



**RAVENNA CITY COUNCIL
COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE MEETING MINUTES
January 20, 2026**

The public meeting was held in person in Council Chambers.

The Committee of the Whole Meeting was called to order at 6:00 P.M. by Council President, Rob Kairis.

Council present: Council President Rob Kairis, Amy Michael, Tyler Marovich, Christina West, Paul Moskun, Tim Calfee, Carmen Laudato

Also in attendance: Mayor Frank Seman, Police Chief, Jake Smallfield; Fire Chief, Mark Chapple; Service Director, Tim Contant, Finance Director, Tami Lorence, City Engineer, Bob Finney; Council Clerk, Chelsea Gregor, Larry Silenius, Cliff Soudil, Ryan Hall, Adam O'Connor, Jasen Arbaugh, Nate Hilton, Eric Samodell, Justin Deluke, Chris Singleton, Matt Bowery, Zach Thomas, Ryan Hausch, Joe Rocco, Ryan Leifheit, Tony Tomecko, Justin Harper, Grant Samaco

- Motion to excuse Matt Harper by Ms. West, 2nd by Mr. Marovich- **All Ayes**

The first item on the agenda was to approve the Committee of the Whole meeting minutes from December 22, 2025.

- Motion to approve the December 22, 2025, Committee of the Whole minutes by Ms. West, 2nd by Mr. Moskun- **All Ayes**

The second item was an ordinance to accept a \$1,000 donation from Swagelok for the Fire Department.

Ms. Michael clarified that Swagelok makes annual donations and that this particular ordinance applied to the Fire Department, noting that a separate donation is also made to the Police Department. She expressed appreciation and thanks for the continued support.

Mr. Kairis asked if there were any questions or concerns.

Mr. Marovich asked whether, since Swagelok donates \$1,000 to both departments, the ordinance language should formally reflect that or whether two separate ordinances would be required. Rob Kairis responded by asking if two separate ordinances were needed.

- All Council present responded in favor to move the item forward for legislation.

The third item was an ordinance to accept a \$1,000 donation from Swagelok for the Police Department.

Ms. Michael explained that this ordinance corresponded with the previously discussed donation for the Fire Department, noting that this one was specifically for the Police Department. She thanked Swagelok for the generous donation and stated that it was appreciated.

- All Council present responded in favor to move the item forward for legislation.

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The fourth item was an ordinance to accept a \$25 donation from Don L. Ashton for the Police Department.

Mr. Kairis introduced an ordinance to accept a \$25 donation from Don L. Aston for the Police Department.

Ms. Michael noted that it was another donation and thanked Don L. Aston for the contribution.

- All Council present responded in favor to move the item forward for legislation.

The fifth item was an ordinance authorizing the Mayor to adjust the charges of ambulance billing.

Ms. Michael explained that the issue had been discussed extensively in committee, involving discussions with the ambulance billing company and the City's Finance Director. She stated that the adjustment was necessary because the City had been underbilling and needed to better offset the costs of supplies and services used by the Fire Department and medics. Ms. Michael noted that the increases were implemented gradually rather than at the full recommended amount in order to remain fair while helping cover expenses and support the budget.

- All Council present responded in favor to move the item forward for legislation.

The sixth item was an ordinance authorizing the donation of six bullet proof vests to Edinburg & Portage County EMA.

Ms. Michael explained that the vests were being requested to be donated at no cost to the city, and that it reflected the City's practice of assisting other communities when possible.

Mr. Calfee asked whether the vests were excess or were being replaced.

Ms. Michael confirmed that the vests were being replaced and were no longer needed by the Fire Department.

Chief Chapple explained that ballistic vests have a limited service life and that the City had updated its equipment. He stated that Edinburg does not currently have ballistic vests and also responds to active shooter situations for the Southeast School District. After notifying the county, Edinburg and Portage County EMA requested the vests. Four were allocated to Edinburg for its two ambulances, and the remaining two were provided to Portage County EMA.

- All Council present responded in favor to move the item forward for legislation.

The seventh item was an ordinance authorizing the Mayor to enter into a purchase agreement with Windham Fire Dept.

Ms. Michael explained that the City followed required bidding procedures but received no bids. She stated that Windham Fire Department had the funds available, offered a fair price that exceeded initial expectations, and was in need of the ambulance. Ms. Michael added that the sale would keep the equipment within the county and benefit a smaller community.

