

MINUTES REGULAR COUNCIL MEETING

7:03 p.m.

February 3, 2026

Pursuant to Codified Ordinance Chapter 107 and ORC Section 121.22, notice of the following meeting was given on January 30, 2026.

ROLL CALL

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

Others Present: Mayor Fiala, Service Director Knecht, City Engineer Lannon, Fire Chief Ungar, Police Chief Schultz, Chief Building and Zoning Inspector Keller, Finance Director Hoffman, Economic Development Director Thielman, Clerk Novak

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

Approval of Minutes

Motion made by Mr. Anderson and seconded by Mr. Garry to approve the Regular Council Meeting Minutes of January 20, 2026.

Roll Call 7 yes
 0 no

Motion carried 7 to 0

STANDING AND REGULAR COMMITTEE REPORTS

Committee of Full, Mr. Carr – No report.

Economic Development Committee, Mr. Anderson – Mr. Anderson stated there was a committee meeting held this evening to discuss the Tood Field amphitheater and a brief discussion regarding a DORA.

Environmental Planning Committee, Mr. Kary – No report.

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. Mr. Carr stated he had recently met with Service Director Knecht and wanted to revisit a prior idea that had been discussed with Mr.

Anderson. He said there had been a conversation about scheduling a “drive-around” tour of the City to review various locations, especially since there are new members of Council; however, that plan had never materialized. He stated that during Service Director Tomaselli’s tenure there had been a regular annual practice each spring in which Council members would ride together in the Parks and Recreation van to tour the City. Mr. Anderson stated he would find out when the van would be available. Mr. Carr stated he previously mentioned to Mr. Lannon the need for an update on the City’s Storm Water Master Plan. He clarified that he is not proposing a full new study since the current plan already exists, but rather a refresh or review to present at a committee meeting. He noted the existing plan is approximately 10–15 years old. The City has completed substantial portions of the work outlined in it, bringing the plan back to the committee would help clarify what has been completed, what remains, and whether priorities may have shifted based on present-day knowledge. Mr. Anderson stated he would like to do the tour first, since much of what they would observe relates directly to stormwater issues. Mr. Carr thought it would be helpful to provide all members with a copy of the plan beforehand, so they could reference it during the tour.

WPCC Committee, Mr. Garry – Mr. Garry reported the annual joint meeting is scheduled for March 5th at 6:00 p.m. at Willoughby City hall.

Planning Commission, Mr. Kary – No report.

CORRESPONDENCE:

Clerk Novak read two requests from the Ohio Division of Liquor Control. The first was for Rockdirt LLC, 3941 Erie Street Willoughby, Ohio. This location is the former Brim site. There were no objections. The second was for Boutique Croatian Wines LLC, Boutique Croatian Wines Retail and Shipping, 4964 Campbell Road, Willoughby, Ohio. There were no objections. Mr. Thielman stated that the people who own the Croatian Boutique Winery own a Croatian import export business out in Avon Lake and many other businesses.

PUBLIC PORTION:

Tina Ludwig, Northeast Regional Liaison for Ohio Auditor of State Keith Faber – Ms. Ludwig presented the Auditor of State Award to the City of Willoughby. She recognized the Finance Department’s outstanding work in attaining accounting excellence every day and also Finance Director Cherilynn Hoffman for her leadership, professionalism and exceptional commitment to fiscal integrity.

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 7 yes
 0 no

Motion carried 7 to 0

NEW BUSINESS:**RESOLUTION NO. 2026-6**

A resolution authorizing the Mayor to enter into an agreement to accept a Northeast Ohio Public Energy Council (NOPEC) 2026 Energized Community Grant in the amount of \$62,821.00, 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. 2026-6 be declared an emergency measure.

Roll Call 7 yes
 0 no

Motion carried 7 to 0

Motion made by Mr. Garry and seconded by Mr. Anderson to adopt Resolution No. 2026-6.

Roll Call 7 yes
 0 no

Motion carried 7 to 0

RESOLUTION NO. 2026-7

A resolution approving Change Order No. 2 in the Willoughby Police Station Project with Infinity Construction Co., Inc., and declaring an emergency.

Motion made by Mr. Tomaselli and seconded by Mr. Kary that the rules of Council requiring three separate readings be suspended and that Resolution No. 2026-7 be declared an emergency measure.

Roll Call 7 yes
 0 no

Motion carried 7 to 0

Motion made by Mr. Tomaselli and seconded by Mr. Kary to adopt Resolution No. 2026-7.

Roll Call 7 yes
 0 no

Motion carried 7 to 0

RESOLUTION NO. 2026-8

A resolution to approve a Then and Now Certificate and to authorize the Finance Director to draw a warrant for the invoices associated with such certificate for payment of Court expenses, and declaring an emergency.

Motion made by Ms. Sievers and seconded by Mr. Luciano that the rules of Council requiring three separate readings be suspended and that Resolution No. 2026-8 be declared an emergency measure.

