REGULAR SESSION

March 12, 2026

The Council of the City of Chardon met in Regular Session Thursday, March 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, Bill Hess, Max Yost, Amy Bevan, Paul Ovark, Ken Ovark, Steven Joley, Josh Burke, Ryan Laubenthal, Randy Taylor, Mark Horvath, Kenneth Latz, Allison Wilson, Robert Faehnle, Lori Babik.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Mr. Meleski moved and Mrs. Chuha seconded to approve the minutes of the February 12, 2026 Regular Session and March 5, 2026 Special Session as presented.

Upon roll call vote the motion passed unanimously.

MANAGER'S REPORT

Mr. Young reported that the City is still seeking lifeguards for the pool.

Mr. Young reported on the untimely passing of Lenny Clemson, a Property Maintenance Worker with the Lands & Buildings Department.

Mr. Young reported that the City has applied for and been awarded the bi-annual tire collection grant from the Geauga-Trumball Solid Waste District. He is working with the City’s new hauler, Dumpster Bandit, on the details of a collection event in 2026.

Mr. Young reported on the status of capital projects.

Justin Czekaj, Public Service Director, reported on the status of activities in his division and thanked his staff in the Street, Water/Sewer and Lands and Buildings for their efforts to maintain City infrastructure during the cold temperatures.

Mr. Czekaj reported on grant opportunities he is in the process of pursuing.

Mr. Czekaj reported that residents should be aware that travel will be impacted north of the City due to ODOT’s rehabilitation of State Route 44 through December 2027.

Mr. Young reported that City staff received a demonstration by ADP for cemetery software which they are offering the City at no cost. Representatives from ADP will be at the April Council meeting to provide a demonstration.

Mr. Young reported on upcoming events.

Mr. Young reported that the City has been made aware that a group is planning a civic demonstration on the Square on March 28, 2026, noting that a permit is not required for this event because it is a protected first amendment activity.

PLANNING COMMISSION REPORT

Mr. Blackley reported that Planning Commission met in Regular Session and reviewed the Concept Plan for the Geauga County Public Library - Chardon Branch and Administrative Center at 345 Park Avenue.

Mr. Blackley reported that at his request, the City Architect reviewed the building plans and commented that the proposed design is not compatible in scale, mass and architectural style of surrounding residential buildings, and with City heritage at that location. He asked when the library will return to Planning Commission.

Mr. Holody stated that the library's goal is to come to the April Planning Commission regular meeting for final development plan approval.

Mr. Blackley asked if a variance is needed for the construction of the library administration building in an R-1 residential district.

Mr. Holody stated that this is currently under review.

Mr. Blackley added that the Planning Commission's authority regarding architectural review has come into question and he is requesting the Law Director provide guidance to the Planning Commission, preferably ahead of their April meeting.

Mr. Blackley reported that Planning Commission also heard a presentation of a Tree Protection Plan for the City of Chardon led by David Allen, Urban Forester. Draft legislation has been requested for Council to consider that would require tree protection and preservation as part of development plans.

COUNCIL COMMITTEE REPORTS

Service Committee

Mrs. Chuha reported that the Service Committee met and provided feedback on the City Manager's proposed Goals and Priorities, specifically Strategies 4.2, 4.3 & Goal 8.

Economic Development Committee

Ms. Means reported that the Economic Development Committee met and reviewed the City Manager's proposed Goals and Priorities, specifically Goals 1,2 & 9. She provided highlights of their discussion that included a business visitation schedule, online resident and business surveys, attracting businesses, cohesive branding, marketing space at Old Village Hall and online tools to make the permitting process easier.

Ms. Means added that the Committee also discussed concise zoning code language that Council will be considering during legislation.

Mr. Blackley mentioned a small business that would like to see the City do more for small businesses.

Ms. Means suggested that a small business can possibly be better served by being a member of the Chardon Chamber or Chardon Square Association.

Mr. Young stated that the City has some programs that can be communicated to the businesses such as the Community Reinvestment Area program.

Mr. Meleski noted that Retail Strategies can assist with providing marketing studies.

Mr. Lelko asked how Council is to approve the City Manager's goals and priorities document if there is an objection to any item in the document.

