REGULAR SESSION

September 11, 2025

The Council of the City of Chardon met in Regular Session Thursday, September 11, 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 Benjamin Young, Finance Director Mark Iacofano, Law Director Benjamin Chojnacki, Clerk of Council Amy Day, Police Chief Scott Niehus, Community Development Administrator Steve Yaney, City Engineer Doug Courtney, Rick Dietz, Bill Hess, Allison Wilson, Walter Jones, Ed Slusarski, Molly Nikkila.

Mayor Grau recognized the 24th anniversary of the September 11th terrorist attacks.

Mayor Grau requested a moment of silence in memory of Keegan Loza, Maintenance Worker in the Division of Water & Sewer, who passed away unexpectedly on September 4, 2025.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Mrs. Chuha moved and Mr. Meleski seconded to approve the minutes of the August 14, 2025 Public Hearing and August 14, 2025 Regular Session as presented.

Upon roll call vote the motion passed unanimously.

MANAGER'S REPORT

City Manager, Benjamin Young, reported that he is settling into his new position as City Manager, having been in the position for 1 month.

Mr. Young reported on the status of hiring a new Public Service Director.

Mr. Young reported that the 2026 operating budget process has begun.

Mr. Young reported that he has been selected to present at the 2025 OML conference which he will be attending in October.

Mr. Young provided an update on the Geauga Theater, noting that a meeting has been scheduled with Curtain 440 to discuss the 2026 performance schedule.

Mr. Young reported on the status of capital projects and upcoming events.

Chief Niehus reported on the installation of Flock cameras and briefly reviewed their functionality.

Mr. Martin asked the Police Chief to respond to privacy concerns related to the Flock cameras.

Chief Niehus explained that the cameras are meant to assist the Police Department in locating vehicles involved in a crime by reading license plate numbers.

Mayor Grau asked the Police Chief to address residents’ concerns regarding vehicles pulled onto the shoulder of the road for extended periods of time.

Chief Niehus reported that the City has provisions in its code that allow for parking on the paved portion of the roadway when it is not practical to move off the road. In those cases, the vehicle needs to be as far to the curb as possible. Cones and flashers are helpful, and there needs to be a clear path for vehicles to get around. If the Police Department is called, they will assess the situation and determine if it is practical for the vehicle to get off the roadway. If it is, they will request the vehicle be moved.

Mrs. Chuha inquired about the status of the Hometown Hero Banner Program.

Mr. Young stated that staff is in the process of evaluating the current flags and the program.

PLANNING COMMISSION REPORT

Mr. Blackley reported that Planning Commission met in Regular Session and granted a variance for a detached garage at 125 South Street, approved the architectural review for exterior renovations at Dunkin’ Donuts, granted an extension to the variances, conditional use and sign deviations for Meijer, and granted an amendment to the approved landscape plan for the Cider Mill Townhomes development at 329 Park Avenue.

Mr. Blackley noted that Planning Commission also entertained comments from concerned citizens regarding a proposed Redwood development on the Chardon United Methodist property, noting that it is not something the City is pushing on anyone. He asked if there were any updates on this project.

Mr. Young noted that the City has not received any formal applications for annexation or Planning Commission approval yet for Redwood Chardon.

COUNCIL COMMITTEE REPORTS

Economic Development Committee

Mr. Lelko reported that the Committee met and received an update on Retail Strategies’ activities.

Mr. Yaney reported on his visit to Retail Strategies in Alabama where he learned about what is happening with retail in the City, State, and nation. He stated that they are receiving positive feedback about the City of Chardon from higher caliber retailers.

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Mr. Blackley announced that Community Development Administrator, Steve Yaney, has tendered his resignation after 15 years of working for the City of Chardon, and thanked him for his expertise and diligence, and expressed gratitude for the work Mr. Yaney did for the City.

Members of Council spoke about Mr. Yaney’s contributions to the City and wished him well in his future endeavors.

Park and Recreation Board

Mr. Martin reported that the Board heard from residents who had concerns about disturbances at the Chardon Living Memorial Park (CLMP), and made the recommendation that all the City parks be closed at 9:30 PM, rather than their current 11 PM closing time.

Mr. Young stated that this is set by ordinance and requested Council direct staff how they would like to proceed, noting that he recommended all the City’s parks close at the same time for ease of enforcement by the Police Department.

