



City of Ashtabula

Ashtabula City Council

Public Works / Public Utilities / Cable / Schools Committee Meeting

Monday, March 27, 2023 at 5:00 PM

4717 Main 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 5:00 p.m. by Committee Chair Ward 2 Councilor Calvin Crawford.

Roll Call

Members Present: **Chair:** Chair Ward 2 Councilor Calvin Crawford, Vice Chair Ward 3 Councilor RoLesia Holman, Member Ward 4 Councilor Jodi Mills

Absent: None

Officers Present: City Manager James Timonere, Clerk of Council McKenzie Burgan

Visitors: Council President John Roskovics

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

Chair Ward 2 Councilor Calvin Crawford welcomed guest Interim Dean Ayres.

Special Guest Presentation

Interim Dean Ayres of Kent State Ashtabula

Interim Dean Ayres introduced himself. He is the Interim Dean and Chief Administrative Officer for Kent State University in Ashtabula and Dean and Chief Administrative Officer for Kent State University in Trumbull. He has held the role of Senior Vice Provost for Academic Affairs at the University of Toledo for about 4 years, and Dean of the graduate school at Wright State University for about 7 years. He started his career in faculty roles for many years. He is a Political Scientist by training and received his Ph.D. at Ohio State University. He informed us that Kent State is the third-largest institution in the state. He stated it is the healthiest place he has worked in and out of the state of Ohio. He explained that enrollments are down about 40% over the last ten years across all of the Kent State Regional Campuses. Every year they have been able to balance their budgets and a lot of this has been through nutrition and staff. They have fewer people than they used to have. Some good news is that last fall they were only down 6% and this is good because they were projected to be down 12%. The current spring semester has matched the same number of students they had last spring. They have a lot to do here in Ashtabula and across the regional campus system to try and turn these past trends around. They are healthy enough as a whole that they have time to change. He stated the pandemic did not alter their trajectories so much as accelerate and reveal them. If changes are not made, they will have to make some hard decisions in the future. They had a

visit from Kent State University President Todd Diacon, Provost Melody Tankersley, and Vice President for the regional campuses Dr. Peggy Shadduck. They took a tour of all the regional campuses, starting with Ashtabula. The message they brought was that the university as a whole was committed to the health of the regional campuses, the regional campuses remaining in their current communities, and how important these campuses are to the communities they serve. He stated he has had a hard time with what his vision is for the campus as he does not have a vision for the campus so much as he has a vision for the world we live in and the campus is just a way to achieve that vision. This vision is to live in communities and a society that is just and equitable and where everyone has a chance to prosper. The mission of Kent State as a whole is to transform lives through education. The particular mission of Kent State Ashtabula is to transform lives through education for those who, but for us, would not have the opportunity to get a college education. The whole purpose of having the structure they have and being where they are is to extend the reach of higher education to serve those who have been left out of the broader high education system. Through this work is how we change the world and make something better. Their work gives the communities around them a chance to share equally in the prosperity of broader society. Their mission is really justice and equity through education, so that everybody can prosper. If we are talking seriously about changing the world, the regional campuses are where it's at. Given their mission, they have four priorities. 1. They need to increase the number of learners they impact. The more learners they get, the more impact they can have. They are looking at how to get those who have typically been left out into their schools. These individuals include first-generation college students, adult learners, etc. 2. Increase the success of the learners they serve. Given the challenges their learners face, the success rate is not surprising and it is not out of line with the rest of higher education. 3. Serve the needs of the community around us. He asked if they are offering the programs needed for our community. 4. Continually improve their infrastructure to better serve the previously listed priorities.

City Manager Timonere asked if the statistics provided for enrollment were regional or for Kent State as a whole. Interim Dean Ayres stated the enrollment being down 6% was for the Ashtabula Campus. He stated the regional campuses varied widely as far as their enrollment percentages. Mr. Timonere asked if he knew how the main campus was doing as far as enrollment. Interim Dean Ayres stated they are in good shape. This past fall, they admitted not the largest freshman class but one that is in the top ten.

