

# MINUTES REGULAR COUNCIL MEETING

7:01 p.m.

January 20, 2026

Pursuant to Codified Ordinance Chapter 107 and ORC Section 121.22, notice of the following meeting was given on January 16, 2026.

## ROLL CALL

**Council Members Present:** Carr, Garry, Luciano, Sievers, Tomaselli and Anderson

**Absent:** Mr. Kary

**Others Present:** Mayor Fiala, Law Director Lucas (via Zoom), Service Director Knecht, City Engineer Lannon, Fire Chief Ungar, Police Chief Schultz, Parks & Recreation Director Keller, Finance Director Hoffman, Clerk Novak

Motion made by Mr. Anderson and seconded by Ms. Sievers to excuse Councilman Kary from tonight's meeting.

Roll Call      6 yes  
                    0 no

Motion carried 6 to 0

The meeting was led in Prayer and Pledge of Allegiance by Councilman Anderson.

## ORGANIZATIONAL BUSINESS

### MAYOR'S APPOINTMENT (Confirmed by Council)

Motion made by Mr. Tomaselli and seconded by Ms. Sievers to confirm the Mayor's appointment of Jerry Ranally to the Civil Service Commission.

Roll Call      6 yes  
                    0 no

Motion carried 6 to 0

### **Approval of Minutes**

Motion made by Mr. Anderson and seconded by Mr. Garry to approve the Regular Council Meeting Minutes of January 6, 2026.

Roll Call      6 yes  
                    0 no

Motion carried 6 to 0

**STANDING AND REGULAR COMMITTEE REPORTS**

**Committee of Full, Mr. Carr** – No report.

**Economic Development Committee, Mr. Anderson** – Mr. Anderson explained that he and Mr. Luciano had recently met with members of the downtown Willoughby bar and restaurant association as well as local merchants. He stated they were approached regarding the idea of establishing a Designated Outdoor Refreshment Area (DORA). He stated that while the concept may or may not be necessary for Willoughby, he believed it was worth starting a conversation. He mentioned that the state has many such areas; at a glance, it appears there may be around 200 and that two currently exist in Lake County, including one in Chardon. After gathering more feedback from merchants, he stated he might request an Economic Development Committee meeting to examine the topic further. He also acknowledged that the Mayor is not enthusiastic about the idea, which he understands, but he emphasized that a DORA can be tailored to community needs.

Mayor Fiala stated that the outreach came from one merchant and one restaurant/bar owner, and encouraged Council to independently reach out to additional businesses, as well as their constituents. Mayor Fiala stated that the term “DORA” may sound appealing, residents often respond differently when the phrase “open container” is used. Mr. Anderson agreed, reiterating that it is an issue that warrants thoughtful discussion. Mr. Carr added that his instinct tells him that residents may react to “open container” the same way they reacted to previous short-term rental (Airbnb) discussions. Mr. Anderson acknowledged this concern but shared that in his own informal polling including conversations with bar owners and a broader group of individuals, the feedback was overwhelmingly supportive of a DORA.

**Environmental Planning Committee, Mr. Kary** – Absent.

**Finance and Audit Committee, Mr. Tomaselli** – No report.

**Parks & Recreation Committee, Ms. Sievers** – No report.

**Personnel Committee, Ms. Sievers** – No report.

**Safety Committee, Mr. Tomaselli** – No report.

**Service Committee, Mr. Anderson** – No report.

**WPCC Committee, Mr. Garry** – No report.

**Planning Commission, Mr. Kary** – Absent.

**CORRESPONDENCE:** No correspondence.

**PUBLIC PORTION:** No one spoke.

**Motion made by Mr. Tomaselli and seconded by Ms. Sievers that all ordinances and resolutions be read by caption only and that as to legislation not containing an emergency clause, the rules requiring that ordinances and resolutions be read on three separate days be waived.**

Roll Call      6 yes  
                    0 no

Motion carried 6 to 0

**NEW BUSINESS:**

**RESOLUTION NO. 2026-4**

**A resolution authorizing the Mayor to enter into an agreement between the Board of Lake County Commissioners and the City to utilize proceeds from the FY 2026 Senior Levy Fund for the purpose of support of the senior citizens services or facilities for the Willoughby Senior Center, and declaring an emergency.**

Motion made by Mr. Tomaselli and seconded by Mr. Garry that the rules of Council requiring three separate readings be suspended and that Resolution No. 2026-4 be declared an emergency measure.

