City of Ashtabula

Ashtabula City Council Public Hearing
Monday, December 1, 2025 at 5:30 PM
Council Chambers
4230 Lake Avenue, Ashtabula, OH 44004

Minutes

Opening of Public Hearing

Call to Order

The Public Hearing of the Ashtabula City Council 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, Finance Director Vladimir Kan, 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.

Purpose of Public Hearing

Public Hearing Notice

Welcome and Acknowledgement of Visitors

Presentation

2026 "Tentative Appropriation" Budget

Finance Director Vladimir Kan presented the City of Ashtabula 2026 budget. He stated that the budget was crafted to ensure efficient management of operational costs by utilizing historical data, assessing anticipated expenses, and focusing on essential projects and desired outcomes. He stated that the budget not only details the City's 2026 expenditures and revenues, but also provides an estimate for the fund balance at the end of 2026. Finance Director Vladimir Kan stated that the Fund Summary reveals a projected deficit of more than $825,000 in the general fund for 2026. The deficit will be covered by carryover funds, but it highlights a critical challenge the City faces: the salaries for both union and non-union personnel are set at much higher increases than in previous years. To address the substantial increase in expenses, he stated that it is imperative that the City and Court explore new revenue streams. By doing so, it will ensure the City's financial sustainability while protecting the reserves for unforeseen expenses in the future.

Finance Director Vladimir Kan outlines the following key provisions in the 2026 budget:

- Elimination of 5% pension pickup for all City and Court employees
- Wage increases for the next three years are being negotiated with unions, with estimated increases included in the budget draft
- Various hourly rate increases of up to 4% for Court employees

- A 10% decrease in medical insurance for the first half of 2026. Health insurance expenses might increase considerably during 2026 due to the aging employee population. The Nurse Navigator and Concierge Health Network programs proved to be a highly efficient cost-saving strategy. EPLS specialty prescription program should help both the City and employees with cost savings
- Increases in salary and overtime in the Finance Department due to the ongoing transition and the search for a new assistant finance director
- Increases in operating and professional services for the finance department due to higher audit costs and GAAP conversion from hiring a new accounting firm under unfavorable market conditions
- Expected decrease in the City's claims settlement account
- Increased salary for the Public Works Department due to salary weight reallocation to help the Sanitation Fund
- Decreased salaries due to reallocation of salary weights to the General Fund and more active utilization of grants. The Court revenue accounts in the General Fund are expected to experience a significant increase due to the collection of fines through the Ohio Attorney General's Office
- A $10,000 reimbursement from the Court to help offset court improvements at the end of 2026
- Full police lieutenant's salary with benefits to be absorbed by the opioid settlement fund

Finance Director Vladimir Kan addressed the Sanitation Fund, noting it would continue experiencing shortfalls in both operating and capital needs due to low trash collection, private hauler, and commercial dumpster fees. He stated that the City Manager's Office had prepared updated fee schedules for Council's consideration. With the updated fees, the projected end fund balance for 2026 for the Sanitation Fund would be $245,000.

Finance Director Vladimir Kan explained that while debt service was naturally decreasing in the Permanent Improvement Fund, increased funding would be required for public works, police, and fire aging equipment, vehicles and infrastructure, resulting in a total increase of 43.4% from fiscal year 2025.

He noted that the Water Pollution Control Capital Fund would begin repayments of a $358,488.89 advance from the General Fund, amortized over the next five years, which was used to purchase a new sewer jet truck.

Finance Director Vladimir Kan stated that it is important to note that in most cases, the amounts are obligated and not yet liquidated. Additionally, expenses may rise due to weather conditions.

President John Roskovics asked for clarification on the $245,000 Sanitation Fund balance and whether it was based on the new rates. Finance Director Vladimir Kan confirmed it was and added that without the rate increase, the fund balance would be negative.

Ward 4 Councilor Jodi Mills asked for clarification on where the funds come from in Fund 222. Finance Director Vladimir Kan explained that the fund consisted of opioid settlement funds from pharmaceutical companies. He stated that once a settlement is achieved, pharmaceutical companies begin transferring funds. City Manager James Timonere added that the amount received varies from year to year depending on the different companies that have settlements. He stated that while money was supposed to flow directly to the City, the state got involved, creating a system where some funds go to regions for grants and some are distributed directly to the City. He confirmed that these funds must be used for drug-related purposes, including staffing.