Council President John Roskovics shared a personal story about his college experience. He stated that if it were not for Kent State Ashtabula, he would not have been able to afford to go to college. He attended Kent State Ashtabula in the 70s where he was able to get his two-year degree and then was able to attend Garfield Senior College in Painesville. He expressed his great affection for Kent State Ashtabula and expressed his excitement at their growth, as there are probably a lot of people who are being better served today because of their program options and the ability to get a four-year degree at this campus. He stated this school is a vital part of our community. When he first started on the council, he said that he would love to see every graduate of Ashtabula City Schools be able to attend Kent State Ashtabula for free through a promise program. Interim Dean Ayres stated he has a conversation coming up with John Rubesich about something similar to that. Interim Dean Ayres mentioned they do have a Rising Scholars Program that has been running for four years now. This program starts in the 7th grade. There are 6 students in a cohort and they now have four cohorts. When they graduate, they can attend Kent State Ashtabula for free if they choose to do so. Kent State Ashtabula has a lot of two and four-year degrees that you can take and not have to leave the campus. He explained the cost side of this is interesting as well. People often refer to higher education as being expensive. He said it is, but there is a big difference between going to Kent State Ashtabula and going to Harvard. Kent State Ashtabula, or any regional campus, is about 40% less than the main campus. For a full-time student, it costs a little over \$7,000 a year. If you are eligible

for the full Pell Grant from the Federal Government, it will cover all but a couple of hundred dollars of the tuition at Kent State Ashtabula. There may be some legislation coming that would allow students to have access to OCOG funding too and this, along with the Pell Grant, would cover the tuition expenses. If everyone knew this information, he believes it would help a lot.

City Manager Timonere stated that one of the most significant times for us was when Kent State Ashtabula started offering four-year degrees. He stated that he knows some people who did two years of their education here at Kent Ashtabula and then went to another college to finish their four-year degree and got lost in the shuffle. He also thinks the ability for high school students to attend college classes at Kent Ashtabula allows students to see if college is the right choice for them and also allows them to earn college credits before graduating from high school. It is even possible to graduate high school with an associate's degree. Interim Dean Ayres stated he is working a lot with A-Tech to build partnerships between them and Kent State Ashtabula. He also stated that it is no longer that you go to college when you are 18 or you don't. It is now you can go to college whenever you are ready and want to.

City Manager Timonere asked if Interim Dean Ayres knew which major most of the students are enrolled in at the Kent State Ashtabula campus. Interim Dean Ayres stated the number one program is nursing, the number two program is Information technology, and the number three program would be the rest of the allied health programs combined. They also have a lot of students interested in some type of business. He stated they will be starting a Social Work Program this upcoming fall.

Vice Chair Ward 3 Councilor RoLesia Holman asked if Interim Dean Ayres can speak a little about the student demographic that is easier to draw in versus the demographic that has been more challenging. Interim Dean Ayres stated they have lost a lot of their adult learners. They have also seen a decline in Pell-eligible students or students who have lower socioeconomic backgrounds and he is not sure why. He also stated that their student racial/cultural demographics do not match the community. They do not have as many kids of color as they should and this is something they need to work on. He stated they need to figure out how to connect with the communities that are experiencing poverty. They tend to believe that everyone thinks college is valuable and they just wait for people to show up. He stated the university president spends a lot of time in Columbus speaking with state-level government officials and legislators trying to convince them that higher education is worth something. In some ways, the people who could most benefit from some form of higher education are being driven away because of the conversations that college is a waste of money, they party too much, etc.

City Manager Timonere asked if it was a messaging/marketing issue in regards to the conversation of higher education being too much money. He stated that the programs that are available to students are just put on a bulletin board somewhere where students are expected to find this information on their own and it is not happening for one reason or another. He asked how much of it is the perception of Kent State Ashtabula being less valuable than other areas. Interim Dean Ayres stated the fact that they get to put Ashtabula in their title actually helps and he believes a lot of people understand there is a difference between attending Kent Ashtabula and Kent main. He stated the difference looks valuable to people here. Some of this is messaging. There is a lot of information out there. He spoke with an individual about these issues and said that they send staff out to high schools to help parents with the FAFSA's and this individual said that is great, but do you realize that is step five and you skipped the first four steps? Most of the people they are trying to reach are back on step one not even knowing what a credit hour is. They need to figure out how to have this conversation be a dialogue and not a lecture and spend just as much time listening to people as they do talking. So the challenge is how do we get to these people and how do we reach them? It is not just about reaching the kids but their parents and guardians. If a child is excited about college and

their guardians do not agree, how do we get to these individuals to have this dialogue with them about higher education and ask them what they want for their children?