Mr. Young stated that Council will have the opportunity to voice any objections during legislation.

Legislative Committee

Mr. Martin reported that the Legislative Committee met and reviewed the City Manager's proposed Goals 6 & 7. Most of the discussion was related to how technology can help improve processes and procedures. The only recommendation the Committee had was to adopt more modern technology tools to preserve permanent records.

Safety Committee

Mr. Meleski reported that the Safety Committee met and reviewed the City Manager's proposed Goals 3 & 10). The Committee supported the City Manager's goals; however, they recommended caution be used on adding a detective position because the City is not currently adequately staffed to add a detective position.

Mr. Meleski added that he viewed the goals and priorities document as a direction for the City Manager, and envisions that more discussion on the strategies will happen before implementation.

Finance Committee

Mr. Lelko reported that the Finance Committee met and reviewed the City Manager's proposed Goal 5. He stated that there were a number of the strategies that the Committee asked for more information from staff before giving approval. He noted that the Committee members disagreed on the proposal to change the way the budget is completed using a temporary budget. With regards to the entire document, he feels that Council should concentrate primarily on the goals and priorities for 2026 because of the time it would take for all of Council to review the entire document.

Mr. Meleski stated that the Committee also reviewed and recommended the changes to Chapter 127 as proposed by the City Manager.

Water/Sewer

Mr. Blackley reported that the Water/Sewer Committee met and reviewed the strategies related to City Manager's proposed Goal 4.1. He provided highlights of the Committee's discussion that included developing GIS capabilities to manage assets, transitioning away from calculating connection charges from the Ohio plumbing code to using an equivalent dwelling unit metric, aligning utility operations with EPA best management practices, adopting a formal source water protection plan, construction of a second clearwell, rehabilitating the water tower, adopting the CRWP EPA-endorsed storm water code, and evaluating the creation of a storm sewer utility.

Mr. Blackley stated that the Committee agreed with all of the goals and priorities except for the expansion of utility services beyond City boundaries. He noted that there would need to be more discussion about expanding City utilities before it is adopted as a goal. Mr. Blackley stated that it is something that should be looked at because the more utility customers the City has, the wider the costs can be spread out.

HEARING OF PERSONS BEFORE COUNCIL

Those Persons on the Agenda

Robert Faehnle, City's representative on the Geauga Family First Council, reported on the organization's mission and introduced Ken Lantz, family representative and Lori Babik, Service Coordinator.

Ken Lantz reviewed the way Geauga Family First helps kids and families with complex needs by providing early intervention and financial support.

Lori Babik reviewed additional services Geauga Family First provides and explained how they coordinate resources with other local agencies.

Mark Horvath, co-owner of Dumpster Bandit, introduced himself as the City's new single trash hauler and answered questions regarding trash services.

Council asked general questions about the services Dumpster Bandit provides.

Mayor Grau noted that communication to residents by Dumpster Bandit needs to be made clear what they need to do to set up their account.

General Public

Ryan Laubenthal,_9177 Cambridge Rd., addressed Council to request removal of the Flock Cameras recently installed in the City that he feels are a potential threat to civil liberties.

Mayor Grau asked Mr. Laubenthal to contact him so that they can discuss his concerns further.

OLD BUSINESS – none.

NEW BUSINESS

Regarding a new D-1 liquor permit for Chipotle, 414 Water Street, no member of Council had any objections.

Regarding the transfer of stock ownership of D-1, D-2 and D-3 liquor permits for Chardon Lakes Golf Course, 414 South Street, no member of Council had any objections.

LEGISLATION

ORDINANCE NO._3343
AN ORDINANCE AMENDING CHAPTER 351, PARKING GENERALLY, SPECIFICALLY SECTION 351.24, SPECIFIED PARKING TIME LIMITS; PARKING BEYOND TIME LIMIT; PENALTY; MULTIPLE VIOLATIONS, OF THE CODIFIED ORDINANCES OF THE CITY OF CHARDON TO DESIGNATE PARKING FOR COUNTY COURT USE, AND DECLARING AN EMERGENCY was read for the first time by title only.

Mr. Blackley 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. 3343 was then read for the second and third time by title only.