Ms. Means stated that she does not want to ignore the residents’ concerns, but expressed apprehension that 9:30 PM is early, especially in the summer. She questioned if it is a widespread problem or a problem only at the Chardon Living Memorial Park.

Mr. Martin noted that the residents were encouraged to contact the Police Department when issues arise at the Park so that they are documented.

Mrs. Chuha asked if the clapper could be fixed so that the bell cannot be rung.

Mayor Grau stated that he does not support closing all the parks at 9:30 PM because it is too early to close other parks.

Ms. Means asked if the discussion could be tabled to allow time to consider alternative options rather than closing CLMP to discourage unwanted activities.

No member of Council had any objection to tabling the discussion.

HEARING OF PERSONS BEFORE COUNCIL

Those Persons on the Agenda

Ed Slusarski, representing Chardon Square Association, reported on the Chardon Family Market and asked Council to consider an additional market on October 18 or 25 from 9 AM – 12 PM.

Mr. Young stated that staff had no objection to either date.

Ms. Means moved and Mrs. Chuha seconded to approve an additional CSA family marker on October 18, 2025.

Upon roll call vote the motion passed unanimously.

Ms. Means thanked Mr. Slusarski for his dedication to managing and operating the market.

General Public – none.

OLD BUSINESS – none.

NEW BUSINESS

Regarding adoption of the 2026-2030 Capital Improvement Plan, Finance Director, Mark Iacofano, reviewed the process of preparing the Capital Improvement Plan which was done in collaboration with departments.
Mr. Iacofano began reviewing the proposed capital projects for 2026, noting that for the 5-year plan, the City is estimated to spend $27 million in capital improvements and infrastructure.

Mr. Iacofano pointed out that the plan includes a table that lists the various projects by both type and department for 2026-2030, as well as the 2026 capital projects sorted by costs.

Mr. Iacofano reviewed the anticipated grant and loan funding for the projects in the plan.

Mr. Blackley asked why the North Street Project must be paid upfront.

Mr. Iacofano stated that it is an ODOT project and the money must be paid upfront.

Mr. Iacofano noted that the plan includes key changes and a list of unfunded projects that need further consideration.

Mr. Iacofano stated that the plan includes actual expenditures for the last 5 years.

Mr. Iacofano reviewed the key assumptions in the plan.

Mr. Iacofano reviewed projections by fund, noting that they are the main funds for capital projects.

Mr. Iacofano reviewed the forecasted debt expenditures for all funds, which shows when projects will be coming off the debt schedule. In addition, he reviewed the General Fund transfer schedule for the wastewater treatment plant debt.

Mr. Blackley noted that it should be made clear that the wastewater treatment plant debt repayment schedule is an internal debt transfer and is not debt the City owes to anyone other than itself.

Mr. Iacofano stated that the General Fund transfers money taken in from the system development charges to repay the debt.

Mr. Blackley asked if the debt would ever be fully repaid.

Mr. Iacofano stated that it is unknown what year the debt will be repaid, but the intent is to chip away at it.

Mr. Blackley questioned the timing of the Park Avenue resurfacing project, suggesting instead that it be done after the Wilson Mills/Park Avenue realignment is completed in order to prevent damage to the pavement.

Staff members concurred with Mr. Blackley's suggestion.

Mr. Lelko stated it is difficult to see what streets will be repaved in the plan and asked how this information can be included in future plans.

Mr. Blackley suggested the street rating schedule be added to the City's website.

Mr. Courtney stated that the City's street ratings need to be updated, and added that staff could look into developing a 5-year street maintenance plan that could show the last time the street was paved.

Mr. Blackley moved and Mayor Grau seconded to approve the 2026-2030 Capital Improvement Plan as presented. Upon roll call vote the motion passed unanimously.

LEGISLATION

ORDINANCE NO. 3320
AN ORDINANCE DESIGNATING ELIGIBLE FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS AS THE DEPOSITORIES FOR THE ACTIVE AND INTERIM FUNDS OF THE CITY OF CHARDON, OHIO FOR A PERIOD OF FIVE (5) YEARS BEGINNING OCTOBER 1, 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. 3320 was then read for the second and third time by title only.

Mrs. Chuha moved and Mr. Meleski seconded for the adoption of Ordinance No. 3320.

Mr. Iacofano stated that every five years, the City is required by the Ohio Revised Code to obtain agreements with the financial institutions that can hold City funds. He reviewed the banks that have applied to be eligible to do business with the City, which are listed in the Ordinance.

