

# MINUTES REGULAR COUNCIL MEETING

7:01 p.m.

February 17, 2026

Pursuant to Codified Ordinance Chapter 107 and ORC Section 121.22, notice of the following meeting was given on February 13, 2026.

## ROLL CALL

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

**Absent:** Councilman Carr

Motion made by Mr. Anderson and seconded by Mr. Garry to excuse Councilman Carr from tonight's meeting.

Roll Call      6 yes  
                    0 no

Motion carried 6 to 0

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

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

## Approval of Minutes

Motion made by Mr. Anderson and seconded by Ms. Sievers to approve the Regular Council Meeting Minutes of February 3, 2026.

Roll Call      6 yes  
                    0 no

Motion carried 6 to 0

## STANDING AND REGULAR COMMITTEE REPORTS

Committee of Full, Mr. Carr – Absent.

Economic Development Committee, Mr. Anderson – No report.

Environmental Planning Committee, Mr. Kary – No report.

Finance and Audit Committee, Mr. Tomaselli – Mr. Tomaselli stated that budgets will be discussed at the next Council meeting on March 3<sup>rd</sup> and will cover the operating budget. The 2026 budget will appear on the agenda at the second March Council meeting.

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** – Mr. Garry reported the annual joint meeting is scheduled for March 5<sup>th</sup> at 6:00 p.m. at Willoughby City hall.

**Planning Commission, Mr. Kary** – No report.

**CORRESPONDENCE:** No correspondence.

#### **PUBLIC PORTION:**

**Chris O'Brien, 2975 Nantucket Drive, Willoughby** – Mr. O'Brien stated he has long-standing roots in the community; he's lived in Willoughby for 31 years. He stated his wife is a South High graduate and has lived in the City since 1963, growing up in Ridge Acres. He stated that he is speaking tonight about the City's baseball fields, along with several other park facilities, which are in serious disrepair and urgently need attention. The packet he provided includes photos taken over this winter although he hoped to capture them without snow. Even so, the pictures clearly show the declining state of nine of the ten fields. The tenth field, Todd 5, may be in the worst condition of all; it sits at the bottom of a mudslide, is surrounded by overgrowth, and was simply inaccessible due to snow.

Mr. O'Brien stated that Willoughby Baseball is celebrating its 75th anniversary this year. During COVID, it was the only league in the northeastern part of Ohio and the only one in Lake County that continued operating safely. Through his research he learned that the league is one of the oldest and one of the largest youth baseball leagues in northern Ohio. Some leagues are bigger but newer; others are older but much smaller. Referencing the packet he distributed to Council he noted registration numbers reflect the strength, showing that participation is significantly higher than football and soccer. Each year the league hosts three major tournaments, a boys' tournament the week after Memorial Day, and two girls' tournaments. These events bring in thousands of visitors over the course of the summer. Using simple estimates, 22 players, 6 coaches, and at least 22 parents per game which attracts more than 2,400 visitors every week during the season. The Rebel Rouser weekend brings roughly 4,200 visitors, and the girls' tournaments bring between 6,400 and 7,600 visitors. These crowds directly support local businesses, including restaurants during these tournaments.

For many years, visiting teams would complement our facilities and talk about how much they enjoyed coming to Willoughby. However, in recent years those same teams have stopped attending or now complain about the poor condition of our fields. The criticisms are justified. Rusted fencing, deteriorating backstops, and visibly aging structures are common across the facilities. For example, standing at the top of the stairs at Todd Field and looking toward Todd 1, you can see large areas of rust. This is especially concerning given ongoing conversations about potentially placing an amphitheater; upgrading the surrounding facilities should be a priority if that project is to move forward.

He stated that after walking the fields recently, he was shocked at how much they've deteriorated. It's embarrassing, and the photos reflect the seriousness of the situation. He asked Council to prioritize improvements to these facilities, not just for players, but for families, visitors, and the image of Willoughby as a whole.

**Bridget Thomas, 35858 Ridge Road, Willoughby** - Ms. Thomas shared that she and her husband, along with their family, have lived in Willoughby for seven years. She stated that during COVID, hoping to help their son connect with others, she enrolled him in Willoughby Baseball. She emphasized how wonderful the baseball organization has been for her family. She stated that she wants future families to benefit as much as they have, she expressed strong support for improving the fields. She stated that frequent game cancellations sometimes due to fields still flooded from rain a week prior is disappointing for both kids and working parents who adjust their schedules to attend. As a taxpayer, she stated she is willing to support whatever steps are needed to upgrade the facilities. Ms. Thomas stated that Willoughby Baseball is important to her family and to many others in the community.

