



Ravenna City Council
Streets & Sidewalks Committee Meeting Minutes
August 10, 2026

The public meeting was held in person in 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 Streets & Sidewalks Committee Meeting was called to order at 6:00 P.M. by Matt Harper.

The first item was a discussion on E-Bikes.

Mr. Harper introduced a discussion regarding e-bike regulations and distributed information from the Parma Police Department outlining the different e-bike classifications and related requirements. He explained that Ohio law establishes classifications and operating requirements, but Ravenna's ordinances may need to be strengthened to address unsafe or illegal behavior. Mr. Harper noted that Ohio does not currently require e-bike riders to have a driver's license or license plate.

Ms. West asked how riders and officers can distinguish between Class 1, 2, and 3 e-bikes.

Mr. Harper explained that manufacturers are required to place a label on each bike identifying its class and maximum speed, although the label generally cannot be seen without stopping the rider. He added that motors cannot be engaged on sidewalks. Class 3 e-bikes may provide motor assistance up to 28 mph and are required to have a speedometer.

Ms. Michael emphasized the need for long-term planning to safely accommodate e-bikes because they provide affordable transportation for residents, students, and individuals without access to a vehicle.

Mr. Harper agreed that e-bikes are likely to remain common and noted that the city could consider sidewalk speed limits, although enforcement could be challenging.

Ms. Michael and Ms. West stressed the importance of continuing public education, particularly with schools and new riders.

Ms. West said the city also needs ordinances that give police the tools necessary to enforce violations.

Mr. Harper noted that helmets are required for certain riders and discussed the possibility of additional penalties or warnings for violations.

Mr. Calfee asked about enforcement, licensing e-bikes, and how regulations for e-bikes interact with electric scooters.

Police Chief Smallfield clarified that some of the regulations discussed were local Parma ordinances rather than state law. He cautioned against unnecessarily forcing young riders onto roadways because they may not understand traffic laws. Chief Smallfield said Ravenna officers are already stopping riders on sidewalks and attempting to educate them, emphasizing that enforcement and education will take time.

The committee discussed creating a Ravenna ordinance requiring helmets for riders under 18. Chief Smallfield said a helmet requirement would be easier for officers to enforce than determining whether a motor was engaged.

Ms. Michael suggested combining enforcement with positive education efforts, such as providing helmets, information cards, or incentives for children who follow safety rules.

Ms. West suggested using a QR code to direct riders to information about e-bike regulations and also suggested requiring lights and reflectors as another easily enforceable safety measure.

Mr. Harper agreed that helmet requirements would provide officers with a clear and visible basis for enforcement.

Ms. Michael supported moving forward with a helmet ordinance, particularly before students return to school.

Larry Silenius recommended establishing a sidewalk speed limit, noting that Ravenna currently has no specific sidewalk speed limit. He cited New York's five-mph limit for motorized vehicles and suggested a 10-mph limit for bicycles, joggers, and similar users. Mr. Silenius also raised concerns about inadequate bicycle lighting, vegetation obstructing sidewalks, and riders failing to yield to pedestrians.

Cliff Soudil raised additional concerns about Ohio's recent changes regarding serious injuries or deaths involving e-bikes, including questions about insurance and liability. He also reported seeing gas-powered minibikes, electric dirt bikes, ATVs, and improperly equipped golf carts operating on city streets and sidewalks. Mr. Soudil encouraged the committee to address these issues as part of a broader review of motorized vehicles.

Mr. Kairis added that he had observed a riding lawn mower being driven on the sidewalk along Main Street, further illustrating the variety of motorized vehicles appearing in areas intended for pedestrians.

Ms. West suggested that the City explore a partnership with the Portage County Health District's "Put a Lid on It" program, which provides bicycle helmets to children.

Mr. Calfee strongly supported moving forward with a helmet requirement, describing it as a straightforward safety measure.

Mr. Harper agreed that helmets would give officers a clear visual violation to address, unlike speed or motor engagement, which can be difficult to determine.

- The item was moved forward.

There being no further business for discussion, the meeting adjourned at 6:31 P.M.

ATTEST:

Clerk of Council

**Matt Harper, Chairperson
Streets & Sidewalks Committee**