



**Ravenna City Council
Regular Meeting Minutes
Monday, July 6, 2026, at 6:00 pm**

The Regular Council Meeting was held in person in Council Chambers.

The Regular Council Meeting was called to order at 6:00 P.M. July 6, 2026, by Council President, Rob Kairis

Presentation ~ Mayor Seman

Mayor Seman presented a proclamation officially designating the City of Ravenna as a Purple Heart Community. He recognized the significance of the Purple Heart as the nation's oldest military decoration and honored the sacrifices of service members wounded or killed in combat. The proclamation expressed the City's gratitude to Purple Heart recipients, veterans, active-duty military personnel, and their families while reaffirming Ravenna's commitment to supporting and recognizing their service.

Steven Farhat, Chairman of Homefront Heroes of Portage County, thanked Council for its support. He explained that the nonprofit, established in August 2025, has focused on serving veterans through community projects, supply drives, and outreach. Mr. Farhat highlighted the organization's efforts, alongside Linda Dillon, Matt Kelly, and its board members, to successfully advocate for Portage County's designation as a Purple Heart County.

Linda Dillon, a Gold Star mother, shared the story of how the Purple Heart initiative grew from a local idea into a countywide effort. She thanked Ravenna and Portage County officials for embracing the initiative and presented the City with a Military Order of the Purple Heart Special Recognition Award plaque honoring Ravenna's designation as a Purple Heart City.

Portage County Auditor Matt Kelly, a veteran, thanked the Mayor and Council for their support. He noted that Purple Heart County signage would recognize Portage County as a veteran-friendly community and praised the collaboration that made the designation possible.

Ms. Laudato and Ms. Michael thanked Mr. Kelly for recently assisting a 100-year-old Ravenna World War II veteran by arranging repairs to his flagpole, recognizing the teamwork and commitment shown in supporting local veterans.

Moment of Meditation & Silence

President Kairis called a moment of meditation and silence.

Pledge to Flag

President Kairis then led those in attendance in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Roll Call

The following Council Members were present: President Rob Kairis, Amy Michael, Paul Moskun, Tim Calfee, Carmen Laudato, Matt Harper, Tyler Marovich, Christina West

Also in attendance: Mayor Frank Seman; Police Chief, Jake Smallfield; Fire Chief, Mark Chapple; City Engineer, Bob Finney; Finance Director, Tami Lorence; Council Clerk; Chelsea Gregor; Cythia Miller, Larry Selinius Cliff Soudil, Barb Niemiller, Cathy Klein, Kathy Karas, Kel Dubinsky, Matt Kelly, Linda Dillon, Steven Farhat, Ann Szalay, Ruth McEwuen, Dirk Remley, Carlee Krause, Tricia Krause

Delegations from the Public:

Rod Flauhaus, owner of a downtown Ravenna record store, addressed Council regarding ongoing maintenance issues at his building, particularly recurring roof leaks that have damaged merchandise and fixtures. He stated that the problem had persisted despite repeated reports to the building owner and noted that previous and current tenants had experienced similar issues. Mr. Flauhaus expressed concern that unresolved maintenance problems were driving businesses out of the building and contributing to downtown vacancies.

Mr. Flauhaus played a video of a conversation with the building owner that he said demonstrated unprofessional treatment. He urged Council to strengthen building maintenance standards and enforcement for mixed-use commercial and residential properties, emphasizing that well-maintained buildings and affordable rents are essential to attracting and retaining small businesses in downtown Ravenna.

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Mr. Kairis encouraged Mr. Flauhaus to submit specific recommendations for potential code changes, noting that current historic district regulations primarily address exterior building features.

Ms. Michael asked about the status of a downtown revitalization plan funded through JEDD revenues.

Ms. Lorence confirmed the funding remains available, and Mayor Seman stated he had met with Mr. Flauhaus and was developing a plan to address the concerns.

Ms. Laudato supported discussing additional planning efforts to improve downtown and expressed concern about potential conflicts of interest involving property owners serving on the Design Review Commission. She suggested Council revisit the Commission's membership structure to avoid perceived conflicts.

Ms. West asked whether Mr. Flauhaus had pursued legal remedies available to commercial tenants, such as rent escrow.

Mr. Flauhaus confirmed that he had followed the appropriate legal process but said his concerns remained unresolved.

Mr. Moskun thanked Mr. Flauhaus for bringing attention to the condition of the downtown building and agreed that deteriorating properties negatively affect the community.

