

**Ashtabula City Municipal Building)
City of Ashtabula, Ohio)**

Monday, June 3, 2013

Call to Order

Council met in a **REGULAR MEETING**. The President of Council called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

Opening Ceremony (Prayer/Pledge/Moment of Silence)

The Clerk of Council offered the opening prayer and the Pledge of Allegiance was cited.

Members Present: Mr. August A. Pugliese, (Ward 2)
Mr. Richard F. Balog, (Ward 1)
Mr. James M. Trisket, (Ward 5)
Mrs. Ann I. Stranman, (Ward 3)
Mr. Christopher J. McClure, (Vice President)
Mr. JP Ducro IV, (President)

Member(s) Absent: Mrs. Julie A. Lattimer, (Ward 4)

Officer(s) Present: City Manager James M. Timonere, City Solicitor Michael Franklin
City Auditor Dana D. Pinkert, Clerk of Council LaVette E. Hennigan

Officer(s) Absent: None

Excused Absence: Mr. Trisket moved, Mrs. Stranman seconded to excuse the Ward 4 Councilor from this meeting; motion CARRIED.

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

Presentations: None

Executive Session: None

CONSENT AGENDA

The Consent Agenda is a means whereby Council is able to more efficiently conduct business.

MEETING MINUTES DISPOSAL

May 6, 2013 Regular Meeting
May 9, 2013 Special Meeting
May 20 Public Hearing

Ashtabula City Regular Council Meeting
Monday, June 3, 2013

Mr. Trisket moved, Mrs. Stranman seconded to waive the reading of the minutes; motion CARRIED. There being no corrections, the minutes stood approved as presented.

FORMAL LEGISLATION REQUESTS - None

PUBLIC DISCUSSION (Consent Agenda Legislation Only) – None

LEGISLATION READING - None

(End of Consent Agenda)

REGULAR AGENDA

READING AND DISPOSAL OF MEETING MINUTES - None

CITY MANAGER’S REPORT

Ashtabula City Parks & Recreation Board

The City Manager requested the appointment of Mr. Christopher Raab to the Ashtabula City Parks & Recreation Board, effective immediately with a term to expire on May 21, 2017. Mr. Trisket moved, Mr. Pugliese seconded to grant the Manager’s request; motion CARRIED.

Vacant Properties

The City Manager reported Council recently passed a Vacant Property ordinance. About a week or so ago owners of vacant properties received a letter from the Planning & Community Development (PCD) Department. The letter explained the process for registering vacant properties and the steps to follow after registration is completed. He reported that the “exemption” section of the process is being overlooked, which details the steps to take to be exempt from registering properties and paying required fees. If properties have no violations because they are well maintained or due to their being no known plans to rent, sell, lease, or personally use them, the City would not know it is a vacant property. This needs to be communicated to PCD. Questions regarding the letter and the vacant property process may be directed to PCD, as well. The Manager reported the program has been successful, to date. Owners have called to say their property is being rented, at which time the department sets the property up as a rental, which information previously was not known.

Ashtabula City Regular Council Meeting
Monday, June 3, 2013

A few owners have called to say they are razing the structures; and two have already been razed. Our program is modeled after the City of Painesville, and the City of Conneaut has a similar program. The Manager said the City did not vacate the properties, but has been left with trying to see that they are taken care of by the owner. He reported the new term for some vacant properties is "Zombie properties". These are properties where a financial institution begins a foreclosure proceeding, the owner moves out of the property, then the institution withdraws the foreclosure, and leaves it sitting empty, with no one taking responsibility for it. It is happening throughout the county, state, and country. We are trying to do what we can to hold owners accountable for their properties.

QUESTIONS AND/OR COMMENTS FOR THE CITY MANAGER - None

CITY SOLICITOR'S REPORT - None

QUESTIONS AND/OR COMMENTS FOR THE CITY SOLICITOR - None

CITY AUDITOR'S REPORT

Annual Sewer/Trash Bill Certification: The Auditor reported notices were sent to landlords today for delinquent sewer and trash bills, and that the assessment period is approaching. The deadline for certification is the first week in August. She urged citizens to call the Auditor's Department to take care of outstanding balances. She urged landlords who have not had contact with the City in the last year to call because it means they are not on the list. She urged those who know landlords to share this information with them so they may avoid being assessed for unpaid sewer and trash invoices.

Street Lighting Assessment: The Auditor announced the street lighting assessment reduction deadline is August 15. Applications are available in the Auditor's office or via email.

QUESTIONS AND/OR COMMENTS FOR CITY AUDITOR

Street Lighting Assessment: The President asked the Auditor to explain eligibility criteria. The Auditor reported: parcels have no improvements on them, the properties must be contiguous (next to each other), and used as a one or two family home and yard. The assessment, if approved, is reduced to \$36.00. A copy of the property tax bill must accompany the reduction application.