Upon roll call vote the motion passed unanimously.

ORDINANCE NO. 3321
AN ORDINANCE AUTHORIZING THE CITY MANAGER TO ENTER INTO A LICENSE AGREEMENT WITH WILLO TREE DEVELOPMENT INCORPORATED TO TRAVEL OVER AND ACROSS MUNICIPAL PROPERTY AND THE PUBLIC RIGHT-OF-WAY 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. 3321 was then read for the second and third time by title only.

Mrs. Chuha moved and Mr. Meleski seconded for the adoption of Ordinance No. 3321.

Mr. Chojnacki stated that the City has property that bisects Willo Tree development, and a license is needed to allow them to cross the City's property during site work activities for the development.

Upon roll call vote the motion passed unanimously.

ORDINANCE NO._3322
AN ORDINANCE AMENDING APPROPRIATIONS IN THE CITY OF CHARDON TREASURY FOR 2025 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. 3322 was then read for the second and third time by title only.

Mr. Blackley moved and Ms. Means seconded for the adoption of Ordinance No. 3322.

Mr. Iacofano stated that amended appropriations are needed in order to cover the City Manager's vacation and sick leave payout, and expenses related to having two City Managers on staff concurrently. In addition, amended appropriations are needed to cover payments to Geauga County related to the RIDs in order to make them whole.

Upon roll call vote the motion passed unanimously.

RESOLUTION NO. 19-25
A RESOLUTION REQUIRING CERTAIN LANDOWNERS TO CONSTRUCT SIDEWALKS WHERE THEY DO NOT PRESENTLY EXIST was read for the first time by title only.

Mr. Meleski 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. 19-25 was then read for the second and third time by title only.

Mr. Blackley moved and Mr. Meleski seconded for the adoption of Resolution No. 19-25.

Mr. Chojnacki stated that Council authorized him to prepare legislation at their last regular meeting which would require 3 parcels of land in the Hidden Glen development to install sidewalks where they do not presently exist. He noted that since passing the motion at the last Council meeting, the 3 property owners have all made steps towards the sidewalk installation.

Ms. Means asked if there is a date of completion for the sidewalks.

Mr. Chojnacki stated that there is no date of completion for the sidewalks.

Mr. Lelko asked why the sidewalks were not required of the developer, explaining that his concern is that property owners or HOAs would have unexpected expenses related to the installation of sidewalks.

Mr. Yaney stated that Fox Pointe was the last subdivision where the sidewalks were required to be installed with the streets. Sidewalks are now required when the homes are built, and whoever owns the property adjacent to the property is responsible for installing the sidewalks.

Upon roll call vote the motion passed unanimously.

RESOLUTION NO. 20-25
A RESOLUTION ACCEPTING THE AMOUNTS AND RATES AS DETERMINED BY THE BUDGET COMMISSION AND AUTHORIZING THE NECESSARY TAX LEVIES AND CERTIFYING THEM TO THE COUNTY AUDITOR was read for the first time by title only.

Mrs. Chuha moved and Mr. Meleski 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. 20-25 was then read for the second and third time by title only.

Mr. Meleski moved and Ms. Means seconded for the adoption of Resolution No. 20-25.

Mr. Iacofano stated that the legislation before Council gives the City their starting available resources for the 2026 budget.

Mr. Lelko inquired about the feedback the budget commission gave the City.

Mr. Iacofano stated that the City’s meeting with the budget commission went well.

Upon roll call vote the motion passed unanimously.

REVIEW OF EXPENDITURES

Mrs. Chuha reported that expenditures were in order.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

Mr. Meleski moved and Ms. Means seconded to adjourn to Executive Session at 8:00 p.m. to consider the appointment, employment, dismissal, promotion, demotion, discipline or compensation of a public employee or official and invite Ben Chojnacki, Ben Young, and Amy Day into the session. Upon roll call vote the motion passed unanimously.

Discussion occurred regarding the appointment, employment, dismissal, promotion, demotion, discipline or compensation of a public employee or official.

Meeting reconvened at 8:41 p.m.

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ANY OTHER BUSINESS TO COME BEFORE COUNCIL

Mayor Grau reported on the dedication of new furniture on the Square, and thanked the organizations that provided donations.

ADJOURN

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

The meeting adjourned at 8:49 p.m.

Attest:

____
CHRISTOPHER GRAU, Mayor
President of Council

____
AMY DAY
Clerk of Council