**Rich Zurga, 36930 Stevens Boulevard, Willoughby** - Mr. Zurga explained that Nason Park behind his home is not being cleaned up. Each April, he stated he usually collects about five bags of trash on his own, but after recent construction, the amount of debris has increased significantly. Crews removed shrubs to build a road, leaving trash, which has washed into the basin. There are also plastic grates that were left. Because the construction gate is often left open, people drive in and dump more waste, making the area muddy and dirty. He urged the City to secure the gate or take other action, and suggested that if the City cannot maintain the park, nearby residents should be allowed to take responsibility for the portion behind their homes. He emphasized that the situation is worsening and asked for help.

**Melissa Lovestick, 37457 Second Street, Willoughby** - Ms. Lovestick explained that her family are devoted baseball fans and even got married on Daniel's Baseball Park field in 2014. She supports the comments made about the baseball fields but also wanted to talk about concerns regarding Lincoln Park. She stated that large trees along the Second Street side were removed after storm damage and have not been replaced, unlike the trees added on the Sharpe Avenue side. Since her son plays soccer, she would appreciate plans to restore trees near the soccer fields to provide shade and restore the beauty that once lined the street.

**Dennis Quigney, 5349 Strawberry Lane, Willoughby** - Mr. Quigney stated it's great seeing his former ninth-grade English teacher, Larry Luciano. He recently read in the News-Herald that the amphitheater issue is being revisited, which surprised him because he thought it had been resolved after the City purchased the portable stage. He's unsure why the topic resurfaced and would like to understand the plan going forward. He spends much of the summer at the park coaching several teams, and with how busy it already is, holding concerts during multiple baseball games seems chaotic.

**Motion made by Mr. Anderson 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:**

**ORDINANCE NO. 2026-10**

**An ordinance amending Chapter 913 of the Codified Ordinances of the City of Willoughby, Ohio, titled, "Sanitary Sewerage System Charges"; specifically, Section 913.10, titled, "Surcharge for Extra-Strength Wastes".**

Motion made by Mr. Garry and seconded by Mr. Anderson to adopt Ordinance No. 2026-10.

Roll Call      6 yes  
                    0 no

Motion carried 6 to 0

**RESOLUTION NO. 2026-11**

**A resolution approving Change Order No. 2 in the Osborne Park Coastal Improvements Phase 2 with Mark Haynes Construction Inc., and declaring an emergency.**

Motion made by Ms. Sievers and seconded by Mr. Kary that the rules of Council requiring three separate readings be suspended and that Resolution No. 2026-11 be declared an emergency measure.

Roll Call      6 yes  
                    0 no

Motion carried 6 to 0

Motion made by Ms. Sievers and seconded by Mr. Kary to adopt Resolution No. 2026-11.

Roll Call      6 yes  
                    0 no

Motion carried 6 to 0

**RESOLUTION NO. 2026-12**

**A resolution declaring a 2015 Ford Explorer Interceptor K9 vehicle owned by the City of Willoughby as obsolete and not needed for public use and authorizing the sale thereof to the Village of Timberlake, Ohio, and declaring an emergency.**

Motion made by Mr. Garry and seconded by Mr. Anderson that the rules of Council requiring three separate readings be suspended and that Resolution No. 2026-12 be declared an emergency measure.

Roll Call      6 yes  
                    0 no

Motion carried 6 to 0

Motion made by Mr. Garry and seconded by Mr. Anderson to adopt Resolution No. 2026-12.

Roll Call      6 yes  
                    0 no

Motion carried 6 to 0

**RESOLUTION NO. 2026-13**

**A resolution authorizing an expenditure in the amount of \$25,000.00 from the Public Art Fund to commemorate America 250 with a public performance of the Cleveland Pops prior to the City's July 4<sup>th</sup>, 2026 fireworks display, and declaring an emergency.**

Motion made by Ms. Sievers and seconded by Mr. Garry that the rules of Council requiring three separate readings be suspended and that Resolution No. 2026-13 be declared an emergency measure.

