



City of Ashtabula
Ashtabula City Council
Safety Forces Committee
Thursday, December 11, 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 Roskovic

Absent: None

Officers Present: City Manager James Timonere, Clerk of Council Stacy Millberg, Ward 4 Councilor Jodi Mills

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

Visitors: Ashtabula County Commissioner Casey Kozlowski

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

Casey Kozlowski, Ashtabula County Commissioner - County Jail Project

Ashtabula County Commissioner Casey Kozlowski provided an update on the County Jail project. He provided extensive background on why the county needed this new facility, stating that the current facility was built in the 1970s, and the county, at that time, never actually completed building the facility. As a result, the current jail does not have the maximum number of beds that it should. He explained that pre-COVID in 2019 and early 2020, the county housed over 170 inmates in the current facility. Since then, the state has gradually reduced the capacity, and currently the facility is limited to just 98 inmates. Committee Chair Terence Guerriero asked if the reduction was due to lack of space or state restrictions. Commissioner Casey Kozlowski clarified it was due to COVID restrictions and also DRC requirements. He stated that the state actually sets how many inmates can be housed in the facility. He further noted that due to these limitations, the county has been forced to contract with Geauga County to house 20 inmates at a rate of \$75 per day per inmate plus transportation and food costs.

Commissioner Casey Kozlowski outlined the plans for the new facility. The facility will be built as an addition, just north of the current sheriff's office. The new facility will be 55,000 square feet and house 219 individuals in a one-and-a-half-story mezzanine-style design. He emphasized the importance of the single-story design, explaining that it is much more efficient to be as close to a one-story facility as possible. A multi-story facility would require having staff at every level, and it becomes much more costly. He also detailed the parking challenges the project would create. The construction will eliminate approximately 81 parking spots currently used by the sheriff's office and employees. Additionally, parking spaces in the general parking area will be eliminated as well. Several buildings

will also be demolished, including the old professional building, owned by Chris Altier, and the Environmental Services building, which will be relocated within Jefferson Village.

Commissioner Casey Kozlowski discussed the project timeline, stating that the design phase would take approximately six months, with construction documents expected by summer 2026. Bidding and procurement would occur in June or July 2026, with groundbreaking in the fall 2026. The project is expected to take two to three years to complete. The cost of the project has increased significantly over the project's decade-long development. Initially, a 296-bed facility on green space was estimated at around \$30 million. The current 219-bed facility will cost close to \$40 million, approximately \$650 per square foot for the 55,000-square-foot building, totaling \$36 million plus ancillary costs including property acquisition and demolition.

Commissioner Casey Kozlowski stated that the county has saved \$15 million in their capital fund, secured a \$15 million grant from the Department of Rehabilitation and Corrections, and recently obtained an additional \$250,000 through capital appropriations. This totals \$30.25 million in grants and cash on hand. He mentioned they would be applying for federal funding early next year and would finance any remaining costs through bonds.

Commissioner Casey Kozlowski provided some solutions to the parking situation, involving multiple locations. The county has obtained property behind Chicago Title and the Community Credit Union, where they hope to create 110 parking spots. The county also owns the old Key Bank building, housing the Public Defender's Office, which could provide 50 spots. Negotiations are underway with Huntington Bank to lease potentially 30 to 50 additional spots. He acknowledged this would require a mindset change because people would now have to walk from offsite parking, noting that other courthouse facilities in large downtown areas have similar parking situations.

Commissioner Casey Kozlowski stated that during construction, the county would use the fairgrounds, Bissell's, and a landbank parcel off of Walnut Street for equipment and supplies staging. He emphasized that parking would be lost immediately when construction begins next year.

Committee Chair Terence Guerriero asked about the existing jail's future. Commissioner Casey Kozlowski stated the building will be addressed during phase two, explaining that the goal is to potentially lease beds to house federal inmates after the new facility is opened. The revenue could help offset expenses. He stated that the county previously leased beds for federal inmates before COVID, but had not done so recently due to county needs taking priority.

Committee Chair Terence Guerriero asked if the new jail would improve access for Ashtabula City. City Manager James Timonere confirmed that the city jail, at times, holds inmates longer than appropriate, sometimes because the county jail is full, and other times because the sheriff does not want the inmate because they are a problem. Commissioner Casey Kozlowski acknowledged that this had been an ongoing issue for decades, as the county has been behind the eight-ball as it relates to meeting the county's incarceration needs.

Commissioner Casey Kozlowski stated that the new facility would include programming space for GED classes, drug rehabilitation, mental health services, and other programs that couldn't currently be offered due to space constraints. The county intends to partner with local providers rather than delivering these services directly. Adequate medical facilities would also be included, addressing current deficiencies in meeting inmates' medical needs. He also mentioned that the facility would feature a pod design which would allow one staff member to oversee multiple dorms, and would include a perimeter chase on the outside for accessing mechanical entering the correction space. He stated that addressing maintenance issues in the current facility is a challenge as inmates must be moved for repairs to be made.

Ward 4 Councilor Jodi Mills asked if the county had considered building a parking deck. Commissioner Casey Kozlowski stated that the county had looked into various alternatives, but they were all too costly. A parking deck would cost \$25,000 per parking spot. He stated they looked at constructing a vertical jail on stilts to allow for ground-level parking; however, that would have been an additional \$10 million.

Commissioner Casey Kozlowski stated that the county is working with DLZ Architects and would be issuing a Request for Proposals (RFP) in January for a construction manager. He stated there are approximately 15 jail projects underway statewide.

