REGULAR SESSION

November 13, 2025

The Council of the City of Chardon met in Regular Session Thursday , November 13, 2025 at 6:24 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, Clerk of Council Amy Day, Law Director Benjamin Chojnacki, Police Chief Scott Niehus, City Engineer Doug Courtney, Public Service Director Justin Czekaj, Allison Wilson, Steve Yaney, Ed Slusarski, Gina Hofstetter, Amy Bevin, Sylvia McGee, Abigale Blashinsky.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Mr. Blackley moved and Mr. Meleski seconded to approve the minutes of the October 9, 2025 Regular Session as presented.

Results of the roll call vote:

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

Motion passed.

MANAGER'S REPORT

Mr. Young reported that Jonathan Holody has accepted the position of Community Development Administrator and Reid Morrison is returning to the City as a maintenance worker in the Water and Wastewater Department. Both will be starting on November 17, 2025.

Mr. Young reported that staff is preparing the 2026 draft budget and reviewed new items included in the budget including a bi-annual community survey and robotic lawn mower for the pool. An additional staffing item will be discussed in Executive Session.

Mr. Blackley asked if the survey will be mailed to residents.

Mr. Young stated that would like to have the survey available online and also included with the water bills.

Mr. Lelko inquired about the process of choosing the survey questions.

Mr. Young stated that the survey questions will be selected with the input of Council during 2026.

Mr. Young reported that the City’s website refresh has been completed and he presented the new content and features contained within the website.

Mr. Young reported on the implementation of a citizen services portal through OpenGov that will allow the public to apply for, pay for, and receive approval and feedback on requests from the City through a centralized system. He added that the implementation is expected to take place on December 1, 2025.

Mr. Young reported that the City’s single hauler trash contract expires in June, 2026 and the process of preparing the bid packet has begun.

Mr. Young reported that correspondence was received from the County requesting the City inform them if the City would seek tax increases as a result of the County enacting local homestead and owner occupancy tax credits as part of HB 96. He stated that the City would be looking at approximately $50,000 in foregone revenue and asked for Council’s feedback. He noted that he would not typically say to give up revenue, but the Fire Department operating revenue would be made up when the levy is up for renewal because the credits will be factored in when the levy is recalculated. Therefore, the City would be losing $19,000/year in the long-term but he feels this loss can be absorbed.

Mayor Grau stated that he feels that with the undercurrent of property tax relief, it is in the City’s best interest not to oppose the additional property tax credits being proposed through HB 96.

Mayor Grau suggested a letter accepting the losses be sent to the County.

Mr. Blackley suggested that additional language be added explaining that the City will absorb the loss, but is not happy with it.

Ms. Means concurred with Mr. Blackley’s comment.

No member of Council had any objection to the letter being sent as proposed.

Mr. Young added that he has accepted the County’s invitation to serve on the County’s Property Tax Task Force which will plan for if the referendum to eliminate property taxes is successful.

Mr. Young reported that the preliminary design and cost estimate was received for the Pocket Park, and the cost outpaced the funding, so staff is working to reduce the scope to match the available resources.

Justin Czekaj, Public Service Director, reported on the State Route Resurfacing Project, noting that some additional punch list items are being addressed by the contractor. He also reported that the contractor for the 2024 and 2025 sidewalk programs is still completing punch list items.

Mr. Young reported on upcoming events.

Mr. Young reported that the City's 2024 audit report was released and may be found on the Auditor of State's audit search portal.

Mr. Young reported on a recent plumbing incident at the Geauga Theater which caused the closure of the women's restroom.

Mr. Young reported that the Hometown Hero Banner Program will be expanded with an additional 30 banners on South Street.

Mr. Young reported that he intends to revise the municipal pool rates to help the pool be more financially stable. He reviewed the proposed rates to maintain competitiveness with comparable facilities.

Mr. Lelko stated that he does not support the increases which he feels are too high, especially for non-residents.

Mrs. Chuha expressed that she would prefer the rates to be increased gradually which would be more welcoming. She asked if non-residents outweigh resident participation.

Mr. Young stated that the current participation at the pool is 60% resident/40% non-resident.

