



City of Ashtabula

Ashtabula City Council

Public Works / Public Utilities / Cable / Schools Committee Meeting

Tuesday, January 27, 2026 at 8:30 AM

Council Chambers

4230 Lake Avenue, Ashtabula, OH 44004

Minutes

Opening of Committee Meeting

Call to Order

The meeting of the Ashtabula City Council Public Works / Public Utilities / Cable / Schools Committee was called to order at 8:30 a.m. by Committee Chair Jodi Mills.

Roll Call

Members Present: Chair: Jodi Mills, Vice Chair: Ward 2 Councilor Terence Guerriero, Member: Council President John Roskovics

Absent: None

Officers Present: City Manager James Timonere, Finance Director Vladimir Kan, Clerk of Council Stacy Millberg

Department Heads Present: Public Services Superintendent John Melnik, Water Pollution Control Superintendent Mark Verzella

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

City Manager's Report

City Manager James Timonere provided updates on several ongoing projects and operations. Winter operations are going well, with crews doing a great job keeping streets clean. He mentioned that work was continuing on putting together a street list for this year's paving project, which was presenting challenges as numbers were still coming in. He is working with GPD on this project with the goal of getting it out soon.

City Manager James Timonere stated that bids had been received for the Main Avenue project, but were still slightly high. GPD is currently evaluating the five to six bids submitted. A meeting with Main Avenue business owners is scheduled for February 11 to discuss the facade program, which has now been finalized with the state and Eastgate.

Water Pollution Control as well as City staff are working through Ohio Water Development Authority loan processing and incoming bills related to design work that is underway for improvement projects at the Water Pollution Control Plant. GPD met with WPC Superintendent Mark Verzella at the plant to discuss planned improvements, with bidding potentially happening by the end of the year.

He noted that many projects were being prepared for when the weather breaks, with efforts to get everything out to bid now. The contract for the streetscape sidewalk project might be ready for the February 2 meeting, pending bid evaluation.

City Manager James Timonere also discussed staffing plans, noting that by the end of March, they intend to

request two positions dedicated to the sewer jet during spring, summer, and fall. With the recent retirement of a staff member in motor maintenance, there will be positions to fill, ultimately leading to openings in sanitation. Public Works Superintendent John Melnik had already begun interviews to prepare to backfill positions when they move people around. One of the new sewer jet positions would be funded by Water Pollution Control and the other by Public Works, as they would work on both sanitary sewers and storm drains.

Additional updates include GPD finalizing plans to replace the transfer station roof, which would likely require demolishing the current building and installing a metal-framed hoop-style structure with large supports. City Manager James Timonere also mentioned they were still waiting to hear about recycling grant funding, likely in March of April.

President John Roskovics asked if the City had to match funds for the Hulbert Hill project. City Manager James Timonere confirmed that the project had a relatively small local match of approximately \$30,000, but noted it might not be completed by year's end due to environmental review requirements and current workload. He clarified that the project would use brick matching the other side. He also discussed planned parking changes along Main Avenue, including shifting from parallel to diagonal parking in certain areas, particularly near the Chamber of Commerce and the old City Hall/Key Bank building. City Manager James Timonere noted that sidewalks near the Key Bank building would be reduced in width, and that utility companies had been notified of the project, with Aqua already beginning lead line replacements that needed to be completed before sidewalk installation.

Committee Chair Jodi Mills asked whether the budget would support the recycling program if the grant funding is approved. City Manager James Timonere explained that if the grant was approved, the program would be funded through the sanitation fund. With the new rates implemented, a carryover of approximately \$350,000 was projected for next year, which should cover the costs if they received the full grant amount. The plan would include changing garbage routes to Monday through Thursday with recycling on Fridays, with a phased approach to implementation.

Water Pollution Control Report

WPC Report

Water Pollution Control Superintendent Mark Verzella provided updates on several operational matters. The influent pH controller has been installed and is now operational as required by their permit. This replaced an old unit that had failed and could not be repaired. The Outfall Relocation was complete with the flow meter installed, calibrated, and recording. Monthly checks were being conducted per NPDES permit requirements. The mixing zone study proposal received by Amendola Engineering is under review by the Solicitor's Office and will require a contract amendment due to state-mandated changes. Appropriated funds are available, but a change order will be coming.

