

ASHTABULA CITY COUNCIL
CITY OF ASHTABULA – COUNCIL CHAMBERS
4717 Main Avenue, Ashtabula, OH 44004

REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
Monday, April 20th, 2020

CALL TO ORDER

The President of Council called the virtual meeting to order at 7:00 p.m., the Ward 2 Councilor offered the opening prayer and the Ward 3 Councilor recited the Pledge of Allegiance.

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| MEMBERS PRESENT: | Mrs. Kym A. Foglio | (Ward 1 Councilor) |
| | Mr. Calvin C. Crawford | (Ward 2 Councilor) |
| | Ms. Laydean Young | (Ward 3 Councilor) |
| | Ms. Octavia V. Harris | (Ward 4 Councilor) |
| | Ms. Jane E. Haines | (Ward 5 Councilor) |
| | Mr. Michael D. Speelman | (Vice President) |
| | Mr. John S. Roskovics | (President) |

MEMBER(S) ABSENT: None

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| OFFICER(S) PRESENT: | Mr. James M. Timonere | (City Manager) |
| | Ms. Traci R. Welch | (Director of Finance) |
| | Mr. Michael Franklin | (City Solicitor) |
| | Mrs. Stacy H. Senskey | (Clerk of Council) |

OFFICER(S) ABSENT: None

SUNSHINE LAW: The Clerk of Council certified conformity to the Ohio Sunshine Law.

EXECUTIVE SESSION: None

ANNOUNCEMENT:

Due to the current stay-at-home order imposed by Governor DeWine, the Council President announced the Council Rules of Order may be temporarily suspended at any meeting of the City Council. Ms. Haines moved; Ms. Harris seconded to suspend the Council Rules of Order for the duration of the meeting. On the roll call: Mrs. Foglio, Mr. Crawford, Ms. Young, Ms. Harris, Ms. Haines, Mr. Speelman, Mr. Roskovics voted yea; motion CARRIED.

PRESENTATION:

Health Commissioner of Ashtabula City Health Department, Christine Hill shared current City Health Department actions regarding the COVID-19 situation. She reported as of 2:00 p.m. this afternoon, the State of Ohio has a total of 12,919 confirmed cases, including 403 probable cases and a death count of 509 souls. In Ashtabula County, there are 68 confirmed cases, 13 of which are hospitalized and 6 deaths. In Ashtabula City, there are 15 confirmed cases, two of

which are hospitalized, one probable case. They are following 83 close contacts of the confirmed and probable cases. The City's Nursing Division received training on new software from the Ohio Department of Health (ODH), designed to ease the burden of isolation, quarantine, and contact tracing. They implemented the ODH Director's order to release protected health information to Ohio's first responders. For nearly a week, they collaborated with Ashtabula County Emergency Management Agency (EMA) and 911 Computer Aided Dispatch (CAD) system. Continued requests for Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) from first responders and the health care system are fulfilled by the City's Nursing Division. The State of Ohio sent COVID test kits, reserved for health care workers and congregate living sites. Ashtabula County, Ashtabula City and Conneaut City health departments are developing procedures and guidelines for using the test kits in shortage areas. Under the Environmental Health Division, beginning May 1, Ohio will initiate re-opening the State's economy. It will be a slow process, driven by careful analysis. The City Health Department Staff are asking the public to continue to be patient as they are experiencing a high volume of calls and questions for guidance about local businesses re-opening. Much emphasis is placed on restoring the economy at a gradual and cautious plan. The safety of our citizens and protection of PPE must be considered in conjunction with resuming businesses. The Environmental Division continues to respond to complaints of violations of the Stay-At-Home, Essential Business and Social Distancing Orders. Much needed food distribution sites were advised to establish processes to conform with Social Distancing Orders. Complaints from employees about their workplaces are all being investigated, though many are unfounded. The Environmental Division staff is educating those workplaces with instances of non-compliance are seen.