Mr. Meleski moved and Ms. Means seconded for the adoption of Ordinance No. 3343.

Amy Bevan and Randy Taylor, representing Geauga County Administration, spoke to request the designation of five parking spaces for County Court use during regular business hours to alleviate parking constraints for courthouse staff.

Mr. Lelko asked if the parking spaces are temporary until the County gravel parking lot is paved.

Mr. Taylor stated that the request for the parking spaces is most likely to be permanent. He noted that there are 5-6 parking spaces currently designated for Sheriff parking that could be given back to the City.

Ms. Means asked when the gravel parking lot will be paved, noting that it was planned to be paved early on in the project.

Ms. Bevan reported that it is on their list of projects to be completed, but the timeframe to pave the lot is undetermined. She noted that there has been discussion about modifying the parking lot plans to remove trees to allow for more parking spaces.

Discussion occurred regarding the plan going back to Planning Commission if there are changes.

Ms. Means spoke in support of giving the 5 spaces on E. Park Street to the County with the understanding that the 6 Sheriff spaces on Main Street will be removed and the gravel lot on E. Park Street can be used for City event parking. She added that the City needs to leave spaces as open as possible for the businesses on the Square.

Mr. Meleski stated that the Sheriff parking spaces need to have formal council approval, because formal approval has not been given for those spaces.

Ms. Means suggested that the Sheriff parking spaces are going to be removed unless an ask is made.

Ms. Bevan stated that she would speak to the Sheriff to get some clarity about the spots.

Mr. Lelko noted that the Ordinance does not indicate that the 5 spaces are for Monday – Friday.

Mr. Young recommended that the Ordinance be amended to reflect that the spaces are for Monday – Friday.

Mr. Lelko moved and Ms. Means seconded to amend the draft Ordinance to add Monday – Friday to Section 2C. Upon roll call vote the motion passed unanimously.

Mr. Meleski asked if the signage needs to indicate M-F.

Mr. Young stated that he will ensure that the signs indicate court parking is M-F.

Upon roll call vote the motion passed unanimously.

Mr. Young noted that the County approached him with an additional request for parking as part of their courthouse ribbon-cutting on April 7, 2026.

Ms. Bevan provided a highlight on the day’s events, noting that 5-7 parking spots near the west courthouse entrance are needed for invitees from the federal and state level.

Max Yost, Commissioner’s office, explained that the spots for distinguished guests will be needed until 1:30 PM.

Mayor Grau moved and Mr. Meleski seconded to approve the County’s request for 6 spaces on the west side of the courthouse for a ribbon-cutting on April 7, 2026. Upon roll call vote the motion passed unanimously.

ORDINANCE NO. 3344
AN ORDINANCE AMENDING CHAPTER 941, CEMETERY RULES, OF THE CODIFIED ORDINANCES OF THE CITY OF CHARDON, OHIO TO CLARIFY AND STANDARDIZE RULES, EXPAND THOSE PERMITTED TO BE BURIED, AND ESTABLISH A CEMETERY PRESERVATION FEE, AND DECLARING AN EMERGENCY was read for the first time by title only.

Mr. Meleski moved and Ms. Means 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. 3344 was then read for the second and third time by title only.

Mrs. Chuha moved and Ms. Means seconded for the adoption of Ordinance No. 3344.

Mr. Young stated that a potential issue with the City's cemetery rules was brought to his attention by Superintendent Leroy Dowling, which prompted a comprehensive review of the entire chapter to ensure consistency, clarity, ease of application, and compliance with State law and best practices. In consultation with staff, an updated version of Chapter 941, Cemetery Rules, has been prepared for Council's consideration that provides improved structure and organization, changes to mausoleum crypt opening, right to burial changes to allow interment of spouses and adopted children of blood relatives, adding a $10 preservation fee per transaction, and an update of indigent burial rules to align with State code.

Mr. Lelko asked if there is any money being put into the endowment fund currently.

Mr. Young stated that donations have been made for 2 internees, but the money is not growing. The new $10 fee will be used for the entire cemetery.

Mr. Lelko asked if the money currently in the endowment fund will be restricted for use on the 2 graves.

Mr. Young stated that the money will be used for the 2 graves the City has documentation on.

