REGULAR SESSION

February 12, 2026

The Council of the City of Chardon met in Regular Session Thursday, February 12, 2026 at 6:30 PM in Council Chambers of the Chardon Municipal Center.

Christopher Grau, Mayor & President of Council presiding.

The meeting opened with the pledge of allegiance and roll call.

Members of Council present: Andrew Blackley, Deborah Chuha, Christopher Grau, David Lelko, Kyle Martin, Heather Means, Daniel Meleski.

Members of Council absent: none.

Others Present: City Manager Benjamin Young, Finance Director Mark Iacofano, Clerk of Council Amy Day, Law Director Benjamin Chojnacki, Police Chief Scott Niehus, City Engineer Doug Courtney, Community Development Administrator Jonathan Holody, Public Service Director Justin Czekaj, Parks and Recreation Director Adam Rogers, Abbey Blashinski, Sylvia McGee, Rachel Ruffer, Chris Semrock, Leroy Dowling, Frank Taylor, Mike Butt, Mark Horvath, Allison Wilson, Vicki Dailey.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Mrs. Chuha moved and Mr. Blackley seconded to approve the minutes of the January 8, 2026 Regular Session as presented.

Upon roll call vote the motion passed unanimously.

MANAGER'S REPORT

Mr. Young reported that seasonal staffing is still needed in the Parks and Recreation Department.

Mr. Young reported that the City has acquired the Bid Express electronic bidding platform on State contract to help advertise and receive competitive solicitations more efficiently. The new software will distribute the bid packets and allow electronic submission and complete bid tabs for the City at no cost.

Mr. Young reported that work has begun on the 2025 annual report.

Mr. Young reported on an electric rebate residents can expect to receive as part of a PUCO-approved settlement related to HB6.

Mr. Young reported on the status of capital projects.

Mr. Young reported that the spring and summer recreation brochure has been published on the City’s website. Program registration opens on March 1, 2026.

Mr. Young reported that the City received notification from the State that in 2026 they will be paving SR 44 from the North Corporation line to the County line over the summer.

Mr. Young reported that the new ladder truck has been ordered and paid for. Expected delivery is in 36-38 months.

Mr. Young reported that Geauga County court personnel began moving into the new building on February 2, 2026. The County is working on scheduling a grand opening event.

Mr. Young congratulated Adam Rogers on passing his recent certified Parks and Recreation professional exam.

Mr. Young reported that the City received notification from the County that the City will not be receiving municipal road funds that were requested for 2025. Staff is working with the County to reallocate the money to a 2026 project.

Mr. Lelko asked how the recreation programs are advertised.

Mr. Rogers stated that the programs are advertised by e-mail blasts, social media and the school website.

PLANNING COMMISSION REPORT

Mr. Blackley reported that Planning Commission met in Regular Session and approved a conditional use permit for a funeral home at 308 Park Avenue. Additionally, Planning Commission also approved requested variances and the final development plan for Sheetz at 501 Water Street and a variance for Phase II of the Willo Tree Planned Residential Development to allow a 38-foot setback from the public right-of-way.

Mr. Blackley added that Planning Commission also reviewed and provided some useful feedback on the Chardon Pocket Park concept plan presented by the City Manager and Parks and Recreation Director.

COUNCIL COMMITTEE REPORTS

Service Committee

Mrs. Chuha reported that the Committee met and reviewed streets selected for the 2026 Street Maintenance Program, and reviewed proposed changes to cemetery rules.

Mr. Young stated that the proposed rule changes are to make them easier to understand and to clear up an issue with right to burials. In an interest of time, the changes will be presented to Council in March.

HEARING OF PERSONS BEFORE COUNCIL

Those Persons on the Agenda

Fire Chief, Justin Geiss, reported on the Department's calls for service and Fire Department activities in 2025.

Abigale Blashinski addressed Council to request Permission for a Holiday Market in the Square on Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays from 11/26/26-12/20/26. She stated that electrical supply and safety were two issues that they needed to address following their last conversation with Council. She has had conversations with the Fire and Police Chiefs and discussed safety.

Mayor Grau asked about the electrical system.

Sylvia McGee stated that the Maple Festival board was willing to allow them to use their power source. They are also investigating adding receptacles throughout the park as an alternative to using extension cords.

Mrs. Chuha asked how many huts are being planned as part of the event.

