



Ravenna City Council
Public Health and Safety Committee Meeting Minutes
August 10, 2026

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

Council present: Council President Rob Kairis, Amy Michael, Tim Calfee, Christina West, Matt Harper, Carmen Laudato

Also attending the meeting: Mayor Frank Seman; Police Chief, Jake Smallfield; Service Director, Tim Contant; Finance Director, Tami Lorence; Council Clerk, Chelsea Gregor; Larry Silenius, Cliff Soudil, Barbara Niemiller, Cynthia Miller, Cheryl Wood, Rich Edmiston, L.A.K. Dank, B. Walebraufe

The Public Health and Safety Committee Meeting was called to order at 8:10 P.M. by Chairperson, Amy Michael.

Chief Chapple explained that the Fire Department is facing a significant shortage of space and currently stores a second-due engine at the facility. Because the building lacks heat, the city previously had to rent another building during the winter to prevent the apparatus from freezing. Chief Chapple said the original estimate to expand the facility was approximately \$140,000–\$150,000, but the only bid received came in at approximately \$250,000. He presented an alternative option involving a less-expensive lean-to structure that could be completed within the existing budget. While Mr. Chapple favored the more permanent addition, he asked Council to consider which option represented the better long-term investment.

Mr. Calfee clarified that the engine stored at the facility is a backup engine and is regularly needed when the primary engine is undergoing maintenance or repairs.

Chief Chapple also explained that the Fire Department will eventually need additional space for its older ladder truck, which remains valuable and would be costly to replace.

Mr. Finney said the steel structure option could potentially last 40–50 years or longer, particularly if heated. He estimated the overall project at approximately \$140,000, including concrete, with the City acting as general contractor and separately contracting the various components.

Mr. Harper confirmed that sufficient space is available at the facility.

Ms. Lorence cautioned that the additional \$100,000 needed for the larger expansion would come from funds that will also be needed to pay for the new fire truck next year.

Ms. Michael agreed that the additional expense could place unnecessary strain on the city's finances, particularly with the possibility of a new fire station.

Chief Chapple suggested that if the larger project could not be pursued, the City could instead improve the existing cold storage building by adding heat, water, and electrical service.

However, he emphasized that the Fire Department needs a workable solution because its current space limitations are becoming increasingly difficult.

The committee agreed to proceed with the budgeted lean-to/steel structure option and move the project forward under an emergency clause so construction could begin before winter.

Chief Chapple said the project was expected to take approximately seven to eight weeks, and the new fire apparatus could arrive as early as Christmas or no later than Valentine's Day.

- The item was moved forward.

The second item was a MOU with the Ohio Dept. of Medicaid.

Ms. Lorence presented an MOU with the Ohio Department of Medicaid that would allow the City to participate in a supplemental Medicaid funding program. The program would not create a new service and would be implemented through Life Force. Based on the city's ambulance call volume, Chief Chapple estimated the City could receive approximately \$50,000–\$75,000 in additional funding, while a neighboring community was expecting approximately \$90,000–\$100,000.

Ms. Michael supported moving the MOU forward.

- The item was moved forward.

Management Update

Ms. Michael raised concerns about the lack of after-hours mental health and social-service resources available to Ravenna's police officers, firefighters, and medics. She said emergency responders are frequently dealing with individuals experiencing mental health crises, particularly on evenings and weekends, but often have difficulty reaching agencies or finding facilities willing to accept individuals. Ms. Michael said the situation places significant strain on emergency personnel and can require multiple officers and medics to respond to a single incident. She also expressed concern about the impact on downtown businesses, residents, and neighborhoods when individuals experiencing crises have nowhere else to go. Ms. Michael said she intends to work with the Mayor, Council, and local agencies to address the issue and hold organizations receiving public funding accountable for providing appropriate services. She noted that Summit County has more resources available for similar situations and said Ravenna and Portage County need a better after-hours crisis response system.

Ms. Laudato asked when meetings would be held so Council members could attend and show support.

Ms. Michael suggested that Council consider drafting a letter to the mental health board outlining the City's concerns. She also noted that Mayor Seman wanted to meet with agency leaders.

Mayor Seman confirmed that the City is dealing with these situations almost daily, particularly during evenings and weekends. He said agencies sometimes refuse to accept individuals because they fear being overwhelmed, but emphasized that emergency responders need agencies to answer their calls when assistance is required, adding that the City is actively pursuing solutions.

There being no further business for discussion, the meeting adjourned at 8:30 P.M.

ATTEST:

Clerk of Council

**Amy Michael, Chairperson
Public Health and Safety Committee**