



City of Ashtabula

Ashtabula City Council

Public Works / Public Utilities / Cable / Schools Committee Meeting

Tuesday, July 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 Chair Jodi Mills.

Roll Call

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

Absent:

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

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

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

City Manager's Report

City Manager James Timonere acknowledged the support provided by both Public Works and Water Pollution Control during the Wine and Walleye Festival. He noted that a microburst earlier in the week caused significant but geographically isolated damage, primarily in the area of West 9th Street north between Lake Avenue and the City limits. Multiple trees were downed, and some structural damage occurred on Walnut Boulevard and at Nappy Field. Staff was commended for their rapid response in clearing debris and opening roadways.

City Manager James Timonere reported that Koski would begin the 2026 paving program on Wednesday, beginning with grinding on Dunbar and Dunsmore on the west side before moving east. The current completion date remains August 28.

Regarding the Collins Boulevard project, it was noted that the contractor has identified areas of sidewalk incompatible with the new road profile and has submitted a change order of nearly \$130,000. Given the contractor's original bid was already approximately \$500,000 over the engineer's estimate, City Manager James Timonere indicated that the City may issue a separate bid for sidewalk replacement, anticipating a more competitive price.

City Manager James Timonere provided an update on the curbside recycling program. Staff is currently verifying address lists, with the Sanitation Department working through a list of over 3,000 addresses, cross-referenced against approximately 2,800 properties identified through the County Auditor's Office. Updated route maps have

been prepared and are under review. The cart delivery lead time is approximately four weeks from the time of order. All cart labeling and instructions will be pre-attached upon delivery. Route adjustments will be implemented prior to cart distribution to minimize operational disruptions.

City Manager James Timonere also reported that the Sanitation Department will demo a split rear loader truck on July 31. The vehicle's body is divided into two compartments, approximately 60/40, allowing simultaneous collection of refuse and recyclables on the same route. The truck is manufactured by McQueen which is a distributor to Premier, where the City recently rented a garbage truck. Premier also offers a 13-month lease program, which the City may explore. The cost of the lease program is approximately \$9,000 per truck per month. City Manager James Timonere noted that the City currently spends between \$15,000 to \$20,000 per truck annually on maintenance for a fleet of four trucks, and that any lease arrangement would need to be weighed against a five-year loan scenario inclusive of maintenance costs.

Water Pollution Control Report

WPC Report

Water Pollution Control Superintendent presented the report. The EPA responded to the City's initial mixing zone study submission for the Outfall Relocation Project. The response raises questions about the data, particularly regarding acoustic Doppler profiler readings, which the state indicated they had not previously encountered in this type of application. Engineering firm Amendola is preparing a formal response. The City has until the end of August to complete the second consecutive mixing zone study as required under the approved study framework. The need for a variance related to outfall velocity and the adequacy of dilution ratios for the chronic mixing zone remain under evaluation.

A board malfunction on the Outfall 002 flow meter occurred and had to be sent to Canada for repair. The unit is under warranty; however, the return timeline is pending.

Preventative maintenance at the plant is ongoing. Final settling tanks are undergoing scheduled maintenance, with the east tank nearing completion before being returned to service and the west tank then taken offline. Repairs to valves on the sodium aluminate system are also planned. Both digester heat exchangers are fully operational following a complex isolation and servicing project involving the blower and hot water recirculation pumps. Water Pollution Control Superintendent Mark Verzella noted that this was a very involved project.

The collection system project on 14th and Michigan continues to present challenges with bypass pumping due to the large 27-inch and 18-inch sewer lines at the site, as well as conflicts with other utilities. Leaks in the bypass pipe have been addressed. GPD is onsite daily monitoring and documenting progress.

The Capital Improvement Plan project at the plant is ongoing. GPD had previously committed to delivering initial draft plans by mid-to-late July. No deliverables have been received to date; however, Water Pollution Control Superintendent Mark Verzella indicated he hoped to receive them within the next few weeks.

The department's lateral push camera sustained significant damage during a recent inspection on private property. The camera head was dislodged within a 4-inch private lateral due to joint configurations and was ultimately retrieved with the assistance of Roto Rooter. The cost to repair the camera is approximately \$6,000, compared to a replacement cost of approximately \$15,000. Water Pollution Control Superintendent Mark Verzella noted that an older camera without footage-counting or locating capabilities remains available for basic visual inspections in the interim. He acknowledged that accessing private property to determine the boundary of the City versus resident responsibility is a recurring necessity and that similar incidents may occur in the future.