Mr. Young stated that a slow increase would be preferred; however, rates have not been increased in over 10 years which necessitates a quicker increase in rates.

Mr. Blackley stated that he supports the rate increases and suggested the daily non-resident rate be increased so that it is more than the resident rate.

Mr. Young stated that the daily pass rates are the same because it can be difficult to verify residency for the day passes.

Mr. Blackley stated that a joint recreation district that at least covers the area of the school district would help support recreational facilities.

Mr. Young stated that it will become a conversation in the future.

Mayor Grau asked about the status of a proposed Redwood subdivision.

Mr. Young stated that the City received notice that Redwood does not wish to pursue a second subdivision phase in the City at this time.

PLANNING COMMISSION REPORT

Mr. Blackley reported that Planning Commission met in Regular Session and approved the final development plan for 6 tennis courts and a 31-space parking lot at Chardon Middle School and granted a variance to increase the fence height to 10 feet. In addition, they agreed to install a privacy fence along the property lines of the homes on North Street and Chardon Avenue.

Mayor Grau asked if there was any opposition from the public to the tennis courts.

Mr. Blackley stated that the only concern was related to trespassing.

Brief discussion occurred regarding the school expressing some interest in turning the former tennis courts into pickleball courts.

Mr. Blackley reported that Planning Commission also recommended the City's proposed text amendment to the Planning & Zoning Code, specifically Section 1133.11 (Accessory Uses and Structures) to allow for the expansion and clarification of the rules with regards to accessory structures and uses related to the harboring of animals, and Section 1103.03 definition of "Livestock".

Mr. Blackley reported that Planning Commission gave final development plan approval for an auto dealership at 400 Water Street.

Mr. Blackley reported that informal discussion was held with Pride One for a potential rental unit development to be located at 191 Meadowlands Drive, which Planning Commission felt was an appropriate location.

COUNCIL COMMITTEE REPORTS

Park and Recreation Board

Mr. Martin reported that the Board met and discussed the winterizing of facilities, concert scheduling and fall programming.

Mr. Lelko expressed his desire for additional concerts in the park in 2026.

HEARING OF PERSONS BEFORE COUNCIL

Those Persons on the Agenda

Abigale Blashinsky addressed Council requesting feedback regarding use of the Square for a 2026 Christmas Market that includes artisan vendors, handcrafted goods and seasonal food and drinks out of wooden huts that would remain on the Square for 4 weeks.

Ms. Blashinsky added that the market would be sponsored by Chardon Square Association and would run Thursdays thru Sundays in the weeks following the Christmas lighting of the Square.

Mrs. Chuha asked who would pay for the cost of the huts.

Ms. Blashinsky stated that they would be seeking donors and sponsorships.

Ms. Blashinsky stated that they are looking for the City's support in moving forward with planning for the event.

Mayor Grau expressed concern with how this event would coincide with the City's Square lighting & holiday decorations and Square retail businesses.

Sylvia McGee, representing CSA, stated that they would carefully select vendors that would not compete with the Square retail shops.

Mr. Meleski provided positive experiences he has had with similar markets.

Ms. Means stated that the idea for the market is to create a tradition, but they need feedback as to whether Council is open to the idea before they look for sponsorships and donations.

Mr. Young added that staff members have logistical questions and concerns, but are also seeking Council's feedback before trying to resolve those issues.

Ms. Means suggested Council give Ms. Blashinsky the chance to put something together.

Mr. Blackley stated that he likes the idea and thinks it has great potential.

Law Director Ben Chojnacki asked how vendors will be selected and if vendors without a Christmas theme would be prohibited from participating in the market.

Ms. Blashinsky stated that the vendors would be selected through an application process and would have to meet certain requirements but would not need to sell Christmas items. She added that the name of the market could be changed to the Chardon Holiday Market.

Mr. Chojnacki also expressed concern with how the huts will be secured to prevent injuries.

Ms. Blashinsky stated that there is no glass on the huts and plans to so some research about how other similar markets secure the huts.

Mayor Grau asked how many huts are planned for the first year, noting that he is still concerned that the huts may diminish the look of the Square during the holidays.