Member Ward 4 Councilor Jodi Mills stated that she believes starting at 10th grade or later is too late to be reaching out to these individuals about higher education. There needs to be early intervention that involves the parents and encourages them to want better for their kids. City Manager Timonere stated that with the 10th graders, how many times have parents found the important letter crumpled at the bottom of the bookbag they should have received the week prior? Parents are not even showing up to parent-teacher conferences. They will have one parent show up and it is the one who did not need to come in. How do we get the information out there if we cannot get people to show up? Interim Dean Ayres stated the good news is they can do this. He stated the Rising Scholars Program engages not only the student but the parents too. Some of the kids in the program have experienced homelessness and most are on some sort of public assistance. Not one of these kids has dropped out and that is amazing. So how do we scale this? This program allows for the kids who graduate to become mentors to the younger kids in the program and Kent will pay them to be mentors. Some of this is a question of resources and some of their focus. Council President John Roskovics stated that is something he believes is powerful, like a promise program, where a fifth grader can be told to get good grades and take school seriously, because they may be able to go to college for free. These programs are great because they give parents hope that maybe their kids can go to college and maybe this is a possibility. City Manager Timonere stated another thing these programs do is bring up your local school districts because if there is a standard for individuals in this program where they have to stay, it will bring up state report cards and put more emphasis on how important your school work actually is. Not only is it a win for Kent, our college community, and kids going on to higher education, but for the entire district as it stands. Council President John Roskovics stated maybe a levy can be created to help with this.

Interim Dean Ayres stated they have to look at their institution and see how they are using their resources. They do have some scholarship dollars. Traditional scholarship amounts tend to be based on how high your standardized test scores are and high school GPAs. So the individuals coming out of high school with the highest GPA are getting the most scholarship dollars and some of these kids and their families do not need the money. What Kent State Ashtabula and Trumbull have done is change the naming from merit scholarships to achievement scholarships. The old language made students internalize the value behind the language that if they get a 4.0 in high school they are worth more than the kid that gets a 3 or 2.5. The achievement scholarships are given to everyone who graduates from high school with a 2.5 GPA or better in the amount of \$1,000. The rest of the money goes to the people that need it. If their mission is to serve the people who most need help, they need to put their money where their mouth is. They align their resources with their mission. The messaging and the marketing are critical and the actual dollars are in some ways the least of their problems. Vice Chair Ward 3 Councilor RoLesia Holman stated this is music to her ears to hear they are giving the money to those who actually need it as support to help them achieve their goals. She also stated that she attended Ohio State University and worked with the Young Scholars Program, which sounds similar to Kent State's Rising Scholars Program. With the Young Scholars Program she worked with, the participation of parents was a requirement and they also had to go to the campus to get a feel for that setting. She asked Interim Dean Ayres if there are opportunities for the Rising Scholars Program to grow to include parents. Interim Dean Ayres said we are talking about parent participation and career exploration. Ms. Holman asked if the kids go to Kent main during the summer and he said he is not sure but he does know they go to the Ashtabula campus. Ms. Holman mentioned internship being another need as well.

Member Ward 4 Councilor Jodi Mills asked if there are surveys out there at all to assess the needs of kids and parents and to help kids figure out what they want to do because you do not know what

you do not know. Interim Dean Ayres stated there is a program where 6th and 11th graders come onto the Kent Ashtabula campus to see what is available. They have a program called Flash Medical where they run them through an exercise to see what all the different areas of the medical field consist of. He made a note to himself to try and get this going for some of their other programs too.

Vice Chair Ward 3 Councilor RoLesia Holman asked if they could do a program consisting of AI and VR where someone can actually do the work and see what it is like to do these jobs. This would be beneficial to our students who have little exposure.

Member Ward 4 Councilor Jodi Mills asked if there is anything revolving around the environmental areas at Kent Ashtabula. Interim Dean Ayres stated they have a faculty member at Kent Ashtabula who is a geologist and teaches some of those classes.

Interim Dean Ayres stated they have 7 regional campuses and each campus has different programs with some overlap. They are trying to think of ways to make these programs available to kids throughout these campuses. They need to continue to think of themselves as one university instead of 7 small universities.

Chair Ward 2 Councilor Calvin Crawford said thank you and expressed his appreciation of Kent State Ashtabula.

Interim Dean Ayres stated we could contact him and his team any time with questions, information, ideas, or if we just want an update. They are here to serve the community and we are the community.

Vice Chair RoLesia Holman asked if there was something Interim Dean Ayres would like to see from the city. He stated he would have to think about this. He said the thing he thinks about the most is how do we engage people in dialogue and if we know of forums to help with this, to let him know and he will be there.