Mr. Kairis suggested Council review the City's Comprehensive Plan and consider future discussions on downtown revitalization, including issues related to mixed-use commercial and residential buildings.

Dirk Remley addressed Council on two topics: the proposed income tax levy for new public safety facilities and the City's discussion of data centers.

Regarding the proposed income tax levy, Mr. Remley encouraged the City to strengthen its public messaging by emphasizing efforts to secure grants, loans, and other funding sources before relying on taxpayers. He suggested pursuing an architectural needs assessment and exploring state and federal funding opportunities to reduce the amount requested from residents.

Mr. Remley also recommended explaining how new facilities would improve emergency response times, recruitment and retention of public safety personnel, and help preserve Ravenna's historic character while balancing future economic development. He acknowledged residents' concerns over increasing taxes and encouraged the City to demonstrate that it is seeking multiple funding solutions.

Ms. Michael thanked Mr. Remley for his well-researched presentation.

Ms. Laudato explained that state law limits how the City can communicate about levy issues and noted that a volunteer levy committee is responsible for advocacy efforts. She agreed the City should demonstrate it is contributing available revenue sources, including marijuana tax revenue, rather than placing the full burden on taxpayers.

Turning to data centers, Mr. Remley expressed concern that discussions appeared to favor a complete ban and urged Council to instead pursue additional research before making permanent decisions. He supported extending the moratorium while comprehensive impact studies are completed and suggested partnering with Portage County or other organizations to evaluate environmental, economic, and infrastructure impacts. Mr. Remley encouraged Council to develop balanced regulations that address community concerns while allowing for potential economic opportunities as data center technology continues to evolve.

Ms. West clarified that the Planning Committee had recommended only a temporary moratorium, not a ban, because additional information is needed before making informed decisions.

Mr. Kairis clarified that the discussion occurred during a Planning Committee meeting, not a Committee of the Whole meeting, and stated that Council members generally support gathering balanced information from multiple perspectives. He explained that discussion centered on whether to invite Team NEO as a presenter, not whether additional research should occur.

Ms. Laudato agreed, explaining the committee's concern was that Team NEO might not provide unbiased information. She emphasized that the moratorium is intended to allow time for research and noted that many residents have expressed strong opposition to data centers due to environmental concerns and limited long-term job creation.

Ms. Michael said she wants to hear all potential negative impacts before considering benefits, citing concerns about the credibility of information surrounding the industry and the potential risks to the community.

Ms. Laudato added that Portage County Commissioners indicated they have limited authority over data center development. She also expressed hesitation about tying the City's moratorium

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to future state regulations, noting the lengthy and inconsistent regulatory process experienced with marijuana legislation.

Mr. Kairis concluded the discussion by thanking Mr. Remley for his thoughtful comments, clarifying the record, and noting that Council appreciated the detailed information he submitted.

Approval of the Agenda:

- Motion to approve the agenda by Ms. Michael, 2nd by Ms. Laudato- **All Ayes**
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Consent Agenda:

Communications: A letter from Louis Dudek requesting a traffic study on Main St.

Approval of the Minutes:

- Regular City Council Meeting of June 1, 2026
- Special Council Meeting of June 22, 2026

Report of Officials:

Ordinances:

ORDINANCE NO. 2026-100 AN ORDINANCE AUTHORIZING THE MAYOR TO APPLY FOR THE 2025 FEMA ASSISTANCE TO FIREFIGHTERS GRANT AND TO ACCEPT THE GRANT IF AWARDED, AND DECLARING AN EMERGENCY.

ORDINANCE NO. 2026-101 AN ORDINANCE AUTHORIZING THE MAYOR TO ENTER INTO A 5-YEAR CONTRACT WITH AXON ENTERPRISE INC FOR NEW TASERS FOR THE POLICE DEPARTMENT IN THE SUM OF \$113,991.72, AND DECLARING AN EMERGENCY.

ORDINANCE NO. 2026-102 AN ORDINANCE AUTHORIZING THE MAYOR TO ENTER INTO AN AGREEMENT WITH RAVENNA TOWNSHIP, RAVENNA SCHOOL DISTRICT, VILLAGE OF MANTUA, PMHA, AXESS FAMILY SERVICES AND MAPLEWOOD CAREER CENTER TO DEVELOP A SALT CONSORTIUM TO PURCHASE SALT, AND DECLARING AN EMERGENCY.