Roll Call      6 yes  
                    0 no

Motion carried 6 to 0

Motion made by Mr. Tomaselli and seconded by Mr. Garry to adopt Resolution No. 2026-4.

Roll Call      6 yes  
                    0 no

Motion carried 6 to 0

**RESOLUTION NO. 2026-5**

**A resolution approving Change Order No. 1 in the Willoughby Osborne Park Contract Administration Phase 1 and construction Phase 2 with SmithGroup, and declaring an emergency.**

Motion made by Mr. Tomaselli and seconded by Mr. Garry that the rules of Council requiring three separate readings be suspended and that Resolution No. 2026-5 be declared an emergency measure.

Roll Call      6 yes  
                    0 no

Motion carried 6 to 0

Motion made by Mr. Tomaselli and seconded by Mr. Garry to adopt Resolution No. 2026-5.

Roll Call      6 yes  
                    0 no

Motion carried 6 to 0

**MAYOR'S REPORT** – Mayor Fiala stated there is an ongoing concern involving the school district's proposed income tax, explaining that the matter has created significant concern among the Mayors within the district. He stated that the Mayors are scheduled to meet with the school district's administration tomorrow to discuss the proposal, emphasizing that the idea has caught local leaders off guard. He stated that income tax is the City's primary revenue source. The Mayor noted that the district had floated three different tax-rate possibilities, some of which could raise the rate from the existing 2.0% to as high as 3.0%, depending on which number was ultimately pursued. Although he expressed a desire to avoid conflict with the school district, he stressed the importance of protecting the City's existing and future revenue streams. He stated he would provide an update at the next Council meeting.

Mr. Tomaselli commented on a recent change to the speed limit on Kirtland Road, noting that after driving the area, the difference in traffic behavior was immediately noticeable. Mayor Fiala attributed the quick implementation to Chief Schultz and Service Director Knecht, explaining that although the speed change had been discussed about a year earlier, it had remained an unfinished task until Mr. Knecht took initiative and had signage installed within a week of the prior meeting. Mr. Tomaselli stated that previously the road was posted at 35 mph but quickly dropped to 25 mph near the homes, resulting in drivers often traveling 40 mph before suddenly slowing midway through the residential area. Mr. Carr asked for clarification about which section of Kirtland Road was shared with Kirtland jurisdiction. Mayor Fiala stated that only the very end of the roadway near the Signature Health building fell within that area. Mr. Tomaselli mentioned that discussions are underway regarding a development across from the country club, which could add around 100 new housing units, and suggested that the speed-limit adjustment may have been implemented in anticipation of increased traffic generated by that project.

## **DIRECTOR'S REPORTS**

Law Director Lucas (via Zoom) – No report.

Service Director Knecht – Mr. Knecht reminded everyone that due to extremely cold temperatures, salt becomes ineffective. He cautioned that road surfaces may become slick during cold evenings and urged drivers to allow extra time for travel, brake earlier than usual, and use care when turning.

Mr. Garry noted that during a recent drive, he noticed that the salt supply appeared low and asked whether more salt was on the way. Mr. Knecht stated that additional salt shipments are being delivered daily. Despite the incoming supply, the City continues to go through salt quickly. He confirmed that the salt was coming from Morton Salt. Mr. Anderson asked whether the crews were using any additives in the treatment process. Mr. Knecht stated that additives are being used, but explained that in very cold conditions, additives lose effectiveness. He stated that both are being used and that the crews were exploring every option available to maintain road drivability. Mr. Anderson complimented the crew's efforts, stating they were doing a great job.

Mr. Tomaselli thanked Mr. Knecht for addressing the lighting on the Route 2 bridge. He asked whether maintaining the lights would become the City's responsibility or whether they would simply have the ability to assist the county when outages occur. Mr. Knecht explained that they were working with the county to gain access to the electrical box needed during outages. He noted that a certain part still required replacement, which was why the bridge lights were currently on around the clock. He stated that once the needed part is replaced, the lights would again operate using a photocell. Discussions with the county were ongoing, but it appears likely that the lights will eventually become the City's responsibility moving forward. Mr. Tomaselli remarked that the improvement in lighting has made a "world of difference."

Mr. Carr sought clarification on whether the lights discussed were only those on the bridge or the entire stretch of Route 2. Mr. Knecht clarified that only the lights on the bridge, including entrance and exit ramps and the center section were on the affected circuit and had been restored. Mr. Carr noted that the full stretch has been a long-standing issue. Mr. Knecht stated that the county is aware of the issue and has a design firm working on a long-term solution, with more information expected later in the year, including cost estimates.