Water Pollution Control Report

City Manager Provided the Waste Water Treatment Plant Report:

They completed electrical repairs to the Bridge and Morton Pump Station. One pump had to be ordered for this station and they are still waiting for it to come in. The secondary pump they had as backup has been installed. They have done some suppression surge capacitors down there. They have serviced a 180-volt service. They have upgraded and did some repairs to the grounding points out there. They had some timers they had to replace. They installed two new size two motor starters. Uninterrupted power supplies have been installed, so these kick on in the meantime while the generators are kicking on to keep everything powered. They have done some labeling. In addition to this, they have been discussing some curb appeal for the Bridge and Morton Pump Station with the Ashtabula Harbor Architecture Review Board. This could include painting the green fuel tank black and doing some things to the fence to make it not look like a pump station. The 826 Morton Drive bar rake had some electrical repairs done. There were some issues with the power lines. They had some surging going on, so some surge protection and monitoring had been added, so that if something were to happen, they could inform the power company about what happened. The outfall work has somewhat begun. They have taken the measurements that were needed and parts have been ordered. It is about a four to five-week wait for the clamp to be built. In the meantime, there will be divers going into the pipe and cleaning out the debris that was put into there and this will be done before the permanent repair. They had a pre-construction meeting on March 16th at Kinder Morgan with Allied and our guys going over everything. Hopefully, within the next couple of weeks, we will see some action with the cleaning of the pipe and then that will lead up to the time when the parts will be in to get this project completed. An ordinance for the contract to replace the Grit Building Roof

was completed. This is going out to bid and they are waiting on the RFPs for this. The work is still not completely done on the bar rake at the plant. It is online, but they still have to install grates and resolve some electrical issues. The lack of part supplies is why this project is not done yet. They had to order a 14-inch plug for the sewage sludge pump discharge line. They are working on pricing to get atmospheric monitoring of their methane release in their occupied spaces at the digester building. This is in case there is a leak. They have a little bit more upgraded and better protection if something were to happen, but this is for safety reasons. They cleaned and rebuilt the polymer pump for the centrifuge. They have been out doing a lot of camera work and televising sanitary and storm sewers. A lot of this is leading up to this year's paving project. They are trying to get on those streets so they do not have to cut the new roads.

Public Works Report

City Manager Provided the Public Works Report:

They still have crews on the night shift. He may, by the end of this week, make the call to transition them back to the day shift. The night crews are doing a lot of patching and they are able to run the street sweeper at night which has been much easier with the lower amounts of traffic. With the new bucket truck, they have been able to do some tree trimming. The sanitation employees will be going around with the bigger trucks and limbs scrape the truck so they then radio back to let them know those trees need to be trimmed. They have been doing a lot of vehicle cleaning. With this weekend's storm, they have shifted to picking up limbs from curbs. The two trucks they ordered from Nelson had a further investigation done on them and they turned out to have some frame issues beyond what they wanted to get into, so Mr. Nelson did agree to take them back, so they ended up not purchasing them. A new MAC cannot be ordered currently. They are out until 2025. When they tried to place an order, the order was denied. They have been looking for a double tandem axel dump truck in new condition. They are also in need of a regular one-ton dump truck for sanitation which is used primarily for extra resident pick-ups. The truck that is currently being used for this purpose is extremely old. They found one coming into a shop in Painesville. It is still \$75,000 so they are trying to work out the details. Sanitation does have the funds and did budget for a dump truck, so maybe by Monday's meeting, he will have an ordinance for this. Doing some comparisons, he found them in the \$90,000-\$112,000 range, so this is a pretty good deal. Apparently, this is a truck someone ordered a long time ago and has since then told them he does not want it, but the truck was already on its way.

City Manager's Report

GPD is putting everything together so they can go out to bid for the streets. This is a pretty aggressive paving program this year. He has everything separated by what the Street Levy Funds will pay and what the ARPA Funds will pay. This number may get tweaked a little bit based on what amount of money comes in the first half of the tax revenue. This paving list is on top of State Route 20 being done, Collins Blvd, and Ferry Dr. being done. They had the opportunity to apply for a Transportation Enhancement District Grant. The last time this grant was received was for the roads around Kinder Morgan Pinney Dock. We have on the paving list Michigan Ave. from West 19th St. to the concrete portion, just replacing the asphalt portion. He applied for the concrete portion, which is almost another \$500,000. They applied for \$400,000 with a \$100,000 match for that portion of Michigan Ave. This will probably not be done until next year with the way that grant goes. This grant is for economic development in areas where there could be growth. MFG has stated they will be growing and Chromoflo, now Vibrance, is talking about moving products from another plant in another state to Ashtabula, which could bring a 20-employee growth to their plant. We are the only ones in Ashtabula County that have applied for this grant.

