SPECIAL SESSION

March 6, 2025

The Council of the City of Chardon met in Special Session on Tuesday, March 6, 2025 at 6:30 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, Kyle Martin, Heather Means, Daniel Meleski.

Members of Council absent: none.

Others present: City Manager Randal Sharpe, Law Director Benjamin Chojnacki, Finance Director Mark Iacofano, Clerk of Council Amy Day, Public Service Director Paul Hornyak, Police Chief Scott Niehus, Park and Recreation Director Adam Rogers, Community Development Administrator Steven Yaney, Deputy HR/Finance Director Heidi Delaney, Municipal Court Judge Terri Stupica, Clerk of Courts Vicki Dailey, Janess Heiden.

Regarding the FY 2025 Annual Budget, City Manager, Randy Sharpe provided an overview of the process for preparing and adopting the budget.

Finance Director, Mark Iacofano, began reviewing the budget document including the budgeted positions for personnel, General Fund transfers, and projected ending balances for each of the funds, noting that carryover balances are used to cover the shortfall in the years where expenditures exceeded revenue.

Mr. Iacofano reviewed a comparison of the ending unencumbered balances from 2015 through 2024.

Mr. Iacofano reviewed the revenue estimates for 2025 ($26,759,582) compared to actual revenue from the last 4 years for all funds.

Mr. Meleski asked about the decrease in Ambulance Fund revenue in 2024.

Mr. Iacofano explained that the company that collected ambulance transport fees had a data breach and did not collect fees for most of 2024. A new company has taken over collections and are attempting to recoup the fees that had not been collected in 2024.

Mr. Iacofano reviewed income tax revenue over the last 5 years broken down between withholding, individual and net profit taxes. He explained that the City’s income tax was 25% higher in 2024 than 2023, mainly due to a taxpayer making a one-time catchup payment in net profit taxes.

Mr. Sharpe noted that income tax withholdings is increasing, but at a gradual rate. He added that the 2025 income tax was budgeted conservatively at a 3% increase over what was budgeted in 2024.

Deputy HR/Finance Director, Heidi Delaney, reviewed the anticipated 2025 fund expenditures by function and type compared to the prior 4 years, noting that the 2025 figures are projected higher than the actual because the Finance Department budgets for the worst-case scenario.

Mr. Iacofano noted that the budget includes a list of capital projects for 2025 totaling $6,027,609. He reviewed the changes that were made to the project list since the projects were approved in October, 2024.

Mr. Blackley asked if the proposed budget reflects the State Route Repaving Project cost increase that was presented to Council on 3/4/25.

Mr. Iacofano stated that after the capital plan was approved by Council, the budget was adjusted to reflect updated engineer's estimates. He noted that as the project stands currently, the project cost is $108,000 under what has been budgeted.

Municipal Court Judge, Terri Stupica and Clerk, Victoria Dailey, spoke to review the court's proposed revenue and expenditures for 2025.

Judge Stupica reviewed recent activities at the Municipal Court including the County overseeing the City's prosecution functions. She noted that recent activity at the State removed the courts' ability to suspend licenses for unpaid fines and court costs which makes collections more challenging.

Ms. Dailey reviewed their major projects for 2025 which include technology upgrades and audio/video enhancements.

Mr. Meleski asked about operations costs that are budgeted higher in 2025.

Ms. Dailey stated that higher costs in operations are due to proposed computer purchases and overall higher costs.

Mr. Blackley asked how many Municipal Court cases originate in the City of Chardon.

Ms. Dailey stated that while she does not have a percentage available, the City is required to maintain a municipal court; however, they have tried to reduce costs by moving the prosecutor responsibilities to the County.

Mr. Chojnacki stated that 7.8% of the cases originate in the City.

Mr. Blackley stated that it is unfortunate that the City can't recoup the costs of the municipal court from those who incur the costs. He believes the County and townships should be responsible for the cost of their cases.

Ms. Dailey stated that the court costs are the best way to recoup costs. She explained that they study the court costs on an annual basis and take into account what other surrounding areas charge.

Ms. Dailey introduced Janess Heiden (IT Clerk and Civil Department Manager) who will be replacing her when she retires in 2026. She stated that they are proposing to train someone to replace Janess mid-year in 2025, but this was not included in the budget.

Police Chief, Scott Niehus, reviewed some additional equipment purchases made in 2024, and explained some notable expenditures in the Police Department 2025 budget including legal representation, license plate cameras, radios, computers, and staff training and development.