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Mr. Kairis asked whether the purchase agreement had been completed, and Ms. Michael confirmed that it was available. With no questions or concerns raised, Ms. Michael noted that similar transactions had been done in the past and were beneficial.

- All Council present responded in favor to move the item forward for legislation.

The eighth item was an ordinance authorizing the Mayor to enter into a contract for the School Resource Officer (SRO).

Ms. Michael explained that the School Resource Officer would primarily serve Brown Middle School and that the position was currently funded in part through a grant obtained by the school district. She noted that although student locations and age groupings may change, the resource officer would continue to be utilized where needed. Ms. Michael emphasized the importance of the officer in providing support to students and teachers, and viewed the position as a positive and necessary intervention.

Mr. Kairis sought clarification on the funding arrangement, and Ms. Michael confirmed that while the City pays its portion, the school district's share was covered through a grant, rather than out-of-pocket as is typical.

Mr. Kairis noted that the position was well needed and asked for questions or concerns. With none raised, he stated that the ordinance would proceed to ensure timely approval.

- All Council present responded in favor to move the item forward for legislation.

The ninth item was an ordinance authorizing the purchase of a new sewer camera and van for the Street Dept.

In the absence of Mr. Harper, Mr. Calfee explained that the purchase totaled approximately \$240,000 to \$250,000 and would be financed over five years. He stated that the purchase would replace the City's existing van and sewer camera system and would include a full system consisting of the van, camera, transport tractor, and multiple sets of tires designed for different sewer conditions.

Mr. Moskun asked whether the vehicle was a full-size van, which was confirmed.

Mr. Kairis asked about the financing terms outlined in the meeting packet.

Ms. Lorence stated that while part of the cost was included in the budget, an additional appropriation would be needed for the camera equipment, adding that a detailed breakdown would be provided to council.

Mr. Kairis stated that an appropriation ordinance would accompany the purchase ordinance and clarified that competitive bidding was not required because the vendor was part of Sourcewell cooperative pricing.

- All Council present responded in favor to move the item forward for legislation.

The tenth item was an ordinance authorizing the Mayor to enter into an aggregation with Charlestown & Shalersville.

Mr. Moskun explained that the ordinance was a proposed electrical aggregation agreement to include Charlestown and Shalersville Townships.

Mr. Contant stated that additional information was needed before proceeding, noting that while a prior ballot result existed, there was insufficient documentation confirming approval by the communities' residents. Mr. Contant explained that further clarification was needed regarding the ballot language, the form of authorization passed by the communities, and an opinion from the city's energy broker. He noted that the current electric aggregation contract does not expire until the end of May, allowing time for further review.

Mr. Kairis acknowledged that there was time to ensure the agreement was handled correctly.

Ms. West asked whether the item should be returned to committee or tabled.

Following discussion, Mr. Moskun and Mr. Contant recommended tabling the ordinance until additional information could be obtained by the Service Director and energy broker.

Mr. Kairis asked for the will of the committee, and the ordinance was tabled pending receipt of further information, with the understanding that it could be brought back for future committee or Committee of the Whole discussion.

- All Council present responded in favor to move the item forward for legislation.

The eleventh item was an ordinance authorizing the Mayor to enter into a contract with Fontus Blue for the Water Treatment Plant.

Mr. Moskun explained that Fontus Blue is a relatively new company, but the owner previously ran his own company and operated under CT Consultants, providing high-quality services over many years. He noted the owner has significant experience in wastewater operations, and there have been no reported issues in previous years. Mr. Moskun emphasized that the company is capable of performing the required services and that work is already in progress.

Mr. Contant added that this ordinance represents a three-year contract renewal. He explained that Dr. Chris Miller has been a key representative for the company and that Fontus Blue was sold to USALCO, with Fontus Blue now functioning as a division of USALCO. Both treatment plant superintendents supported renewing the contract. Mr. Contant also highlighted continuity and reliability in working with Fontus Blue, particularly their expertise in water and wastewater services.

- All Council present responded in favor to move the item forward for legislation.

The twelfth item was an ordinance authorizing the Mayor to enter into a contract with Fontus Blue for the Wastewater Treatment Plant.

Council reviewed a similar ordinance authorizing a contract with Fontus Blue for the Wastewater Treatment Plant.

Mr. Kairis noted that the ordinance mirrors the Water Treatment Plant agreement.

