



City of Ashtabula
Ashtabula City Council
Safety Forces Committee
Thursday, June 11, 2026 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 8:32 a.m. by Committee Chair Terence Guerriero.

Roll Call

Members Present: Chair: Ward 2 Councilor Terence Guerriero, Vice Chair: Ward 1 Councilor Kym Foglio, Member: Council President John Roskovics

Absent:

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

Ashtabula Department Heads Present: Lt. Mike Palinkas, Fire Chief Geoff Cannon

Visitors:

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

Lt. Mike Palinkas, Safe Streets Task Force Update

Lt. Mike Palinkas provided the committee with an update on the FBI Safe Streets Task Force, of which the Ashtabula Police Department (APD) has been a member since 2021, operating under the Youngstown FBI field office.

APD currently has three full-time Task Force Officers (TFOs) and four part-time TFOs embedded with the FBI, bringing the total number of federally sworn special agents from APD to seven. The task force's area of responsibility covers Ashtabula, Trumbull, Lake, and Geauga Counties, with investigations focused on gang crimes, firearms, and narcotics.

Lt. Mike Palinkas presented the task force's 2025 seizure statistics, which included approximately 2,675 grams of methamphetamine, 296 grams of fentanyl, 2,800 grams of marijuana, 80 grams of cocaine, 42 fentanyl pills, 629 grams of psilocybin mushrooms, 100 Xanax pills, 20 grams of crack cocaine, 74 firearms, and nearly \$24,000 in currency. He noted that the bulk of seizures occurred within Ashtabula County and the City proper, and that drugs originating in the City tend to filter outward throughout the region.

Committee Chair Terence Guerriero asked how the seized drugs are disposed of. Lt. Mike Palinkas explained that seized drugs are ultimately destroyed via incineration following a court-mandated destruction order.

City Manager James Timonere added important context, noting that the task force's statistics do not include drugs seized incidentally during routine patrol stops — a practice he described as "padding stats" used by other departments. He praised Lt. Mike Palinkas as a driving force behind the task force and credited the decision to break away from a previous multi-agency task force and establish their own FBI-affiliated unit as one of the best the department has made. He further noted that the FBI has praised APD's professionalism and that the task force deliberately limits press releases to protect ongoing investigations, only publicizing results when the top of an operation has been reached.

In response to President John Roskovics' question about officer compensation, Lt. Mike Palinkas clarified that task force officers receive no additional pay, though the city is reimbursed by the FBI for overtime hours worked on qualifying Safe Streets cases. It was also noted that the FBI provides investigative resources, vehicles, and federal jurisdiction to pursue cases wherever needed, and that the FBI has also assisted APD during homicides and major shooting investigations.

Police Department – Chief's Report

APD May Stats

Lt. Mike Palinkas presented the May statistics for the Ashtabula Police Department. The department responded to 282 reports and handled 20 crashes within the City. Calls for service continue to increase, reaching 1,570 in May. Adult traffic arrests totaled 53, juvenile arrests totaled 9, and adult criminal arrests totaled 32. A breakdown of citations issued by the patrol division was included in the committee packet.

A brief discussion took place regarding a complaint about a tractor-trailer being parked on a city street. Lt. Mike Palinkas confirmed that parking a tractor-trailer on a City street for general parking purposes is prohibited. City Manager James Timonere indicated the situation would be followed up on.

Fire Department – Chief's Report

AFD May Stats

Chief Geoff Cannon reported that overall call volume continues to rise. Fire losses were noted to be elevated, largely due to two high-dollar incidents: a boat fire on East 16th Street and the Crow's Nest fire, both of which represented significant losses. The one fire-related death recorded in the statistics was associated with the Crow's Nest incident and was classified accordingly per state reporting requirements, despite the circumstances of the death.

Ambulance calls are up and, as a result, revenue is up approximately \$25,000 compared to the prior year. Mutual aid activity was described as within normal range. The department's boat is fully operational.