Approximately 70 percent of pretreatment inspections are complete, with three industrial facilities remaining. The department transitioned its contracted pretreatment consultant from Verdantas to Rubber City Engineering, selected through an RFP process on an as-needed, per-diem basis. The new consultant will assist in updating the industrial waste survey and annual inspection questionnaires to ensure alignment with current state rules and regulations.

Water Pollution Control Superintendent Mark Verzella noted that the department will undergo some staffing changes due to resignations and retirements. The vacancies will require reassignments from Public Works or Sanitation, creating a downstream staffing impact for those departments.

Public Works Report

Public Service Superintendent John Melnik reported that summer operations are fully underway, including mowing, pothole patching, and ongoing catch basin repairs. Crews are currently working on catch basin work on West 16th Street and have additional repairs scheduled at West 5th Street and Walnut Boulevard for recently identified sanitary lateral and valve issues.

The jet crew has been working nearly every day and completed cleaning of all catch basins and manholes, both storm and sanitary, along the 2026 paving corridors in advance of Koski's mobilization. Curb drain repairs are also ongoing, aided by the department's mini excavator.

The next round of tree removal was recently approved by Council, and the department is awaiting the contractor to begin work.

Public Services Superintendent John Melnik reported that the county's pavement marking truck recently completed striping on a number of key corridors, including Lake Avenue, State Road, East 51st, East 46th, Park Avenue, Center Street, Main Avenue near the VFW, Main Avenue from 48th to 58th Street, West 58th, West Avenue, and West 13th Street. Six barrels of white paint were used, and one additional barrel has been ordered to complete remaining touch-up work on approximately 20 locations. The county will return once that paint arrives. Public Services Superintendent John Melnik confirmed that the higher-durability white paint sourced through Mentor continues to perform well and remains in use. Yellow paint is coordinated through the county.

The street sweeper was confirmed to be operational.

President John Roskovics asked about the new duplex on Franklin and W. 4th Street and whether earlier concerns about construction debris entering the storm sewer system had been resolved. Public Services Superintendent John Melnik confirmed that catch basins in the area were inspected and found to be clear. It was also noted that the developer may be planning a second adjacent unit.

Committee Chair Jodi Mills noted a visible road opening in the middle of East 47th Street that appeared to be settling. Public Services Superintendent John Melnik confirmed that this is the result of a recent sanitary line repair and that resurfacing has been bid out.

President John Roskovics asked for clarification on quality control measures for the upcoming paving project. City Manager James Timonere explained that GPD inspectors are present throughout the entire paving process, photographic and video documentation is taken of all curbs and aprons before and after grinding, material tickets are collected to verify tonnage, and depth gauges are used on the paver. The standard specification calls for a 3-inch grind and 3-inch replacement.

Committee Chair Jodi Mills noted that the transition area near the bridge on Collins Boulevard, where the current paving project ends, is accumulating crumbled pavement debris and presents a poor visual appearance. Public Services Superintendent John Melnik acknowledged the concern and indicated it would be addressed.

Committee Chair Jodi Mills asked about whether interest earnings could supplement the paving budget. City Manager James Timonere clarified that all interest income is consolidated within the General Fund and is already factored into the City's operating budget, which is currently in deficit spending. The possibility of increasing the paving levy was discussed, with City Manager James Timonere noting uncertainty whether the existing levy could simply be increased under current state legislation, and observing that levy renewals and new levies face a difficult environment with voters.

City Manager James Timonere noted that Lake Avenue will need to be addressed in the coming year, as Aqua Ohio is planning a waterline replacement from West 24th Street to Route 20, similar in scope to the recent West 19th Street project. Aqua is expected to contribute to repaving cost, but City Manager James Timonere emphasized that doing the road correctly, including full curb reconstruction, would cost over \$2 million. With the City's annual paving levy yielding approximately \$800,000, significant additional funding would be needed.

New Business

Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Public Works / Public Utilities / Cable / Schools Committee will be August 25, 2026.

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 9:07 a.m. by Committee Chair Jodi Mills.