ORDINANCE NO. 2026-103 AN ORDINANCE AUTHORIZING THE MAYOR, UPON THE APPROVAL OF THE OHIO PUBLIC WORKS COMMISSION (OPWC) GRANT OF \$250,000.00 AND LOAN OF \$150,000.00, TO ENTER INTO THE NECESSARY CONTRACTS, INCLUDING THE CONTRACT WITH Z-TECH BUILDERS AND EXCAVATORS, INC. FOR THE KING STREET WATERLINE PROJECT AND APPROPRIATING \$95,487.00, AND DECLARING AN EMERGENCY.

ORDINANCE NO. 2026-104 AN ORDINANCE APPROVING THE EDITING AND INCLUSION OF CERTAIN ORDINANCES AS PARTS OF THE VARIOUS COMPONENT SECTIONS OF THE CODIFIED ORDINANCES; PROVIDING FOR THE ADOPTION OF NEW MATTER IN THE UPDATED AND REVISED CODIFIED ORDINANCES; PROVIDING FOR THE PUBLICATION OF SUCH NEW MATTER; REPEALING ORDINANCES AND RESOLUTIONS IN CONFLICT THEREWITH; AND DECLARING AN EMERGENCY.

ORDINANCE NO. 2026-107 AN ORDINANCE AUTHORIZING THE FINANCE DIRECTOR, UPON THE ISSUANCE OF A CERTIFICATE OF AVAILABILITY OF FUNDS, TO PAY CERTAIN PURCHASE ORDERS MADE THAT EXCEED \$3,000.00, AND DECLARING AN EMERGENCY.

ORDINANCE NO. 2026-108 AN ORDINANCE AUTHORIZING THE MAYOR TO PURCHASE A NEW VEHICLE FROM PRESTON CHEVROLET KIA FOR THE RAVENNA POLICE DEPARTMENT FROM FUND 553, AND DECLARING AN EMERGENCY.

ORDINANCE NO. 2026-109 AN ORDINANCE ACCEPTING VARIOUS DONATIONS TO THE CITY OF RAVENNA FOR THE PURPOSES OF HOSTING A COMMUNITY PICNIC TO CELEBRATE AMERICA'S 250TH ANNIVERSARY, AND DECLARING AN EMERGENCY.

- Motion to dispense with the requirements of the City Charter in the Revised Code of Ohio with reference to reading on three separate days and adopting emergency clauses and approving the consent agenda by Mr. Calfee, 2nd by Mr. Marovich- **All Ayes**

Invited City Officials: Jonathan Bender, IT Director

IT Director, Jonathan Bender, provided Council with an update on ongoing technology projects across the City. He reported that the new phone system has been implemented throughout most City departments, with the Police Department dispatch conversion remaining. Mr. Bender highlighted upgrades at the Water and Wastewater Treatment Plants, including new cameras, video intercoms, gated access, and enhanced security features. He also explained that police officers now use City-owned mobile phones with recorded lines, business texting for school resource officers, and other features that improve communication and accountability.

Mr. Bender reported that delays in the City's fiber project had been resolved following changes with the contractor, and work is moving forward. He announced that a beta version of the City's new website is ready for review and that the Hello Ravenna mobile app is available for residents. The app will provide emergency alerts, allow residents to submit and track service requests, and support Parks and Recreation programming. He also noted that downtown public Wi-Fi will be upgraded as part of the fiber project and that the Water Treatment Plant's SCADA upgrades are nearing completion.

Mr. Calfee asked about the police road phones, and Mr. Bender explained they are City-issued cell phones assigned to officers during each shift, allowing dispatch to transfer calls directly to officers while recording all conversations. Mr. Calfee also requested that information about the Hello Ravenna app be shared with the full Council.

Mr. Kairis asked about the status of the City's contract with Quality IP.

Mr. Bender said the contract expires in July 2027 and that he plans to begin the bidding process later this year. He explained that future contracts should reduce costs by eliminating required monthly service hours and retiring the legacy phone system while allowing flexibility for additional technology services.

Police Chief Smallfield expanded on the benefits of the new patrol phones, explaining they eliminate the need for officers to use personal cell phones, ensure recorded conversations for evidentiary purposes, improve photography capabilities, wirelessly transfer evidence, and provide additional tools for K-9 operations.

Mr. Bender also explained that incoming calls to City Hall are now recorded to improve accountability and document interactions with the public.

Ms. West said it would have been helpful for Council to have been informed in advance so members could answer residents' questions.

Mr. Calfee voiced his support for recording calls, stating it promotes accountability, while Mr. Marovich agreed that the system increases transparency for both callers and City employees.

Mr. Kairis thanked Bender for his presentation and ongoing work to modernize the City's technology infrastructure.

