

Council met in a **SPECIAL MEETING**. The President of Council called the meeting to order at 5:45 p.m., the Ward 1 Councilor offered the opening prayer, and the Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

Member(s) Present: Mr. Richard F. Balog (Ward 1 Councilor)
Mr. August A. Pugliese (Ward 2 Councilor)
Mrs. Alice T. Cook (Ward 3 Councilor)
Mrs. Josephine Misener (Ward 4 Councilor)
Mr. Kris E. Hamrick (Ward 5 Councilor)
Mr. J. P. Ducro IV (President)

Member(s) Absent: Mr. Christopher J. McClure (Vice President)

Officer(s) Present: Mr. James M. Timonere (City Manager)
Mrs. Dana D. Pinkert (Finance Director)
Mrs. LaVette E. Hennigan (Clerk of Council)

Officer(s) Absent: Michael Franklin (City Solicitor)

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

PURPOSE: The Council President announced the purpose of this Special Meeting was to permit City Council to discuss and vote on legislation pertaining to the placement of a 2.5 mills, per year, Police Levy on the May 6, 2014 Primary Ballot, in order to hire additional police officers.

WELCOME: The Council President welcomed: Police Chief Robert Stell, Police Officer Tom Perry, citizens Mr. Richard Quaranta and Mr. Tom Clutter, and Star Beacon Reporter Shelley Terry.

DISCUSSION

Ward 4 Councilor/Police Levy Committee Chair: Echoed the Ward 1/Safety Forces Committee Chair's email sentiments that we are giving the citizens of Ashtabula the opportunity to add more policemen to the streets. We all read the papers; we all know what's going on. I'm a firm believer that a part of economic development is cleaning up the City. We all know about the problem with drugs and the crime connected them, in our community.

Ward 1 Councilor: We are a democracy, and we're going to let the people have another opportunity to have a say. I spoke with someone today who was very negative about the levy. I said to them, how can you not, no matter what your feelings are about individuals, support adding policemen.

QUESTIONS/COMMENTS

Mr. Richard Quaranta, 1821 West 19th Street: As a taxpayer, citizen, former member of City Council, and one who is active with the committee, I'm happy there is a committee to promote the levy. The campaign should be aggressive. Statistics should be issued to combat the negativity. Everyone thinks they know what police do, but let's show on paper what they actually do. In November 2013, the levy only failed by 200 votes. I would like a safe Ashtabula for our children and grandchildren, and will do what I can to help it (the levy) pass.

Ward 4 Councilor/Levy Committee Chair: Invited Mr. Quaranta to the next levy committee meeting.

Council President: Mr. Quaranta suggested there may be citizens who would like to help but cannot attend the Police Levy Committee meetings during regular work hours. He suggested perhaps the committee have some evening meetings so the general citizenry may participate.

Ward 4 Councilor/Levy Committee Chair: I believe it is very important because I believe it has to be a grassroots effort. This Thursday when the committee meets, we will see what can be done to begin evening meetings.

Council President: One of the complaints/concerned I've heard about the levy is we don't have enough jail space to put people in so what good does it do to have more officers and arrest more people. My simple response to that would be, "So that means we should do nothing". I would think even if we still struggle with the options we have to contain offenders once arrested, we're still safer and better off if we can at least get them arrested and discourage them.

Police Chief: Ten percent (10%) of what police do is put criminals in jail. Ninety percent (90%) is spent providing service to the community. While it is not fair to say there is no jail space, it has diminished somewhat for a variety of reasons.

Mr. Quaranta: The court decides who goes to jail, not the police officer.

Police Chief: That's correct.

Council President: I'd like to add that I'm both sympathetic and empathetic to the property owners of this City who bear the burden of a lot of the fiscal responsibility of taxes within our community. I don't take the decision to put a levy on the ballot lightly. I understand the sacrifices it takes for a lot of people, who are on fixed incomes, to have to fund levies such as this. But, in the overall benefit of the community, I think our safety forces is one of the best investments we can make with any of those tax dollars. For the average valued house, the cost to a homeowner would be in the neighborhood of \$70 to \$75 per year.