**City Engineer Lannon** – No report. Mr. Tomaselli asked how much longer the work on Vine Street would take. Mr. Lannon explained that the timeline was weather dependent, but about six more weeks before they could get off the street, noting that even once the pipe work was finished, there would still be an open trench and one lane of pavement removed. Temporary pavement will be installed, but the area will remain visibly affected until weather conditions improve. Mr. Tomaselli commented that traffic in the area had already become difficult at certain times of day, often backing up almost to the underpass. Mr. Lannon stated he would check to see whether anything could be done to expedite the work, particularly the pavement portion, which he viewed as the most concerning part of the delay.

Mr. Anderson asked whether work on Route 84 had progressed, noting that telephone poles had already been moved; he asked when traffic pattern changes should be expected. Mr. Lannon replied that although there had been preliminary discussions and a contract in place with Great Lakes Construction, (the same firm that had previously worked on the River Street project as a subcontractor), steel still needs to be ordered. It's likely it will be a couple of months before construction will begin. He explained that the City was juggling two competing projects: the Route 84 wall and an extension of the River Street retaining wall. There was an unexpected \$500,000 in remaining grant funds that became available, the City had requested approval from the Ohio Emergency Management Association (OEMA) and was awaiting Federal Emergency Management Agency's (FEMA's) response regarding whether the funds could be applied to River Street. The challenge he stated is that both projects involve the same contractor, so a decision would soon be needed regarding which project should proceed first. On River Street, the goal was to complete the work before a resurfacing project scheduled after July 1. Mr. Lannon stated that poles needed to be moved again on River Street. Mr. Carr asked for clarification about what was happening on River Street. Mr. Lannon explained

that approximately 400 feet of retaining wall had previously been constructed opposite South Street, with \$500,000 left over from a grant. The City hopes to extend the wall another 192 feet to connect it to an older wall built in the early 1990s. This approach would strengthen the area and serve as a proactive, preventative measure rather than a response to any new failure. Mr. Lannon stated that nothing new had developed; the only visible issue was a long-standing chain-link fence in deteriorating condition. The effort to extend the wall stemmed from the desire to use the grant funds efficiently on a project already prepared to move forward, especially since the grant covered 90% of the cost. He remarked that constructing the additional wall would eventually be necessary within the next twenty years, and therefore pursuing the option now made practical and financial sense.

**Fire Chief Ungar** – No report. Mr. Anderson asked about the aftermath of a recent Wickliffe house fire, noting that the firefighters had to break windows and remove large amounts of hoarded material just to access the structure, leaving piles of debris still around the property. Chief Ungar explained that although many offers were made to help the homeowners move or contain the material, the residents repeatedly declined assistance. He emphasized that the items remained the owners' personal property, and the department could only recommend solutions, not force them. Chief Ungar added that firefighters spent hours battling the fire and had no choice but to remove the debris to prevent the house from burning for days. Mr. Anderson noted that snow fortunately covered most of the scattered debris and prevented it from blowing into neighboring yards. Chief Ungar noted that the heavy amount of water used also kept everything weighed down.

**Police Chief Schultz** – Chief Schultz stated that progress continues on the new police facility. Drywall is fully installed and painted on the ground floor, with major drywall work also completed on the first (main) floor. The top floor rooms are built, and much of the drywall is being installed there as well. Work on the jail area will begin soon, as crews were waiting for an underground project to be completed. Temporary boarding is currently in place where front-facing windows were removed in the records division, and those new windows should be installed soon. Cabinet installation also began last week. Overall, the interior work is progressing well, and the construction team is doing excellent work. Additionally, the department is seeking candidates interested in joining the department. Testing will be available online through National Testing Network from February 2nd to March 2nd.

**Chief Building and Zoning Inspector Keller** – Absent.

**Parks & Recreation Director Keller** – No report.

**Finance Director Hoffman** – No report. Budget discussions will take place on the two Council meetings in March.

**COUNCILMEN REPORTS**

**Ms. Sievers** – No report.

**Mr. Kary** – Absent.

**Mr. Tomaselli** – No report.

**Mr. Luciano** – Mr. Luciano thanked everyone who attended his ward meeting last week; about 39 people were in attendance.

**Mr. Garry** – No report.



**Mr. Anderson** – No report.

**Mr. Carr** – No report.

*The Regular Council Meeting adjourned at 7:32 p.m.*

Date approved 2/3/20

  
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Robert E. Carr, President

  
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Clerk of Council  
  
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Robert A. Fiala, Mayor