Report of Committees: Committee meetings start at 6:00 PM 7/13/2026.

Utilities: Mr. Moskun stated that there is nothing so far for next week.

Information Systems: Mr. Marovich stated that there would be a meeting.

Planning: Ms. Laudato stated that there would be a Planning meeting.

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Committee of the Whole: Mr. Kairis stated that the next Committee of the Whole meeting is Monday, July 20, 2026, at 6:00 pm.

Public Health & Safety: Ms. Michael stated that there would be a meeting next week and encouraged Council to review the Fire Chief's report included in their meeting packets.

Streets & Sidewalks: Mr. Harper stated that there will be a meeting.

Personnel: Mr. Calfee stated that there will not be a meeting.

Community & Economic Development: Ms. West stated that there would be a meeting.

Finance: Ms. Lorence stated that the committee might discuss the preliminary tax budget following the upcoming Tax Budget Commission meeting.

Cemetery: Ms. West reported that the Cemetery Board, after consulting with an architect and contractors, determined that replacing the chapel roof should not be the first priority. Instead, the Board plans to develop a five-year restoration plan beginning with structural and foundation repairs, including raising the floor and filling the basement before addressing the roof. Ms. West explained that donor communications would be sent to explain the revised approach and the reasons for prioritizing long-term preservation.

Mr. Marovich agreed that foundation work should come first and noted that existing cemetery funds are sufficient for structural repairs but not a complete roof replacement.

Parks & Recreation: Mr. Marovich reported that the Summer Celebration attracted approximately 800 attendees, summer camp enrollment is exceeding last year's participation, the inaugural pickleball league is concluding with eight teams, and T-ball had 88 participants. He also announced the official opening of the Chestnut Hills Disc Golf Course and reminded residents that Dek of Hearts would perform at Sunbeau Valley on July 11, with tickets available through the Parks and Recreation Department.

Main Street Ravenna Report: Mr. Kairis reported that Main Street Ravenna was expected to hire a new Executive Director following its upcoming board meeting and stated that additional updates would be provided at a future meeting.

First Reading of Ordinances:

RESOLUTION NO. 2026-105 A RESOLUTION DECLARING THE NECESSITY FOR AN ADDITIONAL TWENTY-FIVE HUNDREDTHS OF ONE PERCENT INCOME TAX TO PROVIDE FUNDS FOR THE PURPOSE OF PLANNING AND BUILDING A NEW FIRE STATION, POLICE STATION AND CITY HALL IN THE CITY OF RAVENNA, OHIO , AND DECLARING AN EMERGENCY.

Ms. Laudato presented the resolution from the Planning Committee, explaining that it contained the same ballot language used for the City's May levy effort and expressing hope that Council would approve it so it could be submitted to the Board of Elections.

Ms. West asked about the filing deadline.

Mr. Kairis replied that the deadline was in early August and that approval at the current meeting would meet the requirement.

As Council prepared to vote, Mr. Kairis called for a motion to suspend the three-reading rule. The Clerk and Mr. Moskun reminded Council that resolutions do not require three readings, prompting Mr. Kairis to withdraw the request.

Discussion then turned to whether an emergency clause was necessary.

Mr. Calfee questioned whether resolutions automatically take effect upon passage, while the Clerk noted there was some uncertainty.

Mr. Kairis explained that because the resolution included an emergency clause, Council should vote on it rather than assume immediate effectiveness.

- Motion to adopt emergency clause by Ms. Michael, 2nd by Ms. West- **All Ayes**
- Motion to pass Ordinance No. 2026-105 by Mr. Marovich, 2nd by Ms. Michael- **All Ayes**

Ordinance 2026-105 was adopted.

ORDINANCE NO. 2026-106 AN ORDINANCE ADOPTING THE 2027 TAX BUDGET FOR THE CITY OF RAVENNA, AND DECLARING AN EMERGENCY.

Mr. Kairis explained that the tax budget consists of estimated revenues and expenditures required for submission and is not the City's final operating budget. He noted that Council expects to adopt the official budget by the end of the calendar year, but has until April to do so. There being no further comments or questions.

- Motion to waive three separate readings by Ms. Laudato, 2nd by Mr. Moskun- **All Ayes**
- Motion to adopt emergency clause by Ms. Michael, 2nd by Ms. West- **All Ayes**
- Motion to pass Ordinance No. 2026-106 by Mr. Harper, 2nd by Mr. Moskun- **All Ayes**

Ordinance 2026-106 was adopted.