Ms. Blashinsky stated that they are planning for 10 huts that would be scattered in the Square.

No other objections were voiced by Council who requested Ms. Blashinsky come back to Council in February with a plan for the Square and a vendor application process.

General Public - none.

OLD BUSINESS – none.

NEW BUSINESS

Regarding an Announcement of Decision for a zoning text amendment regarding the regulation of animals and fowl, Mr. Chojnacki stated that the Announcement of Decision is the second step in Council's approval process of the amendments to sections 505.08, 1103.03, 1133.11 of the City's codified ordinances.

Mr. Meleski moved and Ms. Means seconded to approve the announcement of Decision for the zoning text amendment as provided. Upon roll call vote the motion passed unanimously.

LEGISLATION

ORDINANCE NO._3329
AN ORDINANCE AUTHORIZING THE CITY MANAGER TO ENTER INTO AN AGREEMENT WITH CIGNA HEALTHCARE FOR THE PROVISION OF GROUP MEDICAL INSURANCE BEGINNING JANUARY 1, 2026, 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 Ordinance be read for the second and third time by title only. Upon roll call vote, the motion passed unanimously.

Ordinance No. 3329 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. 3329.

Jim Dustin, Managing Director at NFP, presented the 2026 benefit recommendations for medical services noting that the market has been challenging with increasing costs. He stated that Cigna matched the best quote from Medical Mutual at a 7.7% increase over the current cost structure with no plan changes for 2026.

Upon roll call vote, the motion passed unanimously.

ORDINANCE NO._3330
AN ORDINANCE AUTHORIZING THE CITY MANAGER TO ENTER INTO A CONTRACT/AGREEMENT WITH GUARDIAN FOR GROUP DENTAL, VISION AND LIFE INSURANCE BEGINNING JANUARY 1, 2026 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. 3330 was then read for the second and third time by title only.

Ms. Means moved and Mr. Blackley seconded for the adoption of Ordinance No. 3330.

Jim Dustin stated that the City participates in a group pooling arrangement with other public entities for ancillary services, dental, vision and life insurance, and the only increase for 2026 is relative to a 3% increase in the dental premium.

Upon roll call vote, the motion passed unanimously.

ORDINANCE NO._3331
AN ORDINANCE ESTABLISHING A MAXIMUM AMOUNT PAYABLE FOR MEDICAL AND DENTAL INSURANCE FOR EMPLOYEES OF THE CITY OF CHARDON BEGINNING JANUARY 1, 2026 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. 3331 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. 3331.

Upon roll call vote, the motion passed unanimously.

ORDINANCE NO. 3332
AN ORDINANCE AMENDING SECTION 505.08, 1103.03, AND SECTION 1133.11 OF THE CODIFIED ORDINANCES TO REGULATE ANIMALS AND FOWL IN THE CITY OF CHARDON was read for the first time by title only.

Mr. Blackley 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. 3332 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. 3332.

Mr. Chojnacki stated that the legislation is the final step to amend the City’s Codified Ordinances related to animals and fowl.

Mayor Grau asked if a property owner can own livestock within the City limits.

Mr. Meleski noted that the legislation reflects that livestock would only be permitted on lots greater than 5 acres.

Upon roll call vote, the motion passed unanimously.

ORDINANCE NO._3333
AN ORDINANCE AUTHORIZING THE CITY MANAGER TO ENTER INTO AN AMENDMENT OF THE CONTRACT FOR THE SERVICES OF THE C.W. COURTNEY COMPANY AS MUNICIPAL ENGINEER 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 Ordinance be read for the second and third time by title only. Upon roll call vote, the motion passed unanimously.

Ordinance No. 3333 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. 3333.

Mr. Young stated that he received a request from C.W. Courtney Co. for an increase in rates for the next 3 years.

Mr. Lelko asked how long the contract term is and if the contract specifies when increases can be requested.

City Engineer Doug Courtney stated that the contract can be terminated within 30 days notice by either the City of C.W. Courtney Co. and it does not specify when rate increases may be requested.

Upon roll call vote, the motion passed unanimously.