Chief Geoff Cannon reported that a written entrance examination was administered the previous Saturday, with 10 candidates participating. Results are pending. The physical agility test is scheduled for the following Saturday at the fire station, after which interviews will commence.

Chief Geoff Cannon also noted that the Coast Guard has agreed to conduct a 40-hour boat operator class for fire and police personnel, which was described as thorough and highly beneficial.

On a facilities note, a retiring department member has undertaken a project to improve the station's energy efficiency, having replaced 100 fixtures with LED bulbs, which is expected to reduce utility costs.

City Manager's Report

City Manager James Timonere reported that a civil service meeting is scheduled for June 18th, at which an additional entrance examination for the police department will be requested. He noted that several current part-time staff members have expressed interest in becoming full-time officers, but that the cost of the police academy represents a barrier. He indicated the City may need to consider offering stipends with an employment commitment agreement — a practice used in the past — or explore scholarship options, acknowledging that not all candidates meet scholarship eligibility criteria.

Discussion followed regarding how other jurisdictions handle this challenge. It was noted that Lake County Sheriff's Department, for example, places recruits on salary while they attend the academy in exchange for a multi-year service commitment.

The committee also discussed the distinction between the fire and police academy paths. Chief Geoff Cannon noted that fire department candidates must be at least an EMT-Basic to sit for the fire entrance exam and must hold a paramedic certification to be hired — a higher standard than many departments. The paramedic program takes between nine months and one year and requires hospital rotation hours. Police academy options in the area include Lakeland Community College and a facility in Trumbull County, with a retired APD lieutenant currently serving as an instructor at the Trumbull location.

City Solicitor's Report

Unfinished Business

Bicycle Regulations

Committee Chair Terence Guerriero noted this item was placed on the agenda at the request of Ward 5 Councilor Jane DiGiacomo who had been receiving constituent inquiries regarding motorized bicycles. City Manager James Timonere clarified that Chapter 373 of the City's existing legislation already addresses bicycle regulation comprehensively, including classifications of Class 1, 2, and 3 bicycles, as well as rules such as the prohibition on riding on sidewalks. The police department has developed informational graphics summarizing these regulations.

The committee discussed the practical enforcement challenges, noting that with only four officers patrolling approximately 97 lane miles of City streets, it is not possible to be everywhere at once. There was general agreement that the core safety issue is the failure of some cyclists — particularly those on motorized bicycles — to obey traffic laws such as stopping at red lights. City Manager James Timonere emphasized that cyclists, whether motorized or not, have the same rights and responsibilities on City streets as motor vehicle operators.

City Manager James Timonere identified one specific item in the existing bicycle legislation he would like to see repealed: the bicycle licensing requirement under Sections 374.02 through 374.04. He characterized the licensing program as outdated and largely unused, noting it no longer serves a meaningful purpose and creates unnecessary administrative burden. No other specific amendments were proposed by the committee. It was agreed that a copy of the existing legislation would be provided to Ward 5 Councilor Jane DiGiacomo for her review, with an open invitation to bring specific proposed changes forward.

New Business

White Truck on W. 9th Street

The committee discussed a large white truck that has been consistently parked on West 9th Street, near Union Avenue, generating complaints from residents. City Manager James Timonere reported that the truck belongs to a person who recently purchased a home in the area. The truck is operational and has been observed in the driveway on occasion, but is typically parked on the street, where the driveway does not have sufficient capacity, given that approximately four vehicles are associated with the household.

The committee noted that West 9th Street currently has a no-parking restriction only on a limited segment between Lake Avenue and Michigan Avenue, and that the truck's location does not fall within that zone. As a result, the truck is not currently in violation of any parking ordinance. Staff indicated they have spoken with the owner to make him aware of potential safety concerns, but no further enforcement action is available at this time.

Discussion touched on the possibility of establishing no-parking zones on the fire hydrant side of the street; however, it was acknowledged that such a restriction would need to apply to a broader stretch of road rather than targeting a single address.

Next Meeting

July 9, 2026

Adjournment

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