Ms. Blashinski stated that the number of huts depends on how many hut sponsorships they get. She added that there is only so much work they can do before they get approval from Council to hold the event.

Ms. McGee stated that the huts will enhance the already existing decorations in the Square.

Mr. Young stated that depending on the height of the huts, building permits through the County Building Department may be necessary.

Mr. Chojnacki asked how vendors are selected.

Ms. McGee stated that the vendors are juried as is done with their other events.

Ms. Means spoke in support of permitting the event.

Mr. Young suggested that if Council likes the idea of the event and would like details still worked out with staff, they could say yes with the caveat that a contract has to be worked out with staff, and still giving Council final approval.

Mr. Lelko stated that he likes the idea of the event, but can't support the location on the Square for multiple weeks.

Mr. Blackley expressed concern about adding permanent underground electric on the Square and questioned how the huts would be leveled.

Ms. McGee explained that the huts can be leveled by adjusting the legs.

Mayor Grau stated that he is ok proceeding with the event.

Mayor Grau moved and Ms. Means seconded to authorize the City Manager to negotiate an agreement with the Holiday Market in the Square for the dates Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays from 11/26/26-12/20/26.

Mr. Young stated that he would probably need 2 months time to finalize the agreement.

Mayor Grau noted that outstanding issues include: Building issues, non-discrimination, space for huts, power and permits.

Ms. McGee asked how this event is different from other CSA events with regards to the jurying process for selecting vendors.

Mr. Chojnacki stated that it probably isn't different from other CSA events; however, other events don't have the potential establishment of religion.

Results of the roll call vote:

Blackley: Yes
Chuha: No
Grau: Yes
Lelko: No
Martin: Yes
Means: Yes
Meleski: Yes

Motion passed.

Cindie Suszynski - Request Permission to hold a holiday market in the Heritage House on 12/13/26.

Mr. Grau stated that the event is for-profit and the Heritage House rules do not allow for-profit events without Council's approval.

Mr. Lelko noted that the CSA holiday market will be going on at the same time and asked if there is any conflict.

Ms. Blashinsky stated that they understand that the events will be going on simultaneously, noting that they will use the Heritage House on other days not already reserved.

Ms. Means noted that other for-profit events have operated out of the Heritage House.

Mr. Lelko requested that Ms. Suszynski be made aware that no outside signage is permitted.

Ms. Means moved and Mr. Blackley seconded to authorize Cindie Suszynski to hold a holiday market in the Heritage House on 12/13/26. Upon roll call vote the motion passed unanimously.

General Public

Mark Horvath, representing Dumpster Bandit, addressed Council to introduce himself and expressed his gratitude for the opportunity to potentially be awarded the City's trash hauler contract.

Rachel Ruffer, representing Waste Management, addressed Council and reviewed the value the company provides and expressed the company's interest in continuing to serve as the City's trash hauler.

Law Director Ben Chojnacki informed Council that the City did a competitive bidding process and it is Council's job to make a decision to award the trash contract based on the City Manager's recommendation along with the bid documents that were submitted by qualified bidders. Any other discussion is outside of what Council should be considering when awarding the trash contract.

OLD BUSINESS – none.

NEW BUSINESS

Regarding a new C-2 Liquor Permit for Ohio Springs Inc, DBA Sheetz, for location at Water Street/Wilson Mills Rd., no member of Council had any objections.

Regarding approval of the Chardon Pocket Park design, Mr. Young provided background on the acquisition of the property at the corner of Water and Cherry streets, which was gifted to the City. He noted that the design included core elements that the public wanted to see in the park while staying within the budget authorized by Council.

Parks and Recreation Director, Adam Rogers, reviewed the proposed project design for the park prepared by OHM Advisors, which included a Chardon sign, a veterans' memorial area with a flag and benches. A picnic area is in the plan as an add alternate.

Mr. Lelko expressed concern that 2 benches are not enough.

Mr. Rogers stated that based on the funding, only 2 benches are included, but more can be added at a future date.

Mr. Lelko asked how much funding from stakeholders has been received.

Mr. Young stated that $360,000 has been budgeted for; however, the City has not yet received any written commitments from community groups.

Ms. Means stated that stakeholder funding for the project is still being sought. The design needs to be finished first before funding can be secured.

Mr. Rogers noted that he has also applied for grant funding.

Mr. Lelko questioned if Council likes the design and is willing to spend $360,000 on this project.