Mr. Lelko asked if the $10 fee is for each transaction.

Mr. Young stated that the fee is for each transaction.

Upon roll call vote the motion passed unanimously.

ORDINANCE NO. 3345
AN ORDINANCE AMENDING CHAPTER 127, CITY MANAGER, OF THE CODIFIED ORDINANCES OF THE CITY OF CHARDON, OHIO TO CLARIFY THE MANAGER'S DUTIES, SET CLEAR SPENDING AND CONTRACTUAL AUTHORITY, AND CLARIFY PROCUREMENT STANDARDS, AND DECLARING AN EMERGENCY was read for the first time by title only.

Mr. Meleski moved and Ms. Means 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. 3345 was then read for the second and third time by title only.

Ms. Means moved and Mr. Meleski seconded for the adoption of Ordinance No. 3345.

Mr. Young stated that Chapter 127 amendments have been proposed to clarify the City Manager’s powers and to simplify regulations relating to the City’s procurement process. Highlights of the changes include raising the quote threshold to $10,000, approval by Council for all real property transactions, clear exceptions for competitive selection, clear criteria for determination of lowest and best bid, and clearer rules for change orders.

Mr. Blackley asked what happens in the case that a bid exceeds the Engineer’s estimate by more than 10%.

Mr. Young stated that only Council will have the authority to award or accept bids.

Upon roll call vote the motion passed unanimously.

RESOLUTION NO. 8-26

A RESOLUTION AWARDING THE NORTH STREET/FIFTH AVENUE TRAFFIC SIGNAL PROJECT TO GREENWICH ELECTRIC, INC., AUTHORIZING THE CITY MANAGER TO ENTER INTO ALL AGREEMENTS NECESSARY TO PROCEED WITH THE PROJECT AND DECLARING AN EMERGENCY was read for the first time by title only.

Mr. Blackley moved and Ms. Means 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. 8-26 was then read for the second and third time by title only.

Mr. Blackley moved and Ms. Means seconded for the adoption of Resolution No. 8-26.

Mr. Courtney stated that after reviewing the project history of Greenwich Electric, who submitted the lowest bid, he is recommending they be awarded the contract.

Upon roll call vote the motion passed unanimously.

RESOLUTION NO. 9-26

A RESOLUTION APPROVING THE CITY MANAGER'S PROPOSED GOALS AND PRIORITIES FOR 2026 AND BEYOND AND DECLARING AN EMERGENCY was read for the first time by title only.

Mr. Meleski moved and Ms. Means 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. 9-26 was then read for the second and third time by title only.

Ms. Means moved and Mr. Meleski seconded for the adoption of Resolution No. 9-26.

Mr. Young stated that per his employment contract, he and Council are to annually set goals and performance objectives which is the intent of the document he prepared and reviewed with Council committees.

Mr. Blackley asked about why the initiative to encourage development of the east side of the Square was removed from the document.

Mr. Young stated that the Economic Development Committee recommended removal of this initiative due to the fact that the City has limited direct power to cause redevelopment to occur.

Mr. Blackley stated that nothing will happen on the east side if Council ignores it.

Ms. Means stated that the Committee did not express that the east side of the Square should be ignored, but rather they wanted to discontinue following the plan that was designed for the east side of the Square.

Mr. Blackley stated that the initiative 2.2 (g) does not reference a specific plan.

Mr. Young noted that neither he nor the Community Development Administrator would turn away an opportunity to develop the east side of the Square.

Ms. Means stated that this has already happened. She noted that the Committee's intent was not to ignore the east side of the Square, but rather was referencing the development plan. She added that the property in the plan is not available, but if it becomes available, the City will have to start buying it up.

Mr. Martin stated that he views the east side as no different than other areas of the City.

Mayor Grau added that the City has made numerous efforts to have conversations with the County, school and library to develop the east side of the Square, but none have taken hold. However, if someone approaches the City with a plan to develop it, the City would be very interested.

Mr. Lelko stated that Council has identified the east side of the Square as critical.

Mr. Lelko questioned how Council should proceed if they disagree with an item in the City Manager's goals.

Ms. Means stated that the Committees reviewed and made recommendations to the plan and the recommendations made their way into the final document.