Roll Call 7 yes
 0 no

Motion carried 7 to 0

Motion made by Ms. Sievers and seconded by Mr. Luciano to adopt Resolution No. 2026-8.

Roll Call 7 yes
 0 no

Motion carried 7 to 0

RESOLUTION NO. 2026-9

A resolution honoring Zoning Inspector Karen Brooks and commending her for her 36 years of service to the City of Willoughby.

Chief Building and Zoning Inspector read this resolution in it's entirety.

Motion made by Mr. Luciano and seconded by Mr. Anderson to adopt Resolution No. 2026-9.

Roll Call 7 yes
 0 no

Motion carried 7 to 0

MAYOR'S REPORT – Mayor Fiala provided an update regarding the school district's anticipated plan to place an income tax levy on the May ballot. He explained that there was a meeting last Wednesday including himself and four mayors (from the district) in which during the discussions, they urged the school district to reconsider not the need for additional funding, but whether an income tax was the best mechanism to pursue. He stated that both the Willoughby-Eastlake School District and Parma operate under unique five-year emergency renewal levies, and the state has created conditions that will cause the district to lose a substantial amount of revenue, putting them in a difficult financial situation. While acknowledging the district's need for funding, the group including State Senator Jerry Cirino and the four mayor's raised concerns that imposing an income tax could unintentionally drive away the City's highest wage earners, ultimately harming both the school district and the City of Willoughby. The school board had been scheduled to pass the final resolution for the May ballot at a meeting Wednesday evening, but after the discussion that morning, the board chose not to hold the meeting and will forgo the May ballot. Mayor Fiala stated that he expects the district to return with a levy proposal in November, but emphasized that, in the meantime, the four mayors have committed themselves to working collaboratively with the district to identify a rational funding strategy that protects both the City's future and the students of the Willoughby-Eastlake Schools. He noted that the next three months will involve significant work and he will provide updates as progress continues.

DIRECTOR'S REPORTS

Law Director Lucas – Absent.

Service Director Knecht – Mr. Knecht stated that the winter continues, he expressed appreciation to Council members who had reached out with concerns. Mr. Garry asked about the City's salt supply, and Mr. Knecht stated that salt levels were holding up, with several loads arriving daily. All orders had been placed, deliveries were continuing, and although the department was being conservative when possible, the City remains in a good position and is halfway through the annual quota. Mr. Knecht explained that the salt comes from Morton Salt through the ODOT contract and that the company has been delivering reliably, allocating their truck fleet to ensure all customers received what they ordered. Mr. Kary thanked Mr. Knecht, noting that after reporting concerns about handicapped residents in the Ward 2 area, the Service Department responded extremely quickly. The residents were thrilled with the prompt service.

City Engineer Lannon – Mr. Lannon stated that Trax Construction has resumed on Vine Street and, despite weather-related shutdowns, completion is still expected in roughly four weeks. Pavement replacement will extend the work into early April, and because a temporary pavement option is unlikely, at least one lane will remain closed until then. Mr. Carr asked about a discrepancy discovered between the City's ward maps and those posted by the Lake County Board of Elections. He noted that others had independently noticed the issue, particularly inconsistencies involving Wards 2 and 3, and asked Mr. Lannon to investigate. Mr. Lannon stated he will check the legal ward descriptions in the code and ensure they match the county's official data. Mr. Carr stated that recent website updates may have contributed to the mismatch and suggests confirming which map is legally correct before updating anything. Mr. Kary provided examples of the discrepancies, noting changes on Atkins Road and Hurricane, which differ between the City and county maps. Mr. Carr stated that the county's map should reflect the legal boundaries used for voting, but the priority is to confirm accuracy and then decide whether any anomalies need further discussion.

Fire Chief Ungar – No report.

Police Chief Schultz – Chief Schultz stated that over the weekend, several Police and Fire Department members met Noah Coughlin, a man currently on his fifth walk-run journey across the United States. He began this trek in December in Maine and is traveling through all the northern states; by the end of this trip, he will have visited every state except three. His mission is to promote the spirit of America and raise money for rare disease research and related charities. He was described as a genuinely kind person and an inspiration. Anyone interested in learning more can visit his website, run4usa.com. It was truly special that he passed through Willoughby.

Chief Building and Zoning Inspector Keller – Mr. Keller thanked Council for the passage of Resolution No. 2026-9.

Parks & Recreation Director Keller – Absent.

Finance Director Hoffman – Ms. Hoffman thanked Council for the passage of Resolution Nos. 2026-6 and 2026-8.

COUNCILMEN REPORTS

Ms. Sievers – No report.

Mr. Kary – No report. Mr. Kary noted that Ms. Hoffman’s accomplished was amazing.

Mr. Tomaselli – No report.

Mr. Luciano –No report.

Mr. Garry – No report.

Mr. Anderson – No report.


Mr. Carr – No report.

The Regular Council Meeting adjourned at 7:37 p.m.

Date approved 2-17-26



John Tomaselli, Vice-President



Clerk of Council



Robert A. Fiala, Mayor