Mr. Young stated that funds were appropriated for all of the 2026 Capital Improvement Projects as part of the temporary budget, which Council approved in December.

Ms. Means asked how much has been spent on the project to date.

Mr. Young stated that $35,000 was spent on the design in 2025.

Mr. Lelko stated that he would like a separate vote if Council wants to do the project in 2026. He questioned if Council was aware that the Pocket Park was included in the temporary appropriations.

Mayor Grau stated that he understood that $360,000 was the figure that has been discussed for the project, with other contributions to come from other stakeholders. He added that there have been many public discussions about the park that have included it being a passive park, and he feels it is time to move forward with the project.

Mr. Blackley asked if the $27,800 cost for architects and design is in addition to the $35,000 already spent.

Mr. Young stated that the $27,800 cost for architects and design is in addition to the $35,000 already spent. This would result in final construction drawings that could be submitted to Planning Commission for final development plan approval and put out to bid for construction.

Mr. Blackley asked what the $35,000 cost was for.

Mr. Young stated that $35,000 was for the project rendering and the public engagement process.

Mayor Grau moved and Ms. Means seconded to approve the Pocket Park design as presented. Upon roll call vote the motion passed unanimously.

LEGISLATION

ORDINANCE NO. 3339

AN ORDINANCE TO MAKE ANNUAL APPROPRIATIONS FOR CURRENT EXPENSES AND OTHER EXPENDITURES OF THE CITY OF CHARDON, STATE OF OHIO DURING THE FISCAL YEAR ENDING DECEMBER 31, 2026, AND DECLARING AN EMERGENCY was read for the first time by title only.

Mrs. Chuha moved and Mr. Meleski seconded the rules be suspended and the Ordinance be read for the second and third time by title only. Upon roll call vote the motion passed unanimously.

Ordinance No. 3339 was then read for the second and third time by title only.

Ms. Means moved and Mrs. Chuha seconded for the adoption of Ordinance No. 3339.

Mr. Young presented the FY 2026 permanent budget, noting that the budget book provides an overview of key performance indicators and metrics from the budget, with additional details available online through OpenGov.

Mr. Young reviewed the budget summary, noting that the City remains in a strong financial position for 2026.

Mr. Young stated that the 2026 budget is $30,000,000 which is $900,000 more than 2025 actual figures.

Mr. Young reviewed 2026 projected fund balances for active funds.

Mr. Young reviewed the revenue estimates for 2026 ($27,200,627) compared to actual revenue from the last 10 years for all funds.

Mr. Young noted that income tax collections in 2025 declined slightly compared to 2024 due to net-profit filings from businesses and individuals and a one-time payment made in 2024 which inflated that year's totals. However, even though income tax collections were slightly down from the prior year, 2025 revenues outperformed projections by over $1 million.

Mr. Young began reviewing the 2026 expenditures, highlighting the significant reasons that expenditures are $781,000 higher than 2025 actual expenditures including: an extra pay period in 2026, additional fund transfers to emergency reserve funds and increase in capital project and emergency contingencies that arise from personnel costs spread throughout all departments.

Mr. Young noted that in 2026, the City has a higher than normal capital outlay due to two 2027 projects that will be bid by the State that the City has to pay for in 2026.

Mr. Young reviewed the General Fund transfers, budgeted positions for personnel which remain unchanged from 2025, and significant non-capital purchases over $20,000.

Mr. Young noted that the budget includes a 10-year outlook for capital projects, with the first five years being balanced years with fund sources identified. He noted that over 50% of planned capital spending over the next decade goes to streets and traffic.

Mr. Young reviewed the debt schedule with $67 million in outstanding debt obligation; however, $6 million is debt the City owes to itself. The annual debt load declines significantly over the next decade.

Mr. Young began reviewing the remaining budget document that included notable budget line items over $5,000 for each department along with a 4-year lookback of total expenditures in each department.

Mr. Blackley asked how much of the budget for utilities are subsidized by the General Fund.

Mr. Young stated that none of the City's utilities are subsidized by the General Fund.

Mr. Lelko asked how much is budgeted to be spent on information technology in 2026.

Mr. Young stated that approximately $300,000 is projected to be spent on information technology.

Mr. Blackley asked if money has been budgeted for America 250.

Mr. Young stated that funds have been budgeted, but it is less than $5,000.

Mr. Lelko asked the amount the City will be contributing for fireworks, and if a larger fireworks show is planned for America 250.