The Council President announced Governor DeWine's decision to cancel schools for the remainder of the school year. Ms. Hill expressed her approval of the Governor's decision. Keeping the schools closed will allow additional time planning for the next school year. The Ward 3 Councilor announced she is organizing a food distribution event in the parking lot behind her church. Ms. Hill recommended cars should be in single file lines and people should stay in their cars to reduce instances of people congregating and milling. Ms. Hill also suggested to contact Environmental Health Director, Terri Collett. The City Manager also offered his assistance.

The Council President expressed his gratitude to Ms. Hill and her staff at the City Health Department.

REGULAR BUSINESS AGENDA

PRESENTATION OF MEETING MINUTES:

The Clerk of Council presented the minutes from the following meeting:

- April 6, 2020 Regular Council Meeting

Mrs. Foglio moved; Ms. Haines seconded to waive the reading of the minutes. On the roll call: Mrs. Foglio, Mr. Crawford, Ms. Young, Ms. Harris, Ms. Haines, Mr. Speelman, Mr. Roskovics voted yea; motion CARRIED. Hearing no corrections, the minutes were approved as presented.

ADMINISTRATIVE REPORTS and COMMUNICATIONS

CITY MANAGER:

The City Manager is opening the transfer station for receiving large and bulk items daily starting Tuesday, April 21 from 7:00 a.m. to noon. The transfer station office will allow one person at time for check-out and payment in order to maintain social distancing. The recycle bins are accessible outside the gate. Because people are exploiting this benefit, the bins may be locked and moved behind the gates. The area is supervised by a video camera and violators will soon face charges if improper waste products are dumped in the recycle bins. Each bin is clearly marked with allowable items.

Under the direction of Governor DeWine, the City Manager is planning the slow progression of opening up starting May 1, 2020. The City must implement a gradual pace to prevent a spike in the number of COVID-19 cases which could overwhelm our health departments and health care services. Ms. Hill and her staff are tirelessly and extensively managing current patients and their contacts. A spike could ruin any progress made by closing the gap and lead to shutting Ashtabula down again. The City Manager is planning protocols to safely place city employees on their normal schedules and follow the Governor's recommendations for opening our businesses again starting Monday, May 4th.

The Finance Director and the City Manager are collaborating to forecast the finances. Budget reduction modifications from other communities include furloughs and layoffs. Despite outcry from Ohio local governments and small cities to our legislators, relief is not forthcoming. Unions around the country are also advocating on behalf of municipalities of our size. The largest decreases in revenue on the uncollected balance impacts the following line items in the City budget: 15% of Income Tax, 10% of Property Tax, 20% of Court Revenue, 25% of Motor Vehicle Fuel Tax, 20% of Emergency Management Services. The State of Ohio cut the Local Governments Fund by 15%. The City will see a \$96,000 reduction in revenue because School Resource Officers are no longer needed in the schools. More lines are impacted but at a lesser amount. The calculations leave the City with a \$1 million dollar shortfall for 2020. A plan to present a modified budget at another finance meeting within the next two weeks, then again to full Council at the May 4th Regular Council Meeting for a vote. If the modified budget is approved the cuts would be implemented the end of May. The City Manager said it is imperative to continue contacting state and federal legislators, asking for small cities funding. The assistance would not fully cover all the reductions, but any help is needed and appreciated.

The City Manager rejected all the paving bids and resubmitted a new bid package. The package reduces the project to the levy funds currently collected and encumbered. The 2021 paving bid package will include second half of the 2020 collection and the first half of 2021 collection. This will be the bid package process each year of the levy. The new bid packages should be received by the end of this week and the City Manager hopes to present his recommendation for this year's project.