Roll Call      6 yes  
                    0 no

Motion carried 6 to 0

Motion made by Ms. Sievers and seconded by Mr. Garry to adopt Resolution No. 2026-13.

Roll Call      6 yes  
                    0 no

Motion carried 6 to 0

**RESOLUTION NO. 2026-14**

**A resolution authorizing the City Engineer to prepare specifications and to advertise for bids for the 2026 Voluntary Sidewalk Program with one (1) year renewal option, and declaring an emergency.**

Motion made by Mr. Anderson and seconded by Mr. Garry that the rules of Council requiring three separate readings be suspended and that Resolution No. 2026-14 be declared an emergency measure.

Roll Call      6 yes  
                    0 no

Motion carried 6 to 0

Motion made by Mr. Anderson and seconded by Mr. Garry to adopt Resolution No. 2026-14.

Roll Call     6 yes  
                  0 no

Motion carried 6 to 0

**RESOLUTION NO. 2026-15**

**A resolution authorizing the Mayor to enter into a lease agreement with the West Channel Yacht Club, Inc. for the use of unoccupied City-owned real property for parking and boat storage, and declaring an emergency.**

Motion made by Ms. Sievers and seconded by Mr. Kary that the rules of Council requiring three separate readings be suspended and that Resolution No. 2026-15 be declared an emergency measure.

Roll Call     6 yes  
                  0 no

Motion carried 6 to 0

Motion made by Ms. Sievers and seconded by Mr. Kary to adopt Resolution No. 2026-15.

Roll Call     6 yes  
                  0 no

Motion carried 6 to 0

**ORDINANCE NO. 2026-16**

**An ordinance accepting the Final Plat for The Enclave at Literary Pointe Phase 2, and declaring an emergency.**

Motion made by Mr. Anderson and seconded by Mr. Luciano that the rules of Council requiring three separate readings be suspended and that Ordinance No. 2026-16 be declared an emergency measure.

Roll Call     6 yes  
                  0 no

Motion carried 6 to 0

Motion made by Mr. Anderson and seconded by Mr. Luciano to adopt Ordinance No. 2026-16.

Roll Call     6 yes  
                  0 no

Motion carried 6 to 0

**RESOLUTION NO. 2026-17**

**A resolution amending Resolution No. 2025-148 authorizing temporary appropriations totaling \$42,315,156 for current expenses and other expenditures of the City of Willoughby, Ohio during the period ending March 31, 2026, and declaring an emergency.**

Motion made by Mr. Anderson and seconded by Mr. Garry that the rules of Council requiring three separate readings be suspended and that Resolution No. 2026-17 be declared an emergency measure.

Roll Call      6 yes  
                    0 no

Motion carried 6 to 0

Motion made by Mr. Anderson and seconded by Mr. Garry to adopt Resolution No. 2026-17.

Roll Call      6 yes  
                    0 no

Motion carried 6 to 0

**MAYOR'S REPORT** – Mayor Fiala stated he and Ms. Keller will schedule a meeting with Chris O'Brien to review the improvements he mentioned tonight and create a priority list with estimated costs for possible cost-sharing, which will be brought back to Council before the capital budget. Mayor Fiala addressed Ms. Lovestick regarding the trees stating, the City can include the street trees along Lincoln Park in the City's street tree program although the trees won't be 30 feet tall. He will confirm that with the Service Director. Addressing Mr. Zurga, Mayor Fiala stated that the City will look into the Nason Basin project. He confirmed with City Engineer Lannon that the project is complete; noting that it will be cleaned out and secured.

## **DIRECTOR'S REPORTS**

**Law Director Lucas** – No report.

**Service Director Knecht** – Mr. Knecht stated that with the recent warm weather, crews have been actively repairing the potholes that have begun appearing throughout the City, and they plan to continue this work through the week. He added that with a chance of snow coming on Sunday, the goal is to have all potholes filled and to begin addressing the litter now visible as the snow has melted.

Mr. Tomaselli inquired about a pylon spotted in a pothole on Shankland. Mr. Knecht stated that it did not belong to the City but to Lake County Water, which had been notified to return and complete the repair. The pothole was the result from a water main break a few weeks earlier.

