



City of Ashtabula

Ashtabula City Council

Community Development/Economic Development/Parks & Recreation Committee Meeting

Tuesday, August 8, 2023 at 4:00 PM

4717 Main 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 3:54 p.m. by Committee Chair Haines-DiGiacomo.

Roll Call

Members Present: Chair: Ward 5 Councilor Jane Haines-DiGiacomo, Member: President John Roskovics

Absent: Vice Chair: Ward 4 Councilor Jodi Mills

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

Parks & Recreation Board Members Present: Margaret Distler

Visitors: Ryan Whelpley with the Ashtabula County District Library and Julie Wayman with My Neighborhood Collaborative

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 Jane Haines-DiGiacomo welcomed guests Ryan Whelpley, Julie Wayman, and Margaret Distler

Special Guest Presentation

Ryan Whelpley with the Ashtabula County District Library

Ryan Whelpley spoke about the different digital resources the Ashtabula County District Library offers.

The following resources can be found on the library's main website page acdli.info

Hoopla and Libby- These are digital book resources the library offers to cardholders for free.

Northstar Digital Literacy- This resource offers different tests and information on things such as how to use computers, social media, basics of computers, career search skills, how to do MS office, and internet safety and security. There are some communities that use Northstar and LinkedIn Learning for city officials' training.

LinkedIn Learning- Offers thousands of trainings and webinars on multiple different topics. These trainings make you watch them as you cannot leave the screen or else the trainings stop.

Peterson's Test and Career Prep- This resource has free ACT and SAT practice tests.

CultureGrams- Highlights different countries in the world. This resource is directed more toward kids.

Sanborn Insurance Maps- This has a bunch of information and old maps.

What's that snake?- This has information about snakes found in Ohio.

Candid- This is a foundation directory. This resource does have to be accessed on a library computer as it is very expensive and secure. They do have a computer entirely dedicated to this resource and the staff can assist you with utilizing Candid if you would like some help. This is a grant database. There is an introduction video you can watch on your own that shows you how Candid works and walks you through how to use this database. You can watch the video before making a trip to the library to make sure it is something you could use. Mrs. Haines-DiGiacomo asked if this is something the city could use and Ryan said yes and there is also a section for individuals that offer grants on a smaller level. Mr. Timonere stated that usually, foundations do not grant to cities, there are a few that do, but this would take some time to dig through.

DMV Permit- This resource helps individuals practice taking their license test. Ryan stated the library also has traffic cones that can be checked out so people can take them home and practice their maneuverability.

Julie stated that she saw [ancestry.com](https://www.ancestry.com) was listed as a resource and asked Ryan if this was different than what you would have access to on the website and Ryan said yes. Mrs. Haines-DiGiacomo said, but it is free. Ryan said you can also go into the library and work with someone there as they have access to resources that are not made available to the public due to costs. He stated the free ancestry resource through the library is a great way to get started.

Margaret asked if the consumer reports resource was free also and Ryan said yes. Julie asked if they just log into that with their library card and they did not have to be at the library and Ryan said yes. Ryan said there are some resources they offer that you do have to be at the library to access.

Ryan mentioned a few times that if you need help locating your library card number and/or pin, you can contact the library and they will be able to assist you with that, so you can utilize these free resources.

Mrs. Haines-DiGiacomo asked if she wanted to read newspapers through the online library resources if she was able to do so and Ryan said yes she could and there is a list of what newspapers are available. They do not currently have everything digitalized but they are working on it. He stated they are doing their best to get all the local resources digitalized. Julie asked if they digitize in real time or if there is a delay and Ryan said there was a delay.

Julie stated they have been publishing their local food guide for the past six years and she was wondering if there is interest in digitizing copies or keeping copies of the past issues at the library. Ryan asked if he could have a copy to take with him and Julie said yes. He said they love those guides and Julie said she would bring a box of them to him later this week. Ryan said these go quite fast at the library.

Mrs. Haines-DiGiacomo stated she feels like the library offers so much more than she realized and that is why she wanted to have him as a guest. She stated people tend to think of the library as a place you go to and get books, but you can utilize these library resources from your phone.