Ashtabula City Regular Council Meeting
Monday, June 3, 2013

CITY COUNCIL COMMITTEE REPORTS and COMMUNICATIONS

Community / Economic Development / Parks & Recreation (Mrs. Stranman/Mr. Balog)

The Chair announced the Committee will meet on June 5, at 6:00 p.m. The agenda topics will be: historical district sidewalk regulations (signs, tables, grills), rental unit inspections with outstanding fees owed to the City, regular agenda items (Parks & Recreation), and a proposed no smoking in parks inquiry.

QUESTIONS/COMMENTS FOR THE COMMITTEE

East 48th Street Adoption Process: The President reported hearing about community discussion regarding the adoption of the East 48th Street Park, and asked how the process works. The City Manager reported the agreement document for AshtaChemical employees to perform volunteer electrical work in Cornelius Park has been completed. He said volunteers may not take up a cause in a public facility without first obtaining permission from the City due to liabilities. The City wants to make sure the donor, workmen, and City are protected. We now have a template/form for the physical work and a Donation Policy created by the City Auditor. This will also keep the Parks & Recreation Board informed of park activities they are not directly involved in.

The President commented that if someone wants to momentarily donate to a project, their donations would be given directly to the City of Ashtabula and disbursed and tracked accordingly. The Auditor said she would like to know in advance if donations are going to be solicited so the right accounts, and funds, and tracking system may be established. The President announced that anyone desiring to begin a donation drive for a specific project should be directed to the Auditor to get started.

Finance and Personnel - (Mr. Ducro IV/Mrs. Lattimer)

The Chair announced the Committee is scheduled to meet on Friday, June 14, at 8:00 a.m.

Public Works / Utilities / Schools – (Mr. August Pugliese/Mrs. Lattimer)

The Chair announced the Committee will meet on June 11, at 8:00 a.m. A representative from Time Warner Cable will present to answer questions. He encouraged resident's attendance.

Safety Forces – (Mr. Balog/Mr. Trisket)

The Chair announced the Committee is tentatively scheduled to meet on Friday, June 21, at 8:00 a.m.

Ashtabula City Regular Council Meeting
Monday, June 3, 2013

Legislation Request: The Chair entertained a motion to enact new Codified Ordinance Section 147.03(f)... “When as a result of exhausting reasonable attempts to collect the charges, or as unique operational circumstances require, it becomes necessary to amend, write-off or modify charges for ambulance services, the Fire Chief shall present the circumstances to the City Manager and City Auditor. Upon the consent of all parties, charges for ambulance services shall be amended, modified or written-off as agreed upon.” Mr. Trisket moved, Mrs. Stranman seconded to grant the Chair’s request; motion CARRIED.

Work Session

Crime Free Multi-Housing (CFMH) Program: The President reported that efforts to invite speakers to the City to discuss this program are still in the works. He offered to work with the Manager to make this happen.

Ward Meetings: The President kindly reminded the City Manager he looks forward to these meetings being scheduled, and would work with the Manager on doing so.

The Manager asked that consideration be given to having the CFMH meeting closer to the fall. He said with all that is going on in the Planning & Community Development Department (PCD), (e.g. Vacant Property program), to add another major program would be difficult. The President agreed, said he only commented on it because it has been on the pending docket for some time, and agreed that manpower to manage a program is vital.

FORMAL LEGISLATION REQUESTS – None

PUBLIC COMMENT (Legislation Only) - None

LEGISLATION READING

ORDINANCE NO. 2013-95 AN ORDINANCE AUTHORIZING THE CITY MANAGER TO ENTER INTO A CONTRACT WITH GPD GROUP FOR THE PURPOSE OF PROVIDING ENGINEERING SERVICES FOR THE WEST HARBOR SANITARY SEWER IMPROVEMENT, was presented. Mrs. Stranman moved, Mr. Pugliese seconded, to waive the reading of the ordinance; motion CARRIED. Mrs. Stranman moved, Mr. Trisket seconded, to waive the Charter requirement of two readings. The President asked if the City’s camera equipment is used for this scope work. The Manager responded no. The President asked if our cameras have arrived.

Ashtabula City Regular Council Meeting
Monday, June 3, 2013

The Manager responded no; and that a bid was just let for a trailer to enclose it; and hopefully the cameras will be received by then so everything can be done at once. On the roll call to waive the Charter requirement of two readings: Mr. Pugliese, Mr. Balog, Mr. Trisket, Mrs. Stranman, Mr. McClure, Mr. Ducro voted yea; motion CARRIED. On the roll call to adopt the ordinance: Mr. Pugliese, Mr. Balog, Mr. Trisket, Mrs. Stranman, Mr. McClure, Mr. Ducro voted yea; motion CARRIED.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS - None

NEW BUSINESS - None

MISCELLANEOUS BUSINESS

Volunteers: The Manager thanked ADDA, LBCA, Saving Ashtabula's History, and individual citizens for all the work they are doing in our parks and neighborhoods. He thanked them for their willingness to help, and asked that they bear with the City as they move through the process of ensuring everyone's well-being is taken care of.

