



City of Ashtabula

Ashtabula City Council

Public Works / Public Utilities / Cable / Schools Committee Meeting

Tuesday, April 28, 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 Vice Chair Terence Guerriero.

Roll Call

Members Present: Vice Chair: Ward 2 Councilor Terence Guerriero, Member: Council President John Roskovic

Absent: Chair: Jodi Mills

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

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

Visitors: Ward 5 Councilor Jane DiGiacomo

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 an update on spring operational activities. The Parks Department is actively working, and the jet crew has been deployed frequently. The crew will be inspecting sewers and storm drains ahead of the paving season. The City is still awaiting a pre-construction meeting date from the paving contractor to establish a start schedule. Regarding pothole repairs, the City has transitioned from cold mix to hot mix asphalt, which performs significantly better, though its availability is subject to the plant's production schedule. The City has been actively conducting pothole repairs throughout the transition.

City Manager James Timonere noted that an ordinance will come before Council at Monday's meeting for approximately \$50,000 in street resurfacing repairs covering street cuts made over the winter. The majority of these costs will be drawn from the Water Pollution Control fund, as they relate to sanitary sewer lateral repairs, with one storm drain repair to be drawn from the 412 fund. Discussion took place regarding the City's longstanding policy of owning and maintaining sewer laterals from the curb to the main. Neighboring communities, including Geneva, Conneaut, and the Ashtabula County Department of Environmental Services require homeowners to bear full responsibility for the lateral. City Manager James Timonere noted that this policy costs the City an estimated \$300,000 to \$400,000 per year. Committee members discussed liability concerns, the staff time required to access private property to diagnose problems, and the policy implications of continuing this practice. It was noted that amending this policy would require a modification of the City's codified ordinances.

The Main Avenue project was noted to be progressing well, with sidewalk removal completed ahead of schedule and utility pole removal underway. A sequencing decision allowed street lighting to remain active during the initial

phase of the work.

City Manager James Timonere reported that they are exploring the acquisition of a tandem axle truck with a wing plow for clearing major roads such as Lake Avenue, West Avenue, West 9th Street, and Route 20. The unfitting cost alone was quoted at approximately \$190,000, not including the chassis. The truck would not be suitable for neighborhood streets but would significantly improve snow clearing capacity on main corridors.

Street sweeper repairs were noted to be nearly complete. The new engine has been stalled, and the unit has been started, but an electrical issue is being resolved before the unit is returned.

City Manager James Timonere also noted ongoing efforts to identify a solution for the aging Public Works cold storage facility.

Water Pollution Control Report

WPC Report

Water Pollution Control Superintendent Mark Verzella provided several updates. The mixing zone study has been tentatively scheduled for the end of May due to rental equipment availability, specifically an acoustic Doppler profiler. A successful test redirection of 100 percent of plant flow was completed, which will need to be replicated for seven days prior to each of the three required study periods this calendar year, with the study itself taking two days each time.

Disinfection season was set to begin on Friday. The UV system is operational, E. Coli testing has been completed, and the IDEX system is functioning properly.

The department is obtaining pricing for surge protection upgrades in the raw building. An existing surge protector installed in 2015 was burned out and will be replaced. An electrician has recommended repositioning it to protect the entire building structure rather than only the original MCC cabinet. Discussion touched on the nature of sacrificial surge protectors and the value of the broader protection approach.

The recirculation pump for Digester 3 was aligned and re-wired and is fully operational.

Other miscellaneous items included completed work on the jet truck and a new dump valve on the Freightliner, scheduled suspension repairs on the older Freightliner, annual facility crane inspections completed the week of April 17th, and the completion of confined space training for staff, with some Public Works personnel also participating in the confined space training.

Public Works Report

Public Services Superintendent John Melnik reported that the department is actively engaged in pothole patching, mowing, and leaf bag pickup as well as some basic repairs. Ditch work is also being coordinated with ODOT, including recent work on 58th Street. The jet crew is working nearly daily, with the most recent cleaning complete at 44th Street near the post office and along Collins Boulevard, with the next efforts focused on roads scheduled for paving.

Parks maintenance was reported to be well underway, with baseball fields at Smith Field and Massucci Field being actively maintained. City Manager James Timonere noted that the pitching mound at Smith Field may need professional rebuilding after the season concludes.

Public Services Superintendent John Melnik also noted that two new sanitation employees are starting next week.

City Manager James Timonere noted that purchase orders have been pulled for the previously discussed speed signs, with a couple of weeks' lead time expected before installation.

New Business

Illegal Dumping

Ward 5 Councilor Jane DiGiacomo discussed the topic of illegal dumping and bulk waste disposal, due to ongoing resident complaints and requests for a bulk pickup program similar to those offered by neighboring communities.

City Manager James Timonere provided historical context, noting that a prior bulk drop-off event under a previous administration resulted in an enormous accumulation of waste, reportedly an 8-foot-high pile within four hours, that

took approximately three weeks to clean up at a cost of \$50,000 to \$70,000, and resulted in an EPA citation. He cautioned that the scale of Ashtabula's population (approximately 17,000 residents) makes bulk events far more difficult to manage than in smaller communities like Ashtabula Township, which uses only three or four 40-yard roll-off dumpsters. City Manager James Timonere noted that the City does offer curbside bulk pickup on request for a fee, and that the county is hosting an upcoming amnesty day on May 9 providing another avenue for residents. He also stated that illegal dumping is frequently committed by non-city residents who wish to avoid paying for garbage service in unincorporated areas.

City Manager James Timonere also noted that the City did not receive the EPA grant it applied for to fund curbside recycling expansion to the remaining wards. He stated that to expand the recycling program to the remaining wards would cost the City approximately \$300,000, and that recycling is no longer a funding priority at the state level. He indicated that he will seek a technical assistance review from the EPA and inquire about any discretionary funds that may be available. Additionally, he reported that the MOU with Ashtabula County for the recycling program is currently under review. Modifications are being pursued that would increase the City's fee from the county while also improving the efficiency of material handling through the use of 6-yard tipping containers rather than the current arrangement.

Next Meeting

May 26, 2026

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 9:17 a.m. by Committee Vice Chair Terence Guerriero.