



**Ravenna City Council
Planning Committee Meeting Minutes
December 8, 2025**

The public meeting was held in person in City Council Chambers.

Council present: Council President Rob Kairis, Amy Michael, Paul Moskun, Cheryl Wood, Matt Harper, Tyler Marovich, Tim Calfee, Christina West

Also attending the meeting: Mayor Frank Seman; Police Chief, Jake Smallfield; Service Director, Tim Contant; City Engineer; Bob Finney; Council Clerk, Chelsea Gregor; Larry Silenius, Cliff Soudil, Greg Francis, Eve Francis, Cynthia Miller, Barbara Niemiller, Carmen Laudato, Tom Riddle, Andy Whitmore

Planning Committee Meeting was called to order at 6:00 P.M. by member, Christina West

The first item was a presentation by Tom Riddle regarding the historic Seth Thomas clock.

Ms. West explained that the first item was a presentation by Tom Riddle regarding the historic Seth Thomas tower clock originally housed in the 1880 Portage County Courthouse.

Tom Riddle presented an in-depth historical and technical overview of the clock, explaining its global significance and connection to the development of accurate public timekeeping. He described how the British Longitude Act of 1714 led to the invention of the marine chronometer by John Harrison and how this innovation later influenced tower clock design. Mr. Riddle explained that the Seth Thomas clock in Ravenna incorporates the Denison escapement—the same breakthrough mechanism used in Big Ben—which allowed clocks to keep accurate time regardless of external forces on the hands. He detailed how the Seth Thomas Clock Company, under master clockmaker Hotchkiss, adapted this technology for widespread use in American towns. Ravenna’s clock was installed in 1882 and remained in the courthouse until 1960, when many mechanical clocks nationwide were discarded or electrified. In 1973, a community-wide effort placed the clock at the Portage County Historical Society, though limited staffing and access led to deterioration over time.

Mr. Riddle explained that by 2021 the clock had become severely rusted and improperly maintained. Dick Whitmore and Andy Whitmore removed the clock, transported it to storage, and completed a full mechanical restoration at no cost to the city.

Mr. Riddle described the restoration process, demonstrated video of the clock operating, and emphasized that the pendulum, escapement, and movement are fully functional and historically intact. He proposed installing the restored clock as a central, visible feature in the lobby of the new Ravenna City Hall. Mr. Riddle stated that the clock would function as a “performance piece,” with visible gears, moving weights, and a weekly manual winding, creating an educational and cultural attraction. He noted that Mr. Whitmore had offered to install the clock for free and that similar clocks have become centerpieces in other communities, though few are as historically significant as Ravenna’s.

Ms. Michael thanked Tom Riddle and Andy Whitmore for their work and publicly expressed strong support for placing the clock in the new City Hall, praising the craftsmanship, teamwork, and historical value of the project.

Mr. Marovich noted that the clock includes four operating faces and a bell mechanism.

Mr. Calfee asked about testing and accuracy, and Mr. Riddle explained the clock was run briefly due to ceiling limitations but is considered fully restored and accurate.

Members discussed ceiling height requirements, placement options, and the possibility of displaying both exterior clock faces and the interior mechanism.

Ms. West thanked Riddle for the presentation and noted that the timing was ideal since City Hall planning is still in progress.

- The item was for discussion only.

The second item was to enter into a contract with Triad Communications, Inc.

The committee then discussed entering into a contract with Triad Communications for informational marketing related to a proposed income tax levy supporting the new City Hall and safety complex.

Ron Fields, Administrative Assistant for the Police Department, explained that a committee had evaluated multiple firms and narrowly recommended Triad over Impact Group by a 5–4 vote. He stated that while initially opposed to hiring a marketing firm, he became convinced after presentations that professional assistance was necessary. Mr. Fields explained that Triad’s data-driven approach, emphasis on polling and stakeholder research, experience with government clients, and success with similar levies made them the preferred choice. He stressed that the City is legally limited to providing factual information, not advocacy, and that Triad demonstrated a strong understanding of those constraints. Estimated costs included polling and monthly campaign management, with a proposed spending ceiling of approximately \$50,000.

Mr. Finney noted that Triad representatives were monitoring the meeting and were available to answer questions.

Mr. Kairis explained his dissenting vote in favor of Impact Group, citing their clearer pricing structure and municipal income tax levy experience, while acknowledging both firms were qualified.

Ms. Michael, Ms. Laudato, Mr. Moskun, and others raised concerns about cost transparency, whether mailers were included, campaign timing, and ensuring outreach to residents who may not use digital media.

After discussion, Ms. West confirmed that the marketing contract decision would move forward to the Committee of the Whole, pending receipt of additional clarification from Triad.

- The item was moved on.

The third item was to enter into a contract with GPD Group.

Mr. Finney presented a proposal to enter into a contract with GPD Group to conduct a traffic safety study of a high-risk intersection at St. Rt. 14 and St. Rt. 88 that has risen to the third-highest crash severity ranking in Portage County. He explained the study would identify improvements and support grant applications. Council members cited resident concerns and supported moving the study forward.

- The item was moved forward.

The fourth item was to establish a Board of Tax Review- Chapter 881.21.

The committee discussed establishing a Board of Tax Review, which exists in city code but currently lacks appointed members. The board would address rare income tax refund disputes referred by RITA. Council acknowledged the need to appoint two members, with the Mayor appointing a third, and agreed to move forward with appointments.

- The item was moved forward.

The fifth item was approving the 2026 Temporary Budget.

Council reviewed the 2026 temporary budget, noting it mirrored the previously approved tax budget and was required for state audit purposes to take effect on January 1, 2026. Discussion followed regarding scheduling a year-end meeting to ensure timely approval.

- The item was moved forward.

The sixth item was the year-end accounting true-up.

Ms. Lorence addressed the year-end accounting adjustments and acceptance of the 2026 income tax distribution, both required for compliance with state audit requirements.

- The item was moved forward.

The seventh item was accepting the distribution of income and taxes for 2026.

Ms. Lorence reviewed the acceptance of the 2026 income tax distribution and explained that it is part of the routine state audit requirements and that it involves no changes to allocations.

- The item was moved forward.

Management Update

There being no further business for discussion, the meeting adjourned at 7:04 P.M.

ATTEST:

Clerk of Council

**Christina West, Chairperson
Planning Committee**