RESOLUTION NO._22-25
A RESOLUTION ADOPTING A CYBER SECURITY POLICY AND PROGRAM 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 Resolution be read for the second and third time by title only. Upon roll call vote, the motion passed unanimously.

Resolution No. 22-25 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. 22-25.

Mr. Young stated that the legislation was prepared due to changes in state law that requires the City adopt a formal cyber security policy by January 1, 2026. He noted that the City’s policy is attached to the legislation as well as the Geauga County policy which needs adopted for the Chardon Municipal Court.

Upon roll call vote, the motion passed unanimously.

RESOLUTION NO._23-25
A RESOLUTION ADOPTING THE 2025 GEAUGA COUNTY NATURAL HAZARDS MITIGATION PLAN, 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 Resolution be read for the second and third time by title only. Upon roll call vote, the motion passed unanimously.

Resolution No. 23-25 was then read for the second and third time by title only.

Ms. Means moved and Mrs. Chuha seconded for the adoption of Resolution No. 23-25.

Mr. Young reported that this plan serves as a comprehensive strategy to reduce the impact of natural and human-made hazards across Geauga County. The plan needs to be updated every five years and needs to be adopted locally for the purposes of grant funding eligibility and demonstration of the City's commitment to proactive emergency preparedness and risk reduction.

Mr. Blackley asked how this affects the City's emergency management plan.

Mr. Young stated that it works alongside the City's plan. The County's plan is broader and lists where resources are and where they can be mobilized from.

Mr. Blackley asked what the City's backup plans are for the water and wastewater treatment plant.

Mr. Czekaj stated that he would update Council at a future meeting .

Mr. Young stated that in prevention of cyber attacks, the City is in the process of changing switches and firewalls.

Upon roll call vote, the motion passed unanimously.

RESOLUTION NO._24-25
A RESOLUTION TRANSFERRING FUNDS IN THE CITY OF CHARDON TREASURY FOR 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 Resolution be read for the second and third time by title only. Upon roll call vote, the motion passed unanimously.

Resolution No. 24-25 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. 24-25.

Mr. Iacofano stated that the transfers are needed to maintain positive fund balances and are included in the budget.

Upon roll call vote, the motion passed unanimously.

RESOLUTION NO. 25-25
A RESOLUTION REQUESTING THE COUNTY AUDITOR TO MAKE TAX ADVANCES DURING THE YEAR 2026 was read for the first time by title only.

Ms. Means 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. 25-25 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. 25-25.

Mr. Iacofano stated that Resolution allows the City to begin receiving advance payments on property taxes from the County rather than waiting to receive the full allocation when the taxes are all collected and finalized by the County Auditor.

Upon roll call vote, the motion passed unanimously.

REVIEW OF EXPENDITURES

Mrs. Chuha reported that expenditures were in order.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

Ms. Means moved and Mr. Meleski seconded to adjourn to Executive Session at 8:29 p.m. to consider the appointment, employment, dismissal, promotion, demotion, discipline or compensation of a public employee or official and invite Ben Chojnacki, Benjamin 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 9:18 p.m.

APPOINTMENTS TO BOARDS AND COMMISSIONS

Mr. Grau moved and Ms. Means seconded to appoint Josie McKenna to the Park and Recreation Board for a 4-year term beginning January 1, 2026. Upon roll call vote the motion passed unanimously.

Upon roll call vote the motion passed unanimously.

ANY OTHER BUSINESS TO COME BEFORE COUNCIL

Mr. Lelko asked if Retail Strategies is coming to Council in December.

Mr. Young stated that due to a conflict, Retail Strategies requested to call in to the December Council meeting rather than coming in person.

Mayor Grau expressed that it is preferred that they come in person, because of the other meetings that take place besides presenting to Council.

Members of Council requested Retail Strategies come to the January 2026 meeting.

Council discussed having a Special Session in December to discuss the City Manager’s goals and objectives.

ADJOURN

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

The meeting adjourned at 9:24 p.m.

Attest:

____
CHRISTOPHER GRAU, Mayor
President of Council

____
AMY DAY
Clerk of Council