The City Manager decided not to hire the part-time grass cutter this year. Other City employees will take on the responsibility. Since the School Resource Officers are available, he is waiting to

hire another police officer until after the pandemic situation has subsided. All City Department Heads and Staff were told spending is on a “must-need” basis. Discussions with Unions are ongoing. The City Manager praised the diligent efforts of the Finance Director as well as the Fire Chief and Assistant Finance Director. They all are looking at alternatives that would have a positive impact on the modified budget.

The Ward 5 Councilor asked the City Manager to share contact information for our State and Federal Legislators on the new City of Ashtabula Facebook page. The Council Vice President spoke on behalf of local small business owners. He reported many local business owners have not received assistance of any kind for their business or personally. It is critical to allow businesses to open or risk never opening again. He encourages people to think and make their own decisions. The choice to slowly open businesses May 1st may not be soon enough for many. The City Manager recognizes COVID 19 is not only a health crisis, but an economic crisis. Calling on our State legislators to release the rainy day fund would ease the devastating impact on the City’s economy and the livelihood of Ashtabula business owners. The decisions put in place kept our healthcare systems from being overwhelmed, as intended.

CITY SOLICITOR:

The City Solicitor stated his department continues to operate with staggered work weeks. Much of the caseload is managed successfully by using scheduled telephone conferences, a practice he hopes to keep in place once normalcy returns. He advocates citizens should follow the law and directives from elected leaders and safety forces. He advises to consider alternatives before making rash decisions.

CLERK OF COUNCIL:

The Clerk of Council reported on the growing amount of people experiencing stress and anxiety, many for the first time in their lives, because of the present health pandemic. She reached out to Miriam Walton and the Ashtabula County Mental Health and Recovery Services Board (ACMHR SB) for the tips and tools they offer and recommend. Feelings of stress, anxiety and fear are normal in times of crisis. Their website, ashtabulamhrs.org, and Facebook page offers many services to help manage those feelings. For families with children learning from home, the Board offers PAXtools. Other ways to seek help: Call Ashtabula County Hopeline 1-800-577-7849, Text 4hope to 741741 to access the Ohio Crisis Textline, Ohio Department of Mental Health and Addictions Services website, mha.ohio.gov. A hotline specifically for use by healthcare workers and first responders is also available.

CITY COUNCIL COMMITTEE REPORTS and COMMUNICATIONS

ALL COMMITTEE MEETINGS ARE CANCELLED UNTIL FURTHER NOTICE.

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT/ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT/PARKS & RECREATION (CD/ED/P&R)

Members: Chair/Council Liaison to Parks and Recreation Board Haines; Vice Chair Harris; Roskovics

FINANCE & PERSONNEL - (F&P)

Members: Chair Foglio; Vice Chair Young; Roskovics

PUBLIC WORKS/PUBLIC UTILITIES/CABLE/SCHOOLS - (PW/PU/C/S)

Members: Chair Crawford; Vice Chair Harris; Young

SAFETY FORCES - (SF)

Members: Chair Speelman; Vice Chair Foglio; Haines

LEGISLATION AGENDA

- Formal Legislation Request(s): None
- Form and Correctness
- Legislation Overview
The Council President provided a brief overview of the Legislation Agenda, consisting of Ordinance No. 2020-41.
- Public Discussion (on legislation only) – None

LEGISLATION READING

The Clerk of Council presented the following legislation:

ORDINANCE NO. 2020-41 AN ORDINANCE AUTHORIZING THE CITY MANAGER TO ENTER INTO A CONTRACT WITH BROBST TREE & STUMP SERVICE TO PROVIDE DISPOSAL OF YARD DEBRIS FOR THE CITY OF ASHTABULA (City Manager)

Mr. Crawford moved; Mrs. Foglio seconded to waive the reading of the legislation. On the roll call: Mrs. Foglio, Mr. Crawford, Ms. Young, Ms. Harris, Ms. Haines, Mr. Speelman, Mr. Roskovics voted yea; motion CARRIED. Mrs. Foglio moved; Ms. Harris seconded to waive the Charter requirement of two readings. On the roll call to waive the Charter requirement of two readings: Mrs. Foglio, Mr. Crawford, Ms. Young, Ms. Harris, Ms. Haines, Mr. Speelman, Mr. Roskovics. On the roll call to adopt the legislation: Mrs. Foglio, Mr. Crawford, Ms. Young, Ms. Harris, Ms. Haines, Mr. Speelman, Mr. Roskovics voted yea; motion CARRIED.