Member Ward 4 Councilor Jodi Mills asked if this list could be put out there now as she has a few folks asking about it. City Manager Timonere stated we could speak about it at Monday's council meeting. Mrs. Mills said that on West 44th they were doing work on that road and she asked if there

was something going on before it could be paved and Mr. Timonere said no. Mr. Timonere and the City Engineer have been in contact with Dominion and the water company to make sure they are not scheduled to do any work on the roads that will be paved. Mr. Timonere said that work is being done on Mary Street Hill and they will be tunneling underneath the river to install a new line there.

Vice Chair Ward 3 Councilor RoLesia Holman asked Mr. Timonere if the businesses help contribute to the paving of these roads that have heavy traffic from the big trucks coming and going from these companies. Mr. Timonere said not as an assessment or extra payment outside of what is in their taxes. Mr. Timonere stated they just did a project with the State Highway Patrol where they brought in scales. Typically, when they do this, they get between 3 to 5 people pulled over that have the criteria of being overweight and they had four. The one truck had 29 violations on it which resulted in a \$10,000-\$20,000 fine for one truck. Ms. Holman asked what the success rate was for collecting these fines. Mr. Timonere stated that this has not been done with the scales since he has been here, so he is unsure. Other truck violations have been issued but once it gets sent to the courts it is in their hands. Ms. Holman asked when the redesign of the bike lane would happen. Mr. Timonere stated it would be part of this paving project. She asked about a timeframe. He said the cross-section part of the bike lane with the rumble strips will be ground out and new asphalt will be put down. This buffer is there because it is a pedestrian and a bike lane and the buffer is required. This is being made into just a bike lane. Pedestrians at the 38th St. traffic light will go from the Eastside of West Ave. to the Westside of West Ave. and will take the sidewalk. They will then take the new safe routes to schools sidewalks to Michigan Ave. and rejoin the bike lane where it comes out by the bank on Michigan. Bikers can either take that route or keep going on West Ave. to Smith Field. What this does is eliminate the entire buffer zone, so we will now have a northbound lane, a southbound lane, and a center-turning lane. The rumble strips on the eastern side will remain along with the bike lane. He believes in the contract they are putting mid-August as the last date for completion. He will check on this but they will be putting a completion date in the contract instead of this being an open-ended project. For next year they are pushing ODOT hard to upgrade 531 from Kent State all the way to Lake Ave., Bridge St., East 6th St., and past the Crow's Nest and Rt 11. He would also like to pave Station Ave. and some roads off of Station Ave. next year, along with some other minor side streets. Next year there will be some bigger roads being paved. The reason he wants to find out from ODOT when they can expedite the 531 project is that we will have a local share of this. Once he knows when this will be happening, they can plan the rest of the paving project. He can also go after another grant. We will be up for the Small Cities grant by then. Chair Ward 2 Councilor Calvin Crawford asked when the bid for the roads would be sent out. Mr. Timonere said, hopefully, by the end of this week.

Member Ward 4 Councilor Jodi Mills asked about the bus garage. Mr. Timonere said they have a couple more properties to take down over there. He is not sure how far they are in design or whether they have bid out yet. Mrs. Mills asked about the Clean Harbors on Benefit Ave. and asked if this is an established business. Mr. Timonere said it was Clean Harbors but they closed down a while ago. Because of what they did there, the closure of the property is under a lot of scrutiny. Mrs. Mills asked how this was going. Mr. Timonere said it is going fine. They remediated all the PCBs from the property and are now adding a product to the soil that will biodegrade the solvents they used. It takes about two to three months to do this. They will be testing the soil to make sure all the solvents are gone. Once the solvents are gone and the EPA is satisfied, they will demolish the buildings, and then the property will be back to useful use. They used to clean the big transformers on the telephone poles. Mrs. Mills asked when GPD will be coming to complete the rates assessment. Mr. Timonere stated that right before our previous Finance Director left they had sent them a bunch of data they needed to crunch. They are crunching all of those numbers as far as customers, current rates, historical figures, and collection rates, and then they will be able to come back with a "if you do these, here is where your rates need to be". They should be getting close.

New Business

None.

Next Meeting

The next meeting will be on April 24th at 5:00 p.m.

The next meeting is scheduled for Monday, April 24th at 5:00 p.m. in the Council Chambers.

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 6:43 PM by Chair Ward 2 Councilor Calvin Crawford.

Attested By: McKenzie Burgan, Clerk of Council