Mr. Moskun confirmed that services, terms, and reliability are identical to the previous ordinance.

- All Council present responded in favor to move the item forward for legislation.

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The thirteen item was an ordinance authorizing the replacement of a sludge pump at the Water Plant.

Mr. Moskun explained that the sludge pump is original to the plant, installed in 1982 or 1983, and has long surpassed its expected lifespan. He stressed that replacement is necessary to prevent operational failures that could disrupt water treatment processes.

Mr. Marovich noted the critical role of the pump in moving sludge and maintaining clean water processing, highlighting the importance of timely replacement to avoid major operational issues.

- All Council present responded in favor to move the item forward for legislation.

The fourteenth item was an ordinance authorizing the replacement of MMC Electrical equipment at the Water Treatment Plant.

Mr. Moskun explained that this ordinance completes the electrical upgrades at the Water Treatment Plant, as previously described by the superintendent. The equipment is original to the plant and has surpassed its useful life. Mr. Moskun emphasized that failure to replace the equipment could result in major electrical failures in the future.

Mr. Marovich referenced old contact switches in use since the plant's construction, and noted that outdated equipment increases operational risk, underscoring the necessity of this project.

- All Council present responded in favor to move the item forward for legislation.

The fifteen item was an ordinance approving Design Review Commission changes.

Ms. Laudato addressed the Design Review Commission changes to clarify that there was no proposal to eliminate the specialist position, only to reduce it from two to one, and noted the residency requirement allows members to either live in or own property in the city.

Mr. Kairis explained that the committee had proposed keeping two specialists, but if none could be found, appointments could come from other categories. He also outlined proposed changes to the timing of commission meetings: the first meeting would occur four weeks after an application unless the applicant requested two weeks, and the second meeting would occur two weeks unless additional time was requested.

Ms. Laudato emphasized that scheduling at 10 a.m. on Thursdays may limit participation, while Ms. West noted the recently developed design guidelines would help guide committee decisions even without a specialist.

Mr. Marovich agreed, citing additional resources such as the City Engineer and Ohio History Connection, while Mr. Kairis distinguished the proposal from concerns raised by Mr. Cimino about requiring a specialist.

Ms. Michael and Mr. Moskun expressed support for moving the proposal forward.

Ms. West requested that the ordinance not be placed on the consent agenda due to extensive discussion, and it was agreed upon.

Mr. Kairis commended the committee and Council for navigating the complex proposed changes.

- All Council present responded in favor to move the item forward for legislation.

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The sixteen item was an ordinance accepting \$441,279.53 in Adult Use Cannabis Tax Funds.

Ms. Laudato noted that while this is a large back payment from the state, future revenues would be smaller and suggested discussing dedicated uses for the funds in the 2027 budget, such as beautification, capital projects, or the safety center.

Mr. Kairis explained the figures, noting the local dispensary generated over \$12 million in 16 months, and the City's share would average about \$331,000 per year, distributed in monthly payments of approximately \$27,579.

Ms. Michael recalled speaking with a dispensary owner about community contributions, highlighting that the company had focused on employee volunteer hours rather than financial donations.

Ms. Laudato added that payroll taxes from the dispensary were modest, as employees are primarily retail staff.

Mr. Kairis emphasized the potential to create an ongoing plan for these funds, similar to income tax distribution.

Ms. Lorence offered guidance for Council consideration, and Ms. Laudato suggested establishing a dedicated line item.

- All Council present responded in favor to move the item forward for legislation.

The seventeen item was an ordinance to create a moratorium on storage facilities within the city

Mr. Kairis introduced an ordinance from the Community and Economic Development Committee to create a six-month moratorium on storage facilities within the city.

Ms. West explained that the moratorium would allow time to draft a detailed ordinance regulating storage-type facilities and this would give time to do so.

- All Council present responded in favor to move the item forward for legislation.

The eighteen item was an ordinance authorizing the addition of an entry level Mechanic position in the Street Dept.

Mr. Calfee explained that the Street Department currently has only one mechanic who maintains all department vehicles and assists with others citywide. The increased workload over the past few years has required pulling staff from other duties and sending some vehicles out for costly repairs.

Mr. Lovejoy and Mr. Contant requested the addition of this position to address these needs.