Mr. Martin stated that he trusts the Committees to make the recommendations.

Mr. Meleski stated that it sounds like there is serious contention regarding this issue and Council could vote to add it back into the document.

Mr. Lelko suggested that Council could look at just the 2026 goals.

Mr. Meleski disagreed with Mr. Lelko and expressed that there are items that will need action in 2026 for implementation in future years.

Mr. Young stated that his intent was to spread the document review amongst all the Committees. He asked Council if there are any other goals that would cause them to vote no on the entire document.

Mr. Lelko stated that the single unified budget process is an item that he does not support.

Discussion occurred regarding the direction staff will need for this goal.

Mr. Young stated that staff will still prepare the 2027 budget that will be presented to Council in October and Council can choose to adopt it as a permanent budget or as a temporary budget with 25% of wages in it.

Mr. Blackley moved and Mr. Lelko seconded to restore initiative 2.2(g)

Results of the roll call vote:

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

Motion passed.

Mr. Lelko moved and Mr. Blackley seconded to eliminate initiative 5.1(b).

Results of the roll call vote:

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

Motion passed.

Upon roll call vote the motion to adopt Resolution No. 9-26 (as amended) passed unanimously.

REGULAR SESSION

March 12, 2026

RESOLUTION NO. 10-26
A RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING PAVEMENT REPAIR AND RESURFACING OF ALLYND BOULEVARD AND TILDEN AVENUE ("THE 2026 STREET REPAIR AND RESURFACING PROJECT") AND APPROVING THE SUBMISSION OF ALL DOCUMENTS REQUIRED BY THE BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS OF GEAUGA COUNTY TO CONSIDER PROVIDING FUNDING TO THE CITY FROM THE GEAUGA COUNTY MUNICIPAL ROAD FUND TO COVER ELIGIBLE EXPENSES RELATED TO THE 2026 STREET REPAIR AND RESURFACING PROJECT, AND DECLARING AN EMERGENCY was read for the first time by title only.

Mr. Meleski moved and Mr. Blackley 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. 10-26 was then read for the second and third time by title only.

Mr. Meleski moved and Mr. Blackley seconded for the adoption of Resolution No. 10-26.

Mr. Young stated that the City has identified the pavement repair and resurfacing of Allynd Boulevard and Tilden Avenue as a project eligible for funding from the Geauga County Municipal Road Fund, and one of the requirements for the City to receive these funds is the passage of legislation.

Upon roll call vote the motion passed unanimously.

REVIEW OF EXPENDITURES

Mr. Lelko reported that expenditures were in order.

Mr. Lelko reported that the Finance Committee will be reviewing the role of the Finance Committee in relation to the review of expenditures.

Mr. Meleski noted that he is working with the Finance Director to look at the data that is available in the finance software and look for ways to streamline the process of reviewing expenditures.

Mr. Meleski moved and Mayor Grau seconded to amend the agenda to move agenda item #14 to agenda item #12. Upon roll call vote the motion passed unanimously.

Regarding the amendment to the classification and pay plan, Mr. Young stated that the plan includes a 3% increase for non-union employees.

Ms. Means moved and Mr. Meleski seconded to approve the classification and pay plan as presented. Upon roll call vote the motion passed unanimously.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

Mr. Meleski moved and Ms. Means seconded to adjourn to Executive Session at 9:00 PM to consider the purchase of public property for a public purpose or the sale of public property at competitive bidding and invite Ben Young, Ben Chojnacki, Justin

Czekaj and Amy Day into the session. Upon roll call vote the motion passed unanimously.

Discussion occurred regarding the purchase of public property for a public purpose or the sale of public property at competitive bidding.

Meeting reconvened at 9:31 PM.

ANY OTHER BUSINESS TO COME BEFORE COUNCIL

Mayor Grau reported that he received a request for a crosswalk improvement for a visually impaired child that resides near the Square.

Mr. Czekaj stated that he would investigate what options are available in the Ohio Traffic Control Manual.

Discussion occurred the upcoming Maple Festival events.

ADJOURN

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

The meeting adjourned at 9:35 PM.

Attest:

____
CHRISTOPHER GRAU, Mayor
President of Council

____
AMY DAY
Clerk of Council