Julie asked if there was a resource you could use to stream music and Ryan said you could do that from Hoopla.

City Manager's Report

City Manager Timonere stated that we have the last Bands on the Beach coming up on August 17th. The ADA mat was installed at Walnut Beach. He stated Eric Hrin, of the Gazette, got in touch with him that date about doing a story on the mats. He is trying to get him in touch with Manda and Tony

from the Developmental Disabilities Board to do a joint press release. We did get a grant from them for half of the mats. They have also looked into some other things that could improve accessibility down there going forward. The road going to the break wall was paved.

The Smith Field project has not been put out for a rebid yet. The first bid came in way over the engineer's estimate and we only had one bidder. They are trying to do a combination of tearing it down/breaking it down, so we get other bidders involved to be more competitive. He would still like to get this done by the end of the year. If not, it will be awarded and then be completed next year in the spring.

He believes they are going to be buying eight picnic tables for Kadon Park. They will throw the old ones out and replace them with the new tables. Mrs. Haines-DiGiacomo asked if the picnic tables were going to be the same configuration as the ones currently there and Mr. Timonere said no, these would be regular picnic tables. Julie asked if they would be bolted down and he said no. She asked if they were going to be wooden or metal and Mr. Timonere said wooden.

Mr. Timonere stated he believes the lifeguards will be working weekends only starting the week of the 23rd. Then their last day guarding the beach will be Labor Day.

Margaret asked if we will lose the grant for Smith Field if the project is not completed this year and Mr. Timonere said no we have two years to use it.

Parks & Recreation Committee Report

Margaret reported on the August 1st Parks and Recreation Board meeting. They met at Kadon Park. They spoke about the beach mats, at the time, still not being installed, about Smith Field needing to be re-bid and potentially broken into different pieces. Ward 4 Councilor Jodi Mills informed them that the mats should be installed either that week or the next and that the hills were mowed by ODOT, and the road was paved back to the break wall at Walnut Beach.

They spoke about the \$7,500.00 that came out of the Park Levy for the fireworks at Wine and Walleye. They stated there is nothing on the shirts that recognizes the Parks Levy contribution of the \$7,500.00 towards the fireworks. Going forward they believe it would be a good idea to add this to the shirts so people know where some of their Park Levy funds are going.

They had a conversation discussing some frustrations the board is feeling regarding their ideas and lack of communication. The guest from My Neighborhood Collaborative also voiced some frustration regarding feedback.

They spoke with My Neighborhood Collaborative about park mowing, tables at Kadon Park, how there is no bike rack, and with the Greenway Trail close in proximity and kids coming to the park to play, they feel one is needed. Mr. Timonere stated the bike rack they had there was stolen. Julie asked if the bike rack was in-ground or just on the surface. Mr. Timonere said it was a six-foot bike rack and was huge. He did not believe it was cemented in, but it was probably over 100 pounds.

They also spoke about needing trashcans with lids as the wind blows the current ones over or blows the trash out of them.

Lastly, they spoke about how, with the vegetable garden, seniors and low-income individuals can get on the CSA vegetable list for \$50 and they would receive 10 weeks of vegetables. Individuals can also get on this list for \$100 and a family for \$200 and they would also receive 10 weeks of vegetables. Mrs. Haines-DiGiacomo asked what age they considered a senior and Julie said 55 and up.

The next meeting will be held on Wednesday, September 6, 2023, at 5:00 p.m. at Cornelius Park.

My Neighborhood Collaborative

Julie of MNHC stated that they appreciate the news about the new tables, which is exciting and will be a big help with attracting people to the area.

She stated they have their Tuesday market where they pick in the morning and then sell outside the APMC's Premiere Fitness Plaza. At the market, they were also distributing copies of their Local Food Guide which is published by OSU and Ashtabula Local Food. This guide lists all the farms, farmer's markets, community gardens, honey producers, and resources around access to local foods. This guide is published annually.

She stated she was very pleased to see volunteers down in the garden this morning. They have a really good group of core volunteers, about five people who show up consistently and help them harvest in exchange for vegetables.