Summer Safety: The Vice President reported students are getting out of school for the summer. He asked that motorists watch for children, and reminded of the newly amended Minor Curfew Law, which law was constructed with the help of Lakeside Junior High School 7th graders.

East 6th Street & Parkgate Avenue: The Ward 2 Councilor reported receiving several comments regarding the stone debris, dust, and mud from Pinney-Dock/Kinder Morgan. He asked the Manager to notify the company that trucks leaving their doc should make sure no stones are on their tailgates. The Manager said he contacted them when the Councilor first notified his office of the concern, and that they watered the area down and cleaned the road. He will be sure to be mindful of the area in case notification to the company is needed again.

Route 11 Grass Cutting: The Manager reported the City entered a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the State of Ohio, Ohio Department of Transportation (ODOT), to have them mow the Route 11 medians, and exit and entrance ramps. He and others have noticed the grass is high all along Route 11. He contacted ODOT the second and third time, and was told our stretch of Route 11 was missed on the first round of cutting. They have made sure we are included in the next round scheduled for this or next week. He reported ODOT contracted the service out this year.

Ashtabula City Regular Council Meeting
Monday, June 3, 2013

Parks-to-Parks (South Park & Cornelius Park) Clean up: The President announced that in excess of 70 volunteers helped with clean up of parks along Main Avenue. He specifically acknowledged Mr. Chris Hamrick and Mr. Greg Kocjancic (not a city resident) for being there Saturday and Sunday from 8:00 a.m. until 8:00 p.m.

Memorial Day: The President thanked citizens for providing a good showing at the parade and ceremony at Veteran's Park.

Reporting of Violations: The President reported he issued an invitation for persons to email him with high grass and/or vacant property violations. It greatly helps City officials when reports are called in because it is impossible for City personnel to be everywhere. The procedure for citing violators is that the City is made aware of a violation; the violator is cited; they have 5 days to comply; and the City follows up if no contact has been made. The President asked that the address of the violation or the addresses of the properties on both sides of the property in violation be provided. He announced that violations may also be emailed directly to him at jpducro@ducro.com or pcd@cityofashtabula.com.

GENERAL PUBLIC DISCUSSION

Mr. Jeff Schork, 2023 East 39th Street: reported that as a member of the Board of Directors for "Saving the History in Ashtabula", and as a Park-to-Park volunteer, he has received insight into how much needs to be done in the community, and was grateful for the volunteers who helped with the parks and Main Avenue clean up. It also gave him the idea to propose a plan titled, "Adopt Ashtabula (see attached outline). Questions were asked of Mr. Schork. The City Auditor said she would like to be involved in the discussions to ensure the proper procedures are being followed, rather than waiting until the recommendation comes to committee or Council. The President suggested starting small and doing a good job rather than trying to tackle all 13 areas that have been designed. Community/Economic Development/Parks & Recreation Chair Stranman referred Mr. Schork to the Ashtabula City Parks & Recreation Board first, in order to provide them with details. The Board will make a recommendation to Council's Community/Economic Development/Parks & Recreation Board for review. The full Council will have the final say.

City Seal: Mr. Schork said he designed a City Seal, but then found out his is much like the City's current official seal; therefore decided not to officially bring his design to City officials for consideration.

Ashtabula City Regular Council Meeting
Monday, June 3, 2013

Kudos to Karen Flack: The Clerk of Council said she was glad to hear several people volunteered to help clean up the parks. She said for at least 20 years Ms. Flack has taken care of South Park solely on her own (weeding, planting, trimming, etc.); and had she not been faithful to her task, the clean up would have been even greater. The Clerk reported Ms. Flack never sought or wanted accolades or recognition for her service. The Clerk said, "Thank you Karen". The President said Mr. Darrell Hamilton did the same for many years when Cornelius Park was named North Park.

Mr. Nik Tressler, 202 West 58th Street: commented on five pieces of Lakeside High School student's art work on display in Council Chambers this evening. They are (5) out of the (17) pieces that were on display at Cleveland-Hopkins Airport and the Rock N' Roll Hall of Fame in Cleveland. He reported Ms. Roda Wilson, Lakeside High School art instructor, forced the Rock N' Roll Arts Council to review their process when (17) out of (25) of the first round of art on display was from Lakeside High School; and -five (25) out of (25) the next round. Over 2000 student's art was submitted, a group reduces the prospects to 200, another group reduces the prospects to 50, individuals voted on the final prospects and Lakeside kept coming out on top. All this was done without knowing where the art came from, and is a testament to the work Lakeside High School students are doing under the guidance of Ms. Wilson. He said some great things are going on in our community, and folks need to stop bad-mouthing us. He said there are probably 500 talking badly, and that we should stop talking about those 500 and talking up those who are knocking themselves out to better our community.