Second Reading of Ordinances: None

Third Reading of Ordinances:

ORDINANCE NO. 2026-075 AN ORDINANCE AUTHORIZING RAVENNA CITY COUNCIL TO APPOINT TIM CALFEE TO THE TAX INCENTIVE REVIEW COUNCIL IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE OHIO REVISED CODE, AND DECLARING AN EMERGENCY.

Council considered Ordinance No. 2026-75, authorizing the appointment of Tim Calfee to the Tax Incentive Review Council (TIRC).

Ms. West, speaking on behalf of the Community and Economic Development Committee, noted that the appointment had been pending for several months.

Mr. Calfee remarked that he was filling a vacant position and looked forward to serving.

Ms. Lorence explained that the appointment would help fill the positions required on the Tax Incentive Review Council. She stated that Council is responsible for annually reviewing Community Reinvestment Area (CRA) and Enterprise Zone agreements.

Ms. Lorence outlined the membership of the board, which includes representatives from the City, Portage County, the Portage Development Board, the school district, and resident appointees. She noted that Mr. Calfee would serve as one of the City's resident representatives.

Ms. Michael asked for clarification regarding the composition of the board and the appointment process.

Ms. Lorence explained the required membership structure and confirmed that Mr. Calfee and Mr. Huff would satisfy the resident representation requirements.

Ms. Laudato noted that another individual who had expressed interest in board service had instead chosen to pursue appointment to the Charter Review Commission.

There being no further comments or questions.

- Motion to adopt emergency clause by Mr. Harper, 2nd by Ms. Michael- **All Ayes**
- Motion to pass Ordinance No. 2026-075 by Ms. West, 2nd by Ms. Laudato- **All Ayes**

Ordinance 2026-075 was adopted.

Old Business- None

New Business- None

President of Council Remarks-

Mr. Kairis encouraged residents to attend the City's America 250 community celebration, including the community picnic and evening concert at Sunbeau Valley Farm. He also publicly recognized Ms. Gregor for her leadership in organizing the events, praising her dedication, enthusiasm, and the significant work she has done to make the celebration possible.

Council Member Remarks

Mr. Calfee- Mr. Calfee commended the Parks and Recreation Department and Mr. Bundy for improvements at Havre's Woods Park, noting that recent tournament activity has brought many visitors and created a lively atmosphere.

Mr. Marovich added that additional improvements, including field lighting, are planned.

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Ms. West- Ms. West thanked Mr. Farhat and everyone involved in the City's Purple Heart Community ceremony, sharing that the event was especially meaningful because of her family's military connection.

Mr. Moskun- No Comment

Ms. Laudato- Ms. Laudato also thanked Ms. Gregor for her outstanding promotion of the America 250 celebration, noting the widespread community awareness and excitement surrounding the event.

Mr. Marovich- No Comment

Ms. Michael- Ms. Michael recognized Tim Hack, a 1990 Ravenna High School alumnus now living in Washington State, for donating frisbee golf discs and BMX bicycles to benefit Ravenna's parks and youth. She said she plans to distribute the items and promote their use through social media. Ms. Michael also challenged fellow Council members to help sell tickets for the America 250 concert, encouraging everyone to continue promoting the event to ensure a strong community turnout.

Mr. Harper- Mr. Harper said that he had enjoyed seeing America 250 celebrations taking place across the country and looked forward to Ravenna's upcoming celebration.

Mayor's Remarks- Mayor Seman thanked Council and staff for their efforts in preparing for the upcoming events and recognized Ms. Gregor for her work coordinating activities and bringing together numerous community partners. He commended Ms. Gregor's dedication and daily collaboration with the administration, noting that her planning and organization have helped create successful community events.

Mayor Seman highlighted the many summer events taking place throughout the City, stating that they continue to bring residents and visitors downtown and generate positive feedback from the community. He also credited Ms. Gregor's efforts in securing donations and support, including assistance from the State of Ohio, which has helped make the 250th event accessible and memorable for residents.

Mayor Seman also recognized the continued efforts of past and present City Councils in improving downtown Ravenna, including beautification projects and flower beds that have received positive comments from visitors. He concluded by expressing optimism about the direction of the City and the positive impact these initiatives are having on the community.

Adjourn to Monday, August 3, 2026

- Motion to adjourn at 7:34 pm by Ms. West, 2nd Mr. Marovich- **All Ayes**

The next Regular Council Meeting is scheduled for Monday, August 3, 2026, at 6:00 P.M.

ATTEST:

Clerk of Council

Council President