They have an upper garden and a lower garden. The lower garden they let the neighbors use and they primarily manage that one. They are currently transitioning the upper garden to an organic system. They are doing away with some of the harsher chemicals. The focus when doing organics is to build the health of the soil. With that being said, their focus for the next several years will be on the health of the soil. When you start transitioning from using harsher chemicals to being organic, there can be rough periods where there is lower production productivity. They have scaled back their CSA due to this. They used to serve 20 members and now they serve 10. The CSA is a vegetable subscription box where, once a week for ten weeks in the summer, people can show up and get a vegetable subscription. To make sure vegetables are still accessible to people without CSA subscriptions, they also have a market on Saturdays. Their stand is open and people can come and purchase vegetables. They do take SNAP and also offer produce perks. Produce Perks is a program that doubles the SNAP dollar on purchases. For example, if you buy \$5 worth of produce, your card only gets charged \$2.50 and this can be used for up to \$25 per transaction. It is a goal of theirs to make people aware of this perk. Due to their transition to organic, they are slowly spreading the word so as to not blast it out there and have so many people show up on Saturdays for vegetables and there not be enough there.

Tuesday markets seem to be fine. They had another vendor join them on this date and that was fun. They are working with the RSVP Senior Volunteer program, so they have some of their volunteers come sit with them at these markets and that has been nice.

She stated it is feeling more like a community garden now due to all the different partnerships they have going on now. They have also been in communication with the yO! Program and they were very helpful with the fence installation. They plan on working with them on a more regular basis.

Julie stated that she did want to bring up the mowing patterns there since the fence had been installed. She needs to know if the gate needs to be moved or adjusted so they have access again.

She stated the board is on track and she feels very good about where they are organizationally and where the garden is. She stated their hope in the upcoming years is to do more programming in the park and use the garden as a backdrop both for gardening and nutrition information but also for mental health programming and partnership with some of those agencies.

Margaret asked how long it would take to transition to an organic garden. Julie stated the standard, if you are going for certification, is a three-year transition period where the garden can not be sprayed with certain items for those three years. They are not pursuing certification as it is expensive and involves a lot of paperwork and is not needed for the scale that they are growing. If they do use any chemicals, they are all organic, but they are moving away from this and focusing on soil management.

Margaret stated she believed Julie mentioned looking into rain barrels. Julie said they have talked about this, but it would be a conversation about whether the city wants the barrels there. They would also have to calculate how much rainwater the barrels would actually accumulate. This is one of the more unrealistic thoughts about what they can do. This year they have been lucky with the rain patterns working in their favor. They have not had to run the hoses at all and they have not had to use their drip irrigation. The water bill should be significantly less than last year.

They have a new treasurer, Kate Reedy from Spire Institute, who has been on the board for several years, but their current treasurer is stepping off as treasurer but staying on the board, so Kate is filling the role of treasurer. They are going to do more aggressive fiscal management and pursue more grants. They also would like to know what running the garden actually costs so they will be looking into these things. Their overall goal will be to produce and sell enough to at least pay the gardeners a stipend and cover their costs.

Mrs. Haines-DiGiacomo asked how many members they have in MNHC. Julie said they currently have five board members. Their secretary position is currently vacant. Mrs. Haines-DiGiacomo asked about volunteers. Julie said they do not have any qualifications for membership other than board membership. She said pre-COVID they did some sort of educational activity, usually at the library where they would bring in a guest speaker and try to attract community members so they could build relationships and connections within the community. Due to COVID, they got away from these events and have not yet gotten back to this. They would like to do some sort of event like a block party or neighborhood night in the garden to get people into the garden space. This will either occur in the spring or in the fall.

Unfinished Business

None.

New Business

None.

Next Meeting

Tuesday, September 12th at 4:30 p.m.

The next meeting will be on Tuesday, September 12, 2023, at 4:30 p.m. and the Parks and Rec Board meeting will be on Wednesday, September 6, 2023, at 5:00 p.m.

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 4:49 PM by Chair Jane Haines-DiGiacomo.

Attested By: McKenzie Burgan, Clerk of Council