NEW BUSINESS

TELL US SOMETHING WE DON'T KNOW

- The Ward 2 Councilor reported Ashtabula Area City Schools and Lakeside High School are celebrating the 2020 graduates tonight, April 20th, 2020 at 8:20 p.m. for 20 minutes by illuminating the football field and scoreboard. They are asking residents to join in by turning on front porch lights. Lakeside Stadium will remain closed for this event to reduce mass gatherings. The Ward 1 Councilor stated Edgewood High School is also participating at Warrior Stadium.
- The Council Vice President reminded fellow citizens that elected officials may not be able to give the best answer to fit each individual situation. Sometimes the best answer comes from within one's own self.

PUBLIC DISCUSSION/COMMENTS (General Matters)

The Clerk of Council presented emails and phone calls from the public.

Mr. Pete Bean asked about Petmin seeking an increase in allowable pollutants. The City Manager explained in their original air permit Petmin planned for a company to capture and reuse the carbon dioxide emissions. Because of the pandemic, they were unable to secure the contract and could not move ahead with construction unless they asked for a modified air permit from the Ohio Environmental Protection Agency (OHEPA). The OHEPA has determined these increased levels are still acceptable for discharge, though Petmin intends to secure a contract with the off taker company or build a facility to capture the carbon dioxide themselves. Petmin was honest about the situation and did their due diligence with the OHEPA and the City of Ashtabula. The OHEPA will be holding a public hearing on the draft air permit online on May 7 at 6 p.m.

The Clerk fielded two phone calls about trash and sanitation. One woman asked if the City would consider having a Clean-up Day. The City used to organize a clean-up day, but it was expensive and not in the budget at this time. Another woman asked for guidelines for putting out garbage cans, bags and recycle containers. Since the transfer station is opening up from 7 a.m. to noon starting Tuesday, this may no longer be an issue. On windy days, the recycle container lids tend to blow open.

Mr. Earl Tucker emailed due to his concern about the City budget crisis and asked why the sale of the Wastewater Treatment plant to Aqua cannot be discussed. The City Manager replied discussions of the sale should have happened when first presented this year, however the sale of the asset would not come in time to help with the current budget situation. A subsequent request from the Vice President to amend City Council Rules of Order to treat Committee meetings the same as Regular Council meetings.

Mr. Kellat sent a lengthy email including possible budget options and alternatives. He encouraged City Council and Administration to work together regardless of differences of opinions.

The Ward 3 Councilor commented on the Vice President's request to amend the City Council Rules of Order and wants to include meeting conduct and language when amending the rules. She was contacted by several citizens from her Ward about large potholes in need of patching. Other Ward 3 citizens are eager to form a group to combat high litter areas of the Ward. The City Manager commended the efforts but is discouraging getting groups together until people can safely congregate.

The Ward 5 Councilor thanked the Ward 3 Councilor for discussing proper conduct and language during Council meetings. The Vice President apologized, and a brief discussion continued about the justified frustrations during this national crisis.

*Ashtabula City Council Regular Meetings Minutes
Monday, April 20, 2020*

ADJOURNMENT

Hearing no further business to come before this Council, the President thanked the community for understanding the situation and declared the meeting adjourned at 8:07 p.m.

DATE APPROVED: May 4, 2020

ATTESTED BY: John S. Roskovics
John S. Roskovics, President of Council

ATTESTED BY: Stacy H. Senskey
Stacy H. Senskey, Clerk of Council