Mr. Young stated that the City budgeted $3,000 for fireworks, and the City's America 250 committee is working to plan a larger show.

Mr. Lelko stated that he is pleased with the 2026 budget book which is different from recent years, but covers the important items while providing additional details in the online version.

Mayor Grau thanked the City Manager and staff for their efforts in preparing the budget document.

Results of the roll call vote:

Blackley: Yes
Chuha: Yes
Grau: Yes
Lelko: No
Martin: Yes
Means: Yes
Meleski: Yes

Motion passed.

ORDINANCE NO. 3340
AN ORDINANCE AUTHORIZING THE CITY MANAGER TO ENTER INTO AN AGREEMENT WITH DUMPSTER BANDIT, LLC FOR SOLID WASTE COLLECTION AND DISPOSAL SERVICES, AND DECLARING AN EMERGENCY was read for the first time by title only.

Mr. Blackley moved and Mrs. Chuha seconded the rules be suspended and the Ordinance be read for the second and third time by title only.

Mr. Chojnacki stated that customarily, Council waives the reading of ordinances at three separate occasions, however, there are some questions about the City Manager's analysis that may result in more conversation than would ordinarily occur in one meeting. Therefore, before Council votes on waiving of the second and third readings, it may be appropriate for questions to be asked first.

Mr. Young reporting on the bidding process and results. He noted that he is recommending Dumpster Bandit because they had the lowest monetary cost in the bid, and they proposed no changes to the standard language in their bid. Their price is stable for 5-years and provided the required two options; whereas, the next lowest bidder did not. He called all of Dumpster Bandit's references in other communities with a public contract who all transitioned from a previous hauler, and they all conveyed that they experienced no issues with the transition.

Mr. Blackley asked if the contractor's ability to secure capital and to fulfill the terms of the contract entered into the Manager's analysis.

Mr. Young stated that Dumpster Bandit did acknowledge that they would need to acquire additional vehicles, and it appears that they have sufficient time to do that. He added that in addition, a performance bond is required to be provided.

Mr. Blackley noted that the bid specifications were not reviewed by Council, and inquired about the number of hours required for pickup.

Mr. Young stated that the current contract does not specify the number of hours pickup must occur in, but the contract requires pickup must occur in one day.

Mr. Lelko inquired about the City's trash day.

Mr. Young stated that doing trash day is a requirement.

Mr. Lelko asked if any of the bidders offered recycling as an option, where residents could opt out of recycling and not be charged for the service.

Mr. Young stated that the City required all the bidders to submit trash and recycling as separate line items, and the bid specs allow people to opt out of recycling.

Mr. Lelko asked if customers are charged.

Mr. Young stated that he believed they are, but would have to look at each bid.

Mr. Lelko stated that he does not believe the City should be mandating that residents recycle and charge for the service.

Mr. Blackley asked if bag service with recycling is an option.

Mr. Young stated that it is not his intent to change any of the services currently offered. The bid specifications closely mirrored the current contract with Waste Management.

Ms. Means asked if Dumpster Bandit is comparable to Waste Management with regards to their level of customer service and online tools they have for customers.

Mr. Young stated that Dumpster Bandit has met all of the required bidding specifications.

Mr. Martin added that Council has numerous questions because they did not see the bid specifications.

Ms. Means expressed concern regarding if Dumpster Bandit will have all the equipment and resources necessary to service the City residents in the way they are now.

Mayor Grau asked about safety protocols.

Mr. Young stated that it was not addressed in the specifications.

Mrs. Chuha asked where bags are supplied and if a senior discount is available.

Mr. Young stated that bags are available at Dumpster Bandit's offices, adding that a senior discount is available.

Ms. Means stated that she may not be confident in making a decision at the present time, and asked how Council's questions can be answered.

Mr. Chojnacki stated that it depends if the Manager can answer the question with concrete information through reviewing the bid specifications and his investigation of the bids received. He added that the City Manager may be able to investigate certain questions further, but some he may not. If there are questions, they must take place in a public meeting.

Mr. Young noted that the bid specs required prices for years 6 and 7, and the second-lowest bidder did not provide this information, which could potentially make the bid non-compliant.

Discussion occurred regarding if the Ordinance should be read at separate meetings.

Mr. Blackley stated that the contractor complied with the bid documents, provided a bid bond, and if he fails to perform, the City has other recourse.