Mrs. Chuha asked about the status of parking enforcement.

Chief Niehus stated that the department is still working through issues with the technology of the parking app.

Mr. Lelko questioned if a dedicated parking enforcement staff member needs to be assigned.

Chief Niehus stated that the issue has not been with assigning staff. It has been with the technology of the parking app. He stated that once the technology is figured out, the parking enforcement will be addressed using records clerks and available officers. If parking enforcement needs addressed further, an additional position could be discussed at that time.

Mr. Sharpe reviewed the 2025 Fire and EMS budget.

Public Service Director, Paul Hornyak, reviewed the notable expenditures in the water & sewer operating, street maintenance, cemetery, urban forestry and lands and buildings 2025 budgets.

Mr. Lelko suggested that the back wall of the mausoleum may be in need of some maintenance and should be looked at further.

Mr. Hornyak stated that he would investigate further.

Community Development Administrator, Steve Yaney, reviewed notable expenditures in the Planning and Zoning Department budget for 2025.

Recreation Director, Adam Rogers, reviewed the notable expenditures in the Park and Recreation Department budget for 2025.

Mr. Lelko asked if the additional funds for the concerts in the park will be used for more concerts or more pay.

Mr. Rogers stated that the higher expenditure in the budget is for better bands that require more pay.

Mr. Sharpe reviewed the notable expenditures in the 2025 Manager’s budget. He noted that an item not in the budget is to extend the $40,000 per year contract with Retail Strategies.

Mr. Yaney stated that pOpshelf and Chipotle are two retailers that resulted from Retail Strategies’ efforts. The relationship has been up and down due to employee turnover at their organization.

Ms. Means stated that their last presentation made to Council was mediocre.

Mr. Meleski stated that as Retail Strategies indicated, having

Meijer build in the City will organically bring other retailers. He stated that the challenge is that nobody will want to commit until Meijer breaks ground.

Mr. Blackley stated that there are a number of future projects that would benefit from their consultation. Retail Strategies may not be the consultant the City wants.

Ms. Means stated that companies like Retail Strategies can provide useful information and expertise, and asked if another company would be preferred.

Mr. Yaney concurred that Retail Strategies is doing things outside of bringing in new retailers.

Discussion occurred regarding potential other new companies.

Ms. Means suggested a meeting be held with Retail Strategies to discuss their future with the City.

Mr. Iacofano stated that an amended appropriations can be done at a future meeting if Council wishes to allocate money for Retail Strategies.

Mr. Sharpe reviewed the notable expenditures in the 2025 Legislative budget.

Mr. Sharpe reviewed the notable expenditures in the 2025 General Administration budget.

Mrs. Delaney reviewed the notable expenditures in the 2025 budget for the Finance Department and Water and Sewer Billing.

Law Director, Benjamin Chojnacki, reviewed the notable expenditures in the Legal Department budget for 2025, noting that personnel expenditures are down due to the County assuming responsibility for victim advocates and prosecutors. He added that operations and contracts are budgeted higher in 2025 to protect against the uncertainties of legal issues that may arise during the year.

Mr. Iacofano reviewed the debt schedule for 2025.

Mr. Iacofano reviewed the revenue and expenses by accounts for 2025 that include a 4-year history and 2025 budgeted amount.

Mr. Iacofano reviewed a fund balance summary of each account number.

Mayor Grau thanked staff for their work preparing the budget.

ORDINANCE NO. 3304
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, 2025 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. 3265 was then read for the second and third time by title only.

Mrs. Chuha moved and Mr. Blackley seconded for the adoption of Ordinance No. 3304.

Mr. Iacofano requested Council's passage of the appropriation ordinance in the amount of $28,946,071.08 for fiscal year ending December 31, 2025.

Upon roll call vote the motion passed unanimously.

Regarding amendment to the classification and pay plan, Mr. Sharpe stated that the plan reflects a 3.5% wage increase for non-bargaining employees that was included in the 2025 budget.

Mayor Grau moved and Ms. Means seconded to approve the classification and pay plan as presented by the City Manager. Upon roll call vote the motion passed unanimously.

EXECUTIVE SESSION – none.

ANY OTHER BUSINESS – none.

ADJOURN

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

The meeting adjourned at 8:53 p.m.

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CHRISTOPHER GRAU, Mayor
President of Council

Attest:

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AMY DAY
Clerk of Council