Mr. Tressler reported suggesting to the President last December that some sort of award be given to honor our own, much like the Business Men's Council honors business men who make a lot of money, and Industry Council honors industries which make a lot of money, but there is little to nothing acknowledging people who should be recognized for their contribution to our quality of life issues, even if they no longer reside in our community. He commented on Ms. Shelia Dubsy, a former resident, who has put Ashtabula on the map with her superior dance abilities, which she learned at our very own Ashtabula Arts Center (Center). The Center has a statewide and somewhat national reputation. Their Nutcracker production is seen by folks from Buffalo, Cleveland, and Pittsburgh, would rather watch our production than those put on by professional dance companies.

Mr. Tressler suggested an open house be scheduled so the public may view the art pieces. He also reported that the art will be donated or sold, but that the frames for all art pieces were gifted by Mr. Ron Kister, and will not be a part of the sale or donation.

Mr. Keyes, 5313 Nathan Avenue: Thanked the Ward 3 Councilor and Council President for conversing with him in one of the electronic forums. He sought clarification on what is going to be done with the concerns he voiced at this evening's Pre-Council meeting.

Ashtabula City Regular Council Meeting
Monday, June 3, 2013

He asked for confirmation that the grass at 5319 Nathan Avenue would be taken care of. The President reported he emailed the information to the Planning & Community Development Department (PCD). Mr. Keyes said he was told the stop sign was not removed by the City and asked who he should speak with to get it put up again. The City Manager said he will notify the Public Works Department, and asked for clarification on the location of the stop sign. Mr. Keyes said the stop sign that was at the corner of Perryville Place and Nathan Avenue is now laying up again a house at Nathan Avenue and West 55th Street, and is still on a pole. He would like the stop sign erected at the corner of Perryville Place and Nathan Avenue.

The President emphasized that when high grass violations are forwarded to the City it does not mean it will be taken care instantly. There is one employee taking care of said violations. Once in a while persons working off court fines are doing very specific tasks, but not always. He emphasized the importance of providing the exact locations of high grass violations.

The Vice President thought there might be assistance for the indigent, elderly, and infirmed citizenry, however the Manager said we have not been doing this. The Vice President then commented that most high grass violations are vacant lots, and that just mentioning certain groups of persons might need help, he believes they will get it. The President said the goal is not to punish those who are incapable, but those who are ignoring the law and have the means to take care of it, and those who just do not care.

CLOSING REMARKS

“Remember to Keep Believing in Ashtabula”

EXECUTIVE SESSION – None

ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Trisket moved, Mr. Pugliese seconded to adjourn the meeting at 7:58 p.m.

DATE APPROVED: July 1, 2013

ATTESTED BY: _____

**JP Ducro IV
President of Council**

ATTESTED BY: _____

**LaVette E. Hennigan, MMC
Clerk of Council**

Adopt Ashtabula

Being on the Board of Directors of Saving the History in Ashtabula and after our Park to Park project have made me realize first hand that many areas of the City of Ashtabula are in dire need of some TLC. Most of the work done during Park to Park would not have been as overwhelming a task if only there had been regular maintenance done to the Parks and if the business and property owners would take a little bit more pride in their businesses and Main St..

I wish to propose the following plan that would help to maintain the basic upkeep from Cornelius Park to South Park and possibly along Main St..

This approach has been successful in many other states, counties, cities, and parks. The idea is simple.

1. The 2 parks and Main St. would be sectioned into small, manageable pieces. (see maps below) I realize that the business and property owners have a responsibility to keep their buildings and storefronts properly painted and maintained so Main st. would be an option worth discussing.

2. These parcels would be put up for adoption for a period of 1 year.

3. Families, individuals, and businesses would be able to become the caretaker of the parcel that they choose on a first come basis.

4. Caretakers would sign a pledge document and be required a minimum of 6 scheduled weekends per year, (approx. every 2 months) to provide regular maintenance such as but not limited to sweeping, raking, trimming, edging, cleaning, and any other task that the appointed committee see fit and within all legal parameters of any existing group or organization. Having scheduled weekends for all the caretakers to do their work would create a dual purpose, a competitive and cooperative scenario.

5. A sign would be placed at each parcel to recognize the current caregiver of that parcel. The cost of the sign would be paid for by the winning applicant. This would give them a vested interest in their pledge to become a caretaker.

I have been told that there are caretakers already maintaining some areas of the parks and will be notified of this program should it become adopted and set into motion with the intent to confirm the current caregivers intention during the next 12 month period.

This is of course a rough draft of the idea and may be modified and revised as needed.

Thank you for your time.

Jeff Schork