Mr. Young stated that in the draft contract, the City may terminate the contract with or without a reason.

Mr. Blackley stated that not voting on the Ordinance at this meeting is not going to change the bid specifications.

Mayor Grau stated that waiting to vote for another month is not going to change the information that Council has.

Results of the roll call vote:

Blackley: Yes
Chuha: Yes
Grau: Yes
Lelko: Yes
Martin: Yes
Means: No
Meleski: Yes

Motion passed.

Ordinance No. 3340 was then read for the second and third time by title only.

Mr. Blackley moved and Mrs. Chuha seconded for the adoption of Ordinance No. 3340.

Results of the roll call vote:

Blackley: Yes
Chuha: Yes
Grau: Yes
Lelko: No
Martin: No
Means: Yes
Meleski: Yes

Motion passed.

ORDINANCE NO. 3341
AN ORDINANCE AUTHORIZING THE CITY MANAGER TO ENTER INTO A LEASE AGREEMENT WITH MOUNTAIN ROAD CYCLES, LLC, AND DECLARING AN EMERGENCY was read for the first time by title only.

Mr. Meleski moved and Mrs. Chuha seconded the rules be suspended and the Ordinance be read for the second and third time by title only. Upon roll call vote the motion passed unanimously.

Ordinance No. 3341 was then read for the second and third time by title only.

Mr. Blackley moved and Mr. Martin seconded for the adoption of Ordinance No. 3341.

Mr. Young stated that Mountain Road Cycles is a long-term tenant and they would like to renew their lease at Old Village Hall.

Upon roll call vote the motion passed unanimously.

ORDINANCE NO. 3342
AN ORDINANCE AUTHORIZING ALL ACTIONS NECESSARY TO ACCEPT NORTHEAST OHIO PUBLIC ENERGY COUNCIL (NOPEC) 2026 ENERGIZED COMMUNITY GRANT FUNDS AND DECLARING AN EMERGENCY was read for the first time by title only.

Mr. Blackley moved and Mrs. Chuha seconded the rules be suspended and the Ordinance be read for the second and third time by title only. Upon roll call vote the motion passed unanimously.

Ordinance No. 3342 was then read for the second and third time by title only.

Mr. Meleski moved and Mrs. Chuha seconded for the adoption of Ordinance No. 3342.

Mr. Czekaj stated that the grant from NOPEC will be used for the purchase of 2 new roof top HVAC units for the Fire Department.

Upon roll call vote the motion passed unanimously.

RESOLUTION NO. 7-26
A RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING THE CITY MANAGER TO ENTER INTO ALL NECESSARY EASEMENT AGREEMENTS FOR THE INSTALLATION AND MAINTENANCE OF SIDEWALKS AND OTHER PUBLIC IMPROVEMENTS ON THE REAL PROPERTY LOCATED AT 400 WATER STREET, AND DECLARING AN EMERGENCY was read for the first time by title only.

Mr. Blackley moved and Mrs. Chuha seconded the rules be suspended and the Resolution be read for the second and third time by title only. Upon roll call vote the motion passed unanimously.

Resolution No. 7-26 was then read for the second and third time by title only.

Mr. Blackley moved and Mrs. Chuha seconded for the adoption of Resolution No. 7-26.

Mr. Young stated that the easement is to be granted by the owner of 400 Water Street for sidewalk that is outside the right-of-way along Washington Street. He added that the easement was a condition of Planning Commission's approval of the re-development of the property as a used car lot.

Upon roll call vote the motion passed unanimously.

REVIEW OF EXPENDITURES

Mr. Meleski reported that expenditures were in order.

EXECUTIVE SESSION – none.

APPOINTMENTS TO BOARDS AND COMMISSIONS

Mr. Grau moved and Mr. Meleski seconded to appoint Deborah Chuha to the Tax Incentive Review Council.

Results of the roll call vote:

Blackley: Yes
Chuha: Abstain
Grau: Yes
Lelko: Yes
Martin: Yes
Means: Yes
Meleski: Yes

Motion passed.

ANY OTHER BUSINESS TO COME BEFORE COUNCIL – none.

ADJOURN

Mr. Lelko moved and Mr. Meleski seconded to adjourn. Upon voice vote the motion passed unanimously.

The meeting adjourned at 9:06 PM.

Attest:

____
CHRISTOPHER GRAU, Mayor
President of Council

____
AMY DAY
Clerk of Council