Mr. Moskun asked about the qualifications for an entry-level mechanic and Mr. Calfee responded that the HR office would ensure candidates meet requirements and may have someone in mind.

Mr. Contant emphasized the importance of the position, citing the increasing workload, the upcoming retirement of the current mechanic, and the need to keep critical equipment like leaf vacuums and snowplows operational. He noted that a new hire could be trained alongside the current mechanic, providing continuity and long-term benefit.

Mr. Marovich asked about opportunities for certifications such as ASE to maintain highly qualified staff and reduce costs.

Mr. Contant confirmed that the payroll ordinance includes provisions for certifications and incentives.

- All Council present responded in favor to move the item forward for legislation.

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The nineteen item was an ordinance authorizing the addition of a Parks Maintenance Worker in the Parks Dept.

Mr. Calfee explained that the request came from the Parks Department to address increased maintenance demands at new properties, including Sunbeau Valley Farm and Emerald Lake Preservation. The proposal would convert an existing part-time position into a full-time role. Mr. Calfee noted that the part-time employee had already been working approximately full-time hours, around 30 per week, over the past year, and the department requested formalizing this change. Ms. Michael confirmed that the employee had been working extra hours to meet department needs. Mr. Marovich asked whether the position included administrative or clerical duties to support operations such as Sunbeau Valley Farm, which Mr. Calfee clarified it did not.

- All Council present responded in favor to move the item forward for legislation.

The twenty item was an ordinance authorizing the addition of additional personnel in the Fire Dept.

Ms. Michael noted the item had returned to her committee after prior discussion with the Mayor and Finance Director, highlighting increased call volumes and occasional delays in response times. She turned the discussion over to Chief Chapple.

Chief Chapple thanked the Administration and Council for addressing staffing levels, providing historical context on the department's evolution from a small fire-only team in the 1970s to a current EMS-focused operation with three ambulances. He explained that rising call volumes, demographic changes, and overlapping emergencies necessitate additional personnel.

The Mayor and Finance Director supported hiring new personnel, with future staffing contingent on economic growth and funding.

Chief Chapple also addressed operational considerations, including accommodating female staff within current facilities and shift schedules.

Ms. Michael and Mr. Marovich asked questions about call volume, acuity, and operational impacts.

Chief Chapple explained how prior hires improved minimum staffing, raising the station's minimum to five personnel per shift.

Mr. Moskun and Ms. Michael expressed strong support for the measure, emphasizing the importance of robust safety forces.

- All Council present responded in favor to move the item forward for legislation.

The twenty-one item was an ordinance authorizing the Mayor to sign the Collective Bargaining Agreements.

Mr. Calfee explained that negotiations with all unions had been ongoing for several months and had now been completed. He noted that the purpose of the meeting was to review the key changes in the agreements before Council consideration.

HR Director Heather Richkowski addressed Council, summarizing the main updates. She explained that each bargaining unit had been evaluated for wage equity and competitiveness compared with other municipalities in Portage County. The intent of the City was to maintain a mid-range competitive

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position to aid in recruitment and retention, ensuring that wages were neither at the top nor at the bottom of the market. Ms. Richkowski highlighted that the largest adjustments were for police patrol officers and sergeants, due to recruitment challenges and competition with lateral transfers and academy graduates. Dispatch staff received adjustments, including a supervisory deferred compensation match for the Dispatch Coordinator. In the Fire Department, the work week had been reduced from 50 to 49 hours, which slightly increased the hourly rate, impacted overtime calculations, and provided two additional days off per year. This change was intended to enhance the City's competitiveness in attracting qualified candidates.

AFSCME and other units with diverse classifications, including plant operators, CDL-licensed service workers, laborers, and mechanics, received wage and equity adjustments as well as updates to shift differentials, vacation policies, and clothing allowances.

Ms. Richkowski also described the updated mechanic position, with a pay range from 16 to 19, depending on experience and certifications. Entry-level mechanics would start at the lowest range and progress through established advancement criteria. She noted that the city's medical package remained standardized for all employees, supported by a wellness program, with cost-sharing reductions for those participating in annual physicals, biometrics, preventive care, and online health assessments.

Ms. Michael asked for clarification regarding the differences in percentage increases among bargaining units.

Ms. Richkowski explained that the equity adjustments were determined by comparing each position with similar positions in surrounding municipalities. Units that were significantly underpaid received larger increases, while units closer to market received smaller adjustments. The discussion also included optional 12-hour shifts for patrol officers and flexible scheduling options for non-union positions to make city employment more competitive.

