



City of Ashtabula

Ashtabula City Council

Community Development/Economic Development/Parks & Recreation Committee Meeting

Wednesday, April 1, 2026 at 5:30 PM

Council Chambers

4230 Lake Avenue, Ashtabula, OH 44004

Minutes

Opening of Committee Meeting

Call to Order

The meeting of the Ashtabula City Council Community Development/ Economic Development/ Parks & Recreation Committee was called to order at 5:30 p.m. by Committee Chair Jane DiGiacomo.

Roll Call

Members Present: Chair: Ward 5 Councilor Jane DiGiacomo, Vice Chair: Ward 4 Councilor Jodi Mills, Member: Ward 3 Councilor RoLesia Holman

Absent: none

Officers Present: City Manager James Timonere, Clerk of Council Stacy Millberg

Parks & Recreation Board Members Present:

Visitors: Julie Wayman, Frank Brown

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

Welcome Home Ohio

Joe Recchie, CEO of Community Building Partners, presented a comprehensive overview of the Welcome Home Ohio program. The program is a state-funded initiative run by the Ohio Department of Development, designed to make homeownership attainable for individuals earning 80 percent of the median income. The Ashtabula County Land Bank successfully secured a \$750,000 grant to build approximately six homes in 2026.

The program works by providing a substantial write-down of approximately \$100,000 to \$120,000 to bring the purchase price to \$180,000 for qualified buyers. The homes are 1,300 square feet with three bedrooms, two baths, a front porch, and one-car garage, and appraise at \$280,000 to \$300,000, giving buyers immediate equity. The construction uses prefabricated modules built in a factory and delivered to the site, allowing for rapid completion, typically 90 days from contract to move-in.

Mr. Recchie detailed the energy efficiency features, including a high-efficiency heat pump system, low-e windows, and Energy Star appliances. All appliances are included to prevent new homeowners from taking on expensive credit for necessary items. The homes meet 2026 construction standards and include smart thermostats controllable by phone.

Mr. Recchie estimated the monthly mortgage payments on the homes to be approximately \$1,050, noting that in Sandusky where a similar project is underway, every buyer pays less as a homeowner than they were paying in

rent. The qualification process requires income certification at 80 percent of the area median income, which ranges from \$47,760 for a single person to \$68,073 for a family of four or five. Buyers must have sufficient credit for mortgage approval, typically FHA standards of 550 to 570 or conventional lending around 620 and above. Mr. Recchie noted that cosigners are permitted and that Cleveland Housing Network offers special lending programs for those who don't qualify with local lenders.

Buyers must commit to living in the home as their primary residence for five years and participate in financial literacy training. A deed restriction requires that if the home is sold within 20 years of the purchase, it must be sold to someone also qualifying at 80 percent of the median income, ensuring the community investment benefits future families for the next 20 years.

The first three homes will be located at 3835 Station Avenue, 509 W. 36th Street, and 526 W. 34th Street. Mr. Recchie announced plans for an upcoming open house. The tentative date is April 18, 2026. Mr. Recchie emphasized that the selection process for buyers is on a first-come, first-served basis. Prospective buyers should start by getting pre-qualified with their lender for \$180,000.

City Manager's Report

City Manager James Timonere provided updates on several ongoing projects. The Collins Boulevard project will be bidding out through ODOT this month, and the Main Avenue sidewalk project is expected to begin within the next couple of weeks as the contractor finishes another project. Business owners will receive schedules detailing expected disruptions, though access to buildings will be maintained except on concrete pouring days.

The facade program on Main Avenue continues to progress with the Planning and Community Development staff working with building owners. While the program has been challenging to administer, several projects are ready to go out to bid. City Manager James Timonere clarified that there are approximately 24 participating buildings, though the number fluctuates as some property owners adjust their project scope due to financing considerations.

For property owners lacking funds, options include traditional lending and assistance from the 503 Corp. The funding structure requires business owners to pay their portion upfront, with grant funding flowing directly to contractors as a second payment.

Parks operations began this week, with staff addressing storm damage from Tuesday evening. Smith Field was quickly prepared for a Monday game and is being heavily utilized this year along with Massucci Field. The football league also uses Massucci Field, and staff is developing improvement plans for various parks throughout the City.

Parks & Recreation Committee Report

March Meeting Minutes

Unfinished Business

Memorial Day Parade

Committee Chair Jane DiGiacomo announced that the Memorial Day parade will take place on May 25th at 11 a.m., with the lineup beginning at 10 a.m. Following the parade, memorial services will be held in Veterans Park. Committee Chair Jane DiGiacomo noted that the Ashtabula Downtown Development Association hopes to have all Main Avenue windows displaying "America 250" themes from Memorial Day through July 4th in recognition of the nation's 250th anniversary. Organizations interested in participating in the parade should contact Committee Chair Jane DiGiacomo.

City Clean Up

The annual City Clean-Up is scheduled for May 9th from 8:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m., meeting at City Hall. Committee Chair Jane DiGiacomo and Ward 4 Councilor Jodi Mills drove around the City identifying areas where clean-up efforts are needed. Committee Chair Jane DiGiacomo emphasized the need for volunteers. Signature Health will provide lunch at the library following cleanup activities.

New Business

Ward 3 Councilor RoLesia Holman announced that the Racial Wealth Gap Simulation, previously discussed at City Council, has been rescheduled to April 6th at 4 p.m. at the Ashtabula County District Library. The event is open to the public.

Julie Wayman from My Neighborhood Collaborative provided an update that the organization is bringing its

activities to a close due to capacity constraints and difficulty attracting volunteers. The organization wishes to donate \$5,000 to the City's parks fund specifically for Clifford Kadon Presidential Park, with a preference for purchasing a swing set. City Manager James Timonere welcomed the generous donation and noted that new swings for W. 38th Street Park cost approximately \$2,500, making the donation sufficient for the requested purpose. The City is considering replacing the current aging playground equipment and relocating new equipment to the front of the park for better parent supervision. The organization will clean out their tools and leave appropriate items in the Rotary shed for potential future gardening activities.

Next Meeting

May 6, 2026

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 6:43 p.m. by Committee Chair Jane DiGiacomo.