Finance Director: At 2.5 mills, a home with a market value/county appraised value of \$75,000, the annual cost to the homeowner would be \$66; at \$250,000 it would cost the homeowner \$219 a year.

Council President: Have we heard from the Solicitor on the language.

Clerk of Council: We have not. However, presented this afternoon is the second version of the legislation, which he wrote, and which has not been altered. The legislation does not have the Solicitor's signature as to 'form and correctness', but should not be a problem because, again, the Solicitor wrote it.

LEGISLATION READING

RESOLUTION NO. 2014-17 A RESOLUTION TO PROCEED WITH THE SUBMISSION TO THE ELECTORS OF THE CITY OF ASHTABULA AT AN ELECTION TO BE HELD ON MAY 6, 2014, THE QUESTION OF AN ADDITIONAL POLICE TAX LEVY AT A RATE OF TWO AND ONE-HALF (2.5) MILLS PER YEAR FOR THE PURPOSE OF THE PAYMENT OF SALARIES OF PERMANENT OR PART-TIME POLICE, COMMUNICATIONS, OR ADMINISTRATIVE PERSONNEL IN THE ASHTABULA CITY POLICE DEPARTMENT, INCLUDING THE PAYMENT OF ANY EMPLOYER CONTRIBUTIONS REQUIRED FOR SUCH PERSONNEL UNDER SECTION 145.48 OR 742.33 OF THE REVISED CODE, OR PROVIDING AND MAINTAINING MOTOR VEHICLES, COMMUNICATIONS, OTHER EQUIPMENT, BUILDINGS AND SITES FOR SUCH DEPARTMENT, FOR A PERIOD OF FIVE (5) YEARS, was presented. Mr. Balog moved, Mr. Pugliese seconded to waive the reading of the resolution; motion CARRIED. Mr. Balog moved, Mr. Pugliese seconded to waive the Charter requirement of two readings. On the roll call to waive the Charter requirement of two readings: Mr. Balog, Mr. Pugliese, Mrs. Cook, Mrs. Misener, Mr. Hamrick, Mr. Ducro voted yea; motion CARRIED. On the roll call to adopt the resolution: Mr. Balog, Mr. Pugliese, Mrs. Cook, Mrs. Misener, Mr. Hamrick, Mr. Ducro voted yea; motion CARRIED.

CLOSING COMMENTS

The Clerk of Council announced the resolution will be taken to the Ashtabula County Board of Elections (BOE) tomorrow. The Clerk reported she obtained a copy of the Election Board's monthly meeting schedule, as previously instructed, a copy of which was emailed to Council and the Police Levy Committee. The Clerk reported BOE Chair, Carol Lovas, told her we would be notified when we were going to be on the Election Board's agenda, which would be predicated on:

- When they receive the above resolution;
- When they submit it to the Ohio Secretary of State (SOS) for review and approval;
- When the SOS returns it to them; and
- When the Election Board actually schedules the meeting.

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Council President: I was, and maybe I was mistaken, I was under some sort of impression that if the timetable in which it was returned to them did not fall in line with their next meeting, immediately following it, that they weren't going to force it to be put off until their next regular meeting – that they would call some sort of a meeting to address the issue. Maybe that was presumptive on my part. I don't know that the last meeting we went to was officially a meeting... that was their regularly scheduled meeting?

City Manager: Acknowledged it was their regularly scheduled meeting.

Council President: I would only hope that if they get it back the day after their regular meeting, they are not going to put it off until the following month before they give us an opportunity to address it.

Clerk of Council: Especially given their deadline (to get Primary ballot language to them) is February 5.

ADJOURN

Mr. Pugliese moved, Mr. Hamrick seconded to adjourn the meeting at 5:55 p.m.

DATE APPROVED: **February 3, 2014**

ATTESTED BY: _____

J.P. Ducro IV
President of Council

ATTESTED BY: _____

LaVette E. Hennigan, MMC
Clerk of Council