Mr. Moskun thanked Ms. Richkowski for her explanation regarding the entry-level mechanic adjustments.

Mr. Kairis confirmed that full redline contracts would be distributed to Council members prior to the vote and emphasized that the ordinance should not be placed on the consent agenda due to its complexity and importance.

- All Council present responded in favor to move the item forward for legislation.

The twenty-two item was an ordinance amending the 2026 annual payroll ordinance.

Council then considered an ordinance amending the 2026 annual payroll ordinance to incorporate changes resulting from the ratified collective bargaining agreements and other position updates.

Ms. Lorence reviewed the amendments, noting that uniform allowances for department chiefs had been adjusted to align with union contracts, certain hourly rates had been updated, and the mechanic position had been revised to reflect the new pay range and certification-based advancement criteria. She also noted that the Service Director position had been increased from supervisory range 23 to 24 to ensure equity with other supervisory roles.

Mr. Calfee confirmed that all changes over the past year, including adjustments for three fire department positions, had been incorporated, making the payroll ordinance comprehensive and current.

Mr. Kairis emphasized the financial impact of the ordinance and recommended that it not be placed on

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the consent agenda to allow for any necessary discussion.

- All Council present responded in favor to move the item forward for legislation.

The twenty-three item was an ordinance authorizing a contract with Zapher for GAAP Audit services.

Mr. Kairis introduced an ordinance authorizing a contract with Zapka for gap audit services.

Ms. Lorence clarified the correct vendor name and explained the contract would initiate the 2025 gap conversion process.

Mr. Kairis noted the item had been discussed in the Planning committee and the ordinance was included on the special agenda.

- All Council present responded in favor to move the item forward for legislation.

The twenty-four item was an ordinance authorizing the execution of Then and Now Certificates.

Ms. Lorence explained that there were three certificates on the list: one for a service agreement that had been missed in processing, one for an emergency, and one for a fuel fill day. She characterized these as routine housekeeping items.

- All Council present responded in favor to move the item forward for legislation.

The twenty-five item was an ordinance establishing a Finance Committee.

Mr. Kairis introduced the final item on the agenda, proposing the creation of a new standing Finance Committee. He explained that currently, finance-related items often get routed through other committees or the Committee of the Whole, which can delay discussion and decision-making. The proposed committee would provide a dedicated space to review finance matters early in the legislative process. Mr. Kairis noted that he had circulated proposed code changes to add “Finance” as an eighth standing committee and emphasized that the committee would consist only of Council members empowered to create legislation, with the Finance Director participating in all discussions. Mr. Kairis offered to serve as chair and suggested that committee members be selected later.

Ms. Michael asked for clarification on how the committee would fit into the current process, noting that a Finance Committee previously existed but had been replaced by the Committee of the Whole. She expressed concern that the new committee might create additional work.

Mr. Kairis responded that the committee would streamline the review of finance items, many of which currently appear at the Committee of the Whole meeting for the first time and sometimes require special meetings for approval. He emphasized that the new committee would not be time-consuming and would function similarly to the original Finance Committee he had served on.

Ms. Laudato supported the proposal, explaining that a dedicated Finance Committee would provide consistent transparency for budget and income tax matters, especially given the city’s acquisitions and new plans. She noted that it would prevent the appearance that spending decisions are predetermined and to allow Council to discuss finances in a structured manner.

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Mr. Marovich agreed, emphasizing that better communication through the committee and the City’s website would increase transparency and reduce resident speculation about city finances. Ms. Michael noted the importance of maintaining flexibility for emergency finance items. Mr. Kairis clarified that the proposed change would amend the codified ordinances by adding “Finance” as an eighth standing committee of Council. The committee agreed that an ordinance would be required to enact this change. Mr. Moskun raised a concern that adding a Finance Committee might duplicate the Committee of the Whole. Mr. Kairis clarified that the new committee would focus exclusively on finance matters, whereas the Committee of the Whole addresses broader issues.

- All Council present responded in favor to move the item forward for legislation.
- Motion to adjourn at 7:30 pm by Ms. West, 2nd by Mr. Marovich- **All Ayes**

There being no further business before Council, the meeting adjourned at 7:30 pm

ATTEST:

Clerk of Council

Council President