

SPECIAL SESSION

November 14, 2024

The Council of the City of Chardon met in Special Session Thursday, November 14, 2024 at 5:30 p.m. 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, Heather Means, Daniel Meleski.

Members of Council absent: Kyle Martin (6:09 p.m.)

Others Present: City Manager Randy Sharpe, Finance Director Mark Iacofano, Clerk of Council Amy Day, Law Director Benjamin Chojnacki, Police Chief Scott Niehus, City Engineer Doug Courtney, Community Development Administrator Steve Yaney, Public Service Director Paul Hornyak, Deputy HR/Finance Director Heidi Delaney, Parks and Recreation Director Adam Rogers, Municipal Court Clerk, Victoria Dailey, Municipal Court Judge Terri Stupica, Mark Miloro, Angela Hansen, Bill Hess, Jim Dustin, Brian Avsec, Debora Avsec, David Hesse, Molly Nikkila.

Regarding pre-budget 2025 topics, Mr. Sharpe provided an overview of the budget timeline which began in September by meeting with department heads. Mr. Sharpe said the budget will be updated with actual 2024 numbers in January, 2025 and the budget book will be prepared for Council's approval which needs to take place by March 31, 2025.

Mr. Sharpe began reviewing economic projections and possible changes for 2025 including an anticipated 5% wage increase for employees' merit and step increases, a 3% health insurance increase, and water/sewer rate increases that were authorized by Council in 2021.

Mr. Sharpe reviewed goals and priorities including: to retain the same level of service, to be a pedestrian-friendly City through the programs that are in place, and to continue with the salary compensation program to be competitive the marketplace to attract, reward and retain employees.

Municipal Court Judge, Terri Stupica, reported that for 2025, no major changes are proposed, and she noted that the court will continue to work efficiently and within their means.

Municipal Court Clerk, Victoria Dailey, stated that the court is trying to streamline processes, and has taken on the staff of the Victim Advocate Department which has worked out well.

Park and Recreation Director, Adam Rogers, reviewed potential new items for 2025 including the purchase of AEDs. He also requested funds to make improvements to the multi-purpose fields at Mel Harder Park, for the addition of an interpretive sign, and to increase the compensation for bands for the summer concert series.

Community Development Administrator, Steve Yaney, reported that for 2025, no major changes are proposed.

Police Chief, Scott Niehus, reported that no new programs are planned for 2025, but the department will be focusing on training as well as Lexipol and Ohio Collaborative Accreditation in 2025.

Chief Niehus reported that the 2025 budget is proposed to include funding for electronic traffic crash and citation submissions.

Ms. Means asked about the parking enforcement device being proposed.

Chief Niehus explained that parking enforcement would be done using a recently tested phone app. The violations would need added to the app and some staff needs trained on how to use it.

Ms. Means asked which staff members would be trained on the parking enforcement.

Chief Niehus stated that some civilian staff have offered to be trained on how to use the app.

Chief Niehus explained how the parking enforcement app would work.

Mr. Blackley inquired about the legality of taking photographs of vehicles but not chalking tires.

Law Director Benjamin Chojnacki, explained how the act of chalking tires, which was the City's method of parking enforcement, was found to be a violation of privacy. However, there is not a reasonable expectation to privacy when taking a photograph of a vehicle on a public street.

Mr. Blackley inquired about implementing parking pay machines.

Chief Niehus stated that the machines are expensive.

Mr. Chojnacki stated that the Law Department's budget remains generally unchanged for 2025. He added that the costs for the Law Director are fixed, and any other costs are a consequence of litigation which is difficult to speculate about.

Finance Director, Mark Iacofano, stated that there are no new programs or services and no major changes in the 2025 Finance Department budget. A couple items that are related to Finance but not in Finance budget would be the re-inspection and appraisal of buildings/structures, machinery and equipment for insurance valuation purposes. Also, because of the City's spending of over \$750K in Federal awards in 2024, a Federal Single Audit will be performed in 2025.

Public Service Director, Paul Hornyak, reviewed a few new notable programs for 2025 including: an additional curbside brush collection which will allow residents to begin their cleanup activities while ensuring the brush is not present during the Maple Festival, and a water service backflow program for commercial accounts and fire hydrant painting.

Mr. Blackley inquired about the status of the EPA's lead service line inventory.

Mr. Hornyak stated that the City submitted the report to the EPA which indicated that the City does not have any lead service lines.

Mr. Martin arrived (6:09 p.m.)

City Manager, Randy Sharpe, reviewed highlights from the 2025 proposed budgeted items for general administration that include: continued funding for G-TV, increase for educational opportunities for staff, IT improvements, and funding for a compensation study to attract and retain employees.

Mr. Lelko asked if job descriptions and analysis of positions can be included as part of the compensation study. He stated that he would like to know the parameters of the study before the City Manager proceeds with hiring the firm.

Mr. Sharpe stated that he has not talked to any firms, but it could be a possibility.

Mr. Sharpe stated that he will include it in the budget, but won't proceed further until more conversation is had with Council.

Mr. Sharpe continued with 2025 pre-budget items in the area of general administration, noting that the proposed budget includes a contract extension for Retail Strategies.

Ms. Means requested Retail Strategies provide Council a list of points of what they have done over the last 3 years, with focus on the last year.

Mr. Sharpe stated that the 2025 proposed budget also includes funding to hire a consultant to prepare an RFQ to convert Short Court Street into a park.

Mrs. Chuha expressed concern about the removal of parking spaces with this plan.

Mr. Blackley noted that head-in parking in other areas around the Square has been an idea that was discussed.

Mr. Lelko asked if the study would include looking at head-in parking.

Mr. Sharpe stated that yes, the study would look at parking. He added that he envisioned public meetings to discuss the public's concerns and desires for this project.

General discussion occurred regarding the RFQ for the proposed project.

ADJOURN

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

The meeting adjourned at 6:14 p.m.

Attest:

CHRISTOPHER GRAU, Mayor
President of Council

AMY DAY
Clerk of Council