Valves will need to be ordered for one of the sludge tanks. Digester one's recirculation pump failed due to normal wear and tear, as these pumps run continuously. They switched to Digester three but needed to order a replacement pump with an 18 to 22 week lead time at a cost of \$33,000. A spare will be installed in the interim, but this will leave the plant without a backup. The purchase will be presented to Council for consideration soon, likely at the February 2 meeting. An exchanger was experiencing issues with condensation affecting the flame fill, and a contractor is scheduled to inspect it.

WPC Superintendent Mark Verzella also noted that GPD was still working on the Ohio Public Works Commission Michigan Avenue project design, which needed to be completed by July. There were complications because Aqua's waterline was on a different side of the road than originally thought, limiting options for new lines. GPD was considering creating sweeping connections rather than straight angles at the Michigan Avenue intersection, similar to a successful project at West 14th Street and Lake Avenue.

The 2002 International dump truck acquired from Public Works had experienced motor failure. A replacement truck was in the budget, and they are working with the City Manager and Solicitor on procurement. Rather than replacing it with an equivalent 7-ton truck costing around \$200,000, they planned to purchase a 1.5-ton 5500 truck for approximately \$70,000 and put a plow on it, which would better meet their needs.

The technical justification for the permit had been submitted to Ohio EPA through their online system with no recommended changes to concentration limits.

Leadership Ashtabula County is scheduled to tour the plant and staff will participate in career day at Ridgeview

Elementary School on February 17. Compliance-based training is set for April 23 and WPC Superintendent Mark Verzella stated he is working on various annual reports.

Committee Chair Jodi Mills asked about the confined space training. WPC Superintendent Mark Verzella explained this was necessary safety training for staff who enter manholes or tanks. The biannual training includes using gas meters, fresh air blowers, tripods, harnesses, and self-retracting lifelines to monitor hazardous gases and ensure worker safety.

Public Works Report

Public Works Superintendent John Melnik reported that his staff has been dealing with winter weather since November 27. In between snow events, crews are performing pothole patching. They are also conducting snow removal on Bridge Street and Main Avenue during night shifts. When trucks are not in use, they are being cleaned and greased to minimize maintenance issues.

A tree contractor had just completed work, and they would be seeking another tree contract in the next week or two.

Staffing updates included a new motor maintenance mechanic. Interviews are underway for sanitation positions, with eight to 10 applications received. While there were not many CDL holders among the applicants, the City has a program where employees can obtain CDLs, with three recently passing their tests. Employees sign a three-year commitment agreement in exchange for the City covering the cost of the training.

City Manager James Timonere provided additional information on salt supplies, noting they had ordered 2,300 tons against their quota of 3,000 tons. An additional 10 percent (bringing the total to 3,300) was available but would incur a \$15 per ton surcharge. He emphasized the need to make the salt last for the remainder of winter. He clarified that the City contracts with Morton for road salt, which has not seen a shortage this year. The crews have been focusing on curb-to-curb plowing to widen roads and are using salt sparingly, especially in the extremely cold temperatures when it is less effective.

The Public Works staff received compliments for their snow removal efforts, particularly in clearing streets where cars had been moved with police assistance. Public Works Superintendent John Melnik noted they had kept additional staff on to scrape down areas the previous night and had hit all areas by approximately 3 p.m.

City Manager James Timonere also mentioned that Henderson would be evaluating the old sewer jet truck, which had a good chassis and cab with only 36,000 miles. They hoped to repurpose it by adding a dump box, plow, and wing, which would increase efficiency on wider roads. During the summer, the truck could be transferred to sanitation for hauling construction and demolition materials.

New Business

City Manager James Timonere mentioned that the governor had declared a state of emergency, and the departments were tracking costs related to the snow event for potential reimbursement, though he noted this had been a normal snowstorm for the area.

Next Meeting

February 24, 2026

Ashtabula Area City Schools Superintendent Lisa Newsome will be the guest and will provide school updates.

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 9:11 a.m. by Committee Chair Jodi Mills.