Ward 4 Councilor Jodi Mills asked about the parking deck fund notated in the budget presentation. City Manager James Timonere clarified that it covers the cost of electricity.

President John Roskovics raised concerns about efforts to eliminate property taxes, questioning whether it would affect the police and park levies. City Manager James Timonere stated that he is uncertain whether voted-on levies would potentially be eliminated, but he expects the City would experience some revenue loss, though not as severe as what schools might face.

City Manager James Timonere provided an update on the grant application for the recycling program. He explained that program changes meant they could no longer use solid waste containers as match funding. The recycling containers for 2,800 homes would cost approximately $133,000, with $30,000 for distribution and $4,000 for printed educational materials that would be attached to the containers, totaling $167,000. The City can apply for $133,600 in grant funding, requiring $33,400 as the match. City Manager James Timonere stated solid waste containers would still need to be purchased at an additional cost of $133,000, bringing the total project cost to $300,000. With the grant, the City would be responsible for $166,400. He emphasized that without the sanitation fee increases, the fund would be negative event without the grant project. He stated that neither the grant nor the match or container purchase were in the budget right now. City Manager James Timonere stated that grant notification would not be until next year. If the City is awarded the grant, the documents would be received in April and then administration of the grant could begin. The City would have two years to perform the grant project.

Ward 3 Councilor RoLesia Holman stated that she is struggling to believe there is no money anywhere to enable the City to move forward with the project in the event the grant is not awarded. City Manager James Timonere explained that enterprise funds, like the Sanitation Fund, are funded solely by their rates and collections. He stated that if the City does not receive the grant, the projected ending balance in Sanitation would be $254,000 with the proposed fee increase, which is still short of the full project cost.

Ward 5 Councilor Jane DiGiacomo asked about strategies to generate more income streams. City Manager James Timonere explained that the general approach involves promoting economic development, encouraging investments in the City, supporting renovations and new businesses, and applying for grants to offset costs. Ward 4 Councilor Jodi Mills mentioned discussions in the Public Works Committee about road funding and the challenges of proposing higher millage rates during times of economic pressure, noting that if higher rates were voted down, the City would lose all funding from the levies.

City Manager James Timonere also informed Council that he is still negotiating the contract with Waste Management, which had initially proposed an 8% increase per year over the next five years, which he rejected. This potential increase is not yet factored into the budget. He also mentioned that leachate processing revenue had decreased by $110,000 to $150,000 due to the dry summer.

Ward 1 Councilor Kym Foglio expressed appreciation for the budget management, noting that in past years, some city managers and auditors had disregarded budgetary constraints, leading to millions of dollars of debt, but the current administration had helped the City recover and maintain fiscal stability. City Manager James Timonere stated that when he took office, the City was facing a deficit of over $1 million, which was reduced to a $200,000 carryover.

Ward 3 Councilor RoLesia Holman asked how much the City had in its investment accounts. City Manager James Timonere stated that the City currently has approximately $10 million in investment accounts. Ward 3 Councilor RoLesia Holman asked if that money was earmarked for anything in particular. City Manager James Timonere stated that the money is not entirely liquid as it's needed to maintain cash flow for monthly expenses. He said the investment accounts are not at a point yet where money can be pulled out of them.

City Manager James Timonere noted that City departments had been instructed to begin closing purchase orders, which could improve the final budget figures. He expects to have all union contracts ready for approval at the next meeting and stated that the budget would be posted online for public review until then. Council would vote on the budget at their next meeting on December 15th, after the required 10-day public display period.

Discussion

Questions/Comments

Closing Remarks

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 6:00 p.m. by President John Roskovics.
Ashtabula City Council will meet again on Monday, December 15, 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: December 15, 2025

ATTESTED BY: John S Roskovics

John S. Roskovics, President of Council

ATTESTED BY:

Stacy L. Millberg, Clerk of Council