Commissioner Casey Kozlowski stated that while specific numbers are not available, he anticipates significant economic benefits from the project. He stated that contractors will be encouraged to work with local subcontractors

as much as possible within state law limitations. The facility will require four to seven additional corrections officers, though the efficient design would minimize staffing needs compared to a multi-story facility. He stated that the current jail's operating budget is approximately \$4 million annually, which is part of the sheriff's overall \$11 million budget. Commissioner Casey Kozlowski stated the sheriff receives the largest portion of the county's roughly \$33 million budget.

Commissioner Casey Kozlowski stated that the county has set up a Web page with information on the project. Anyone seeking information can visit www.ashtabulacounty.us/publicsafetycenter. He stated that renderings would be posted on the site when they are finalized.

Police Department – Chief's Report

Chief Rob Stell reported that calls for service were slightly higher than usual. He attributed this partly to having new police officers whose self-generated activity was included in the call numbers. He also noted that short staffing may have contributed to the elevated numbers. Chief Rob Stell anticipates the numbers will decrease over the next few months. He stated that all newly hired officers have completed their training and were assigned to platoons. The process had taken about six to eight months to recover from losing many officers at once.

Committee Chair Terence Guerriero asked about an email regarding a resident on E. 15th Street complaining about issues with dogs urinating in her yard. City Manager James Timonere stated that he would get updates from housing and the police department. Committee Chair Terence Guerriero stated that the resident stated that she has called numerous times, but has not provided who she has been calling.

Chief Rob Stell announced that the department had received two checks, from the MFG Foundation and the Robert Morrison Foundation, totaling \$40,000 toward the purchase of new MDTs (mobile data terminals/in-car laptop computers). The total project cost would be approximately \$67,000 to replace all units. He explained that the MDTs are not regular laptops, but specialized equipment designed to withstand more wear and tear.

President John Roskovics asked if the DORA had caused any significant issues this summer. Chief Rob Stell confirmed that there had been no significant increase in problems or activity.

APD November 2025 Stats

Fire Department – Chief's Report

Lt. Geoff Cannon reported that calls were about the same as this time in previous years, except a slight increase in EMS calls. Total incidents were down when the report was prepared, but they had received 15 calls two days prior to the meeting, so the numbers were about even. He stated that the ladder truck was back in service, and repair costs came in slightly under the expected cost. The department has promotional tests scheduled for January.

Committee Chair Terence Guerriero asked when Lt. Geoff Cannon would officially take over as chief. Lt. Geoff Cannon confirmed he would take over in March after Chief Shawn Gruber retires. President John Roskovics asked if someone had taken over for Capt. Steve Chase. Lt. Geoff Cannon confirmed that someone had taken over as fire inspector. He stated that Harbor Ridge was keeping him busy. City Manager James Timonere stated that the fire department is at the facility almost every day. He explained that the property is owned by a New York company with MMS as the management company.

AFD November 2025 Stats

City Manager's Report

City Manager James Timonere reported that a Civil Service meeting was scheduled for next week to certify the entrance exam list. Three people had taken the test and all passed. He announced that the three Durangos, purchased for the police department approximately six months ago, were finally in service. The delay was due to waiting for equipment, primarily K-9 cages, as they had designated these three vehicles as K-9 units. The City planned to budget for three more vehicles in the current year. City Manager James Timonere expressed his long-standing goal to get on a cycle of purchasing three cars every year.

City Manager James Timonere stated that a previous request to move no-parking restrictions on Washington Avenue from one side to the other was underway. The police chief had completed the notification process with no responses from resident on that stretch. The recommendation would be to move the no-parking to the opposite side of the street, which will likely be presented to Council in January. The change was necessary because when Aqua Ohio installed new water lines, they placed fire hydrants on the opposite side from the current no-parking

zones. He stated that having no parking on the same side as hydrants would improve fire department access and provide more parking since people cannot park in front of hydrants anyway.

City Solicitor's Report

Unfinished Business

Committee Chair Terence Guerriero raised concerns about ongoing issues at a boarding house on W. 10th Street. Lt. Geoff Cannon confirmed that the fire inspector had served a notice of violation the previous week with compliance required by Wednesday (December 17), after which it would go to the Solicitor's Office. He stated that the violations were mostly building code and fire code issues. He stated he did not anticipate the owners would comply. Committee Chair Terence Guerriero commented on complaints of wild nighttime activity. Lt. Geoff Cannon confirmed the facility had a minimum of seven to eight rooms, though they had not inspected the basement yet. He stated that on a recent EMS call, they found 10 different rooms padlocked from the outside, creating a risk of people being locked inside. Those locks had been removed, and the next step was pursuing the certificate of occupancy to enforce the fire code. When the owner had applied for that, they learned a sprinkler system was required for that many rooms.

Discussion turned to another property on W. 41st Street involving Ricky Turner. This was identified as a warming center with an injunction hearing scheduled for the following week. The owner plans to go before the Planning Commission to change zoning from multifamily to allow the use, but the City has a moratorium on boarding houses. The owner is claiming it is not a boarding house because he is not charging residents. The same certificate of occupancy issues apply to this property.

New Business

E-bikes riding on wrong side of road

Committee Chair Terence Guerriero stated that the issue of e-bikes riding on the wrong side of the road had come up at a recent Council meeting. Committee members acknowledged the problem extended to regular bicycles as well. Committee Chair Terence Guerriero compared the e-bikes to motorcycles in terms of speed. It was also noted that the challenge was catching them riding on the wrong side of the road. There was a brief discussion about whether the City had any e-bike legislation, which it does not; however, City Manager James Timonere stated there are rules in the Ohio Revised Code pertaining to e-bikes. He stated that when the police see violations happening, they will be addressed.

Next Meeting

January 8, 2026

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 9:15 a.m. by Committee Chair Terence Guerriero.