly in the gulf and park areas, noting ongoing challenges with enforcement. He stated that the fire inspector has been documenting the encampments but needs assistance with enforcement. City Solicitor Cecilia Cooper acknowledged they had previously used fire code violations as a method to address these situations but agreed a more comprehensive approach is needed. She indicated the Assistant City Solicitor and the fire inspector had recently discussed the issue and committed to setting up a meeting to develop a solution before winter.

Unfinished Business

New Business

Next Meeting

December 11, 2025

Adjournment

The was adjourned at 8:46 a.m. by Committee Chair Terence Guerriero.