Mr. Tomaselli asked about what looks like a sinkhole in downtown Willoughby specifically, a gap stretching across the width of the street. Mr. Knecht acknowledged the issue, noting that the area had shifted before but has opened more significantly this winter. He assured the Council that the matter was being investigated and would be addressed appropriately. Council members also remarked that similar issues had appeared at intersections such as Mentor Avenue and Erie Street and another near Center Street, with some large enough that a snowplow would noticeably hit them.

Regarding the snow fence typically installed on Lost Nation Road west of the airport, Mr. Kary explained that the west-to-east winds in that area are severe, and last year, when no snow fence was installed, conditions became hazardous. This year, however, a newly designed configuration of the fence was put up, and it made a significant positive difference in safety. He encouraged the City to continue using that configuration in future years. Mr. Knecht thanked him and said he would pass the feedback on to his staff, noting that the updated configuration was their idea and had been effective in other locations as well.

**City Engineer Lannon** – No report.

Mr. Tomaselli asked about the crosswalk signals near Lakeland and Vine Street wondering if they were operating again. Mr. Lannon confirmed that the signals were back online and explained that previous outages were tied to construction work in the area. Mr. Lannon also noted that the sidewalk north of Vine remained closed, although crews had opened as much of the area as possible at this stage of construction.

Mr. Tomaselli asked if the vehicles present in Nason Park were connected to construction occurring near Marous, or whether these were two separate projects. Mr. Lannon stated the storm sewer project actually began within the fenced area of Nason Basin, making it likely that all the equipment present belongs to the same contractor and project. Mr. Lannon stated the contractor (Trax Construction) should be out of the City by July 1, with the street possibly reopening in about six weeks.

Ms. Sievers asked about detour signs located at Gilson and Erie. These signs had been covered with black bags, but winter winds had blown the bags away; she asked what the detour signs were for. Mr. Knecht explained that as construction progressed along Vine Street, crews would be closing Ben Hur at Vine Street near the end of the week. The exposed detour signs were part of the planned route that would go into effect while work occurred at that intersection.

**Fire Chief Ungar** – No report.

**Police Chief Schultz** – Chief Schultz thanked Council for the passage of Resolution No. 2026-12. Chief Schultz stated that Chief Dolvin from Timberlake has made many positive changes for the village; he appreciates the sale and the support for his department. Chief Schultz thanked everyone who came out tonight including Mr. O'Brien expressing his appreciation for everything he has done for the baseball league.

Mr. Tomaselli thanked Chief Schultz for the good work on the recent incident at Skylight Inn. Chief Schultz stated that when the department began the corridor project in 2020, particularly focusing on the hotels, it was important to ensure the area remained safe for visitors to Willoughby. Over the past six years, crime in that area has dropped significantly. The department has built strong partnerships with those hotels, and they've made major improvements to their operations, facilities, and landscaping, which has helped tremendously. This recent incident was random and unfortunate, but the victim has been

released from the hospital, which is good news. The department arrested the suspect within hours, and they have been charged with a second-degree felony assault. He stated the incident does not reflect the overall condition of the area, and the department will continue working to keep it safe.

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

**Parks & Recreation Director Keller** – Ms. Keller thanked everyone who came tonight to share their thoughts (about the baseball fields). She stated that the City needs a supportive community and the City is behind the residents.

**Finance Director Hoffman** – Ms. Hoffman thanked Council for the passage of Resolution No. 2026-17.

**COUNCILMEN REPORTS**

**Ms. Sievers** – Ms. Sievers thanked everyone for coming out tonight; the support makes a huge impression and she is extremely grateful.

**Mr. Kary** – Mr. Kary stated he grew up playing Little League baseball in Willoughby back in the '50s where he once pitched an all-star game and Bob Feller threw out the first pitch to him. He thanked everyone for coming out tonight.

Mr. Tomaselli thanked everyone for being at the meeting tonight. He stated that the City fully supports this program (baseball program).

**Mr. Tomaselli** – No report.

**Mr. Luciano** – Mr. Luciano thanked the residents for coming out tonight and providing the baseball statistics.

**Mr. Garry** – No report.



**Mr. Anderson** – Mr. Anderson thanked the residents for coming out tonight regarding the baseball program.

**Mr. Carr** – Absent.

*The Regular Council Meeting adjourned at 7:48 p.m.*

Date approved 3-17-26

  
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John Tomaselli, Vice-President

  
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Clerk of Council  
  
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Robert A. Fiala, Mayor