RAVENNA CITY COUNCIL
COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE MEETING MINUTES
August 24, 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, Christina West, Matt Harper, Tim Calfee, Carmen Laudato

Also in attendance: Mayor Frank Seman, Police Chief, Jake Smallfield; Fire Chief, Mark Chapple; Service Director, Tim Contant, City Engineer, Bob Finney; Council Clerk, Chelsea Gregor, Larry Silenius, Cynthia Miller, Cliff Soudil, Eve Francis, Barb Neimiller, Rich Edmiston, Joni Holloway, Peter Martin, Herman Minor

- Motion to excuse Paul Moskun 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 July 20, 2026.

- Motion to approve the July 20, 2026, Committee of the Whole minutes by Ms. Michael, 2nd by Mr. Marovich- **All Ayes**

The second item was an ordinance authorizing the appropriation of funds for the cold storage build on Spruce St.
Ms. Michael reported that bids for the Spruce Street cold storage building project came in significantly higher than budgeted. The committee agreed to proceed with a steel-frame structure as a more cost-effective option that Mr. Finney believed would provide adequate durability and functionality for the fire department.

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

The third item was an ordinance authorizing the Mayor to enter into a MOU with the Ohio Dept. of Medicaid.
Ms. Lorence explained that the proposed Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Ohio Department of Medicaid would allow the City to participate in a program that could bring additional federal and state funding to the City for Medicaid-billed ambulance runs. The MOU is primarily a formality to enroll in the program.

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

The fourth item was an ordinance creating guidelines for E-bikes and scooters.
Mr. Harper presented proposed changes to the City's e-bike and bicycle ordinance, with an emphasis on helmet requirements. The proposal would require operators and passengers under 18 to wear approved helmets on Class 1, 2, and 3 e-bikes.
Mr. Kairis noted that the existing ordinance already requires everyone riding a Class 3 e-bike to wear a helmet.
Council discussed whether the helmet requirement should apply only to minors or continue to apply to adults riding Class 3 e-bikes.
Ms. West supported maintaining the existing Class 3 requirement while adding Class 1 and Class 2 e-bikes for those under 18.
Mr. Calfee specifically stated that he favored retaining the existing requirement for adults on Class 3 e-bikes.
Mr. Marovich raised concerns about the proposed reference to a "compliant helmet," noting that Department of Transportation standards may not necessarily apply to bicycle helmets and that different certification standards exist.
Mr. Kairis suggested retaining the existing references to standards established by the Consumer Product Safety Commission and the American Society for Testing and Materials.
Police Chief Smallfield said there should be a recognized helmet standard but questioned whether officers should stop cyclists solely to determine whether their helmet meets the required standard. He also expressed some hesitation about requiring adults to wear helmets on e-bikes, while supporting helmet use by minors.
The committee generally favored adding Class 1 and Class 2 e-bikes to the existing approved-helmet standards for riders under 18 while continuing to consider whether the Class 3 requirement should remain applicable to adults.
Mr. Harper agreed to prepare revised language for the next meeting. The ordinance was advanced but not placed on the consent agenda so additional discussion could occur.

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

The fifth item was an ordinance authorizing the Mayor to advertise for bids for the 2026 Stormwater Project.
Mr. Finney presented the proposed 2026 stormwater project, which will be funded through stormwater revenue. The work includes extending the Jones Avenue storm line to address erosion, as well as installing storm pipes and catch basins on North Scranton Street between Mechanic and Main Streets. Mr. Finney said the projects include work in Wards I and II.

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

The sixth item was an ordinance redistricting Wards within the City of Ravenna.
Ms. Laudato reported that the Planning Committee has not yet finalized a redistricting proposal and plans to hold two public meetings in September—one on a weekday evening and one on a

Saturday—to accommodate different schedules and encourage public participation. The meetings will allow residents to review proposed maps and use mapping tools to create and discuss alternatives.
Ms. West recommended keeping the item on the September Committee of the Whole agenda rather than advancing it, since there is currently no finalized proposal.
Ms. Michael agreed, while Mr. Calfee emphasized the importance of having maps available for Council members to review before the meeting.
Mr. Kairis noted that the September 21st Committee of the Whole meeting would allow time to schedule the public meetings beforehand.
Ms. Laudato also discussed making the proposed maps available online for residents who cannot attend the meetings. She planned to work with Mr. Marovich and Ms. Gregor to determine how the maps could be posted on the City's website.

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

The seventh item was an ordinance addressing space requirements for Multi-family units.
Ms. Laudato presented a comprehensive proposal to update the City's multifamily housing minimum floor-area requirements. The proposal would establish minimum living areas based on the number of bedrooms: 450 square feet for an efficiency/studio, 550 square feet for one bedroom, 750 square feet for two bedrooms, 950 square feet for three bedrooms, and 1,100 square feet for four or more bedrooms. Ms. Laudato explained that the proposed standards are based on Ohio Housing Finance Agency (OHFA) guidelines and are intended to improve housing quality, support the City's affordable-housing goals in the 2050 Comprehensive Master Plan, and potentially make future multifamily developments eligible for housing grants and tax credits. The discussion also addressed definitions for bedrooms and kitchens. Ms. Laudato proposed defining a bedroom according to applicable Ohio Building, Residential, Fire, and Housing Codes to prevent spaces such as closets or other inadequate areas from being classified as bedrooms. She also discussed adopting more specific kitchen requirements, including appropriate appliances, sanitation, ventilation, accessibility, and universal-design standards.
Mr. Finney confirmed that Ohio Building Code requirements for bedrooms include approximately 70 square feet, a window that opens to the outside, and a seven-foot ceiling height. He also explained that the City's Building Department conducts rental inspections, although landlords may opt out; approximately 20% currently do so.
Council members discussed the complexity of modifying numerous sections of the zoning code.
Ms. Laudato expressed concern about whether she should be responsible for identifying and drafting every necessary code change.
Ms. Michael advised that such work is typically reviewed and prepared with assistance from the Law Director and department heads.
Mr. Kairis explained that more complicated legislation may require the Law Director to make the specific code revisions and noted that the changes may ultimately require multiple ordinances.
Ms. Laudato also raised the question of whether the proposal would need Planning Commission review.

Mr. Finney indicated that the Planning Commission would likely discuss the proposed changes at an upcoming September meeting.
After discussion, Mr. Kairis recommended moving forward with the minimum multifamily living-floor-area requirements and the bedroom definition, while allowing the remaining provisions—including detailed kitchen standards and other related code changes—to receive further legal review. The committee agreed to move the minimum floor-area requirements forward while continuing to work on the remaining provisions with the Law Director.

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

The eighth item was an ordinance addressing the Design Review Commission.
Ms. Laudato explained that the changes would incorporate Ohio Ethics Commission guidance regarding conflicts of interest and clarify the process when the commission fails to hold a required second meeting. She proposed language requiring a member with a conflict to recuse themselves from voting, while also addressing discussion, deliberation, lobbying, and other participation. Ms. Laudato also proposed clarifying that if the commission fails to hold a second meeting within two weeks after the first meeting, an applicant may appeal to City Council.
Mr. Calfee supported the timing change but expressed concern that the proposed conflict-of-interest language could prevent a Design Review Commission member from fully presenting and discussing their own application.
Mr. Kairis agreed that the language should distinguish between a commission member who has a conflict involving another applicant and a member who is personally the applicant.
The committee agreed that a commission member who is the applicant should be permitted to participate in the discussion and present their application but would still be prohibited from voting on it.
Mr. Kairis agreed to add clarifying language. The ordinance was advanced but left off the consent agenda to allow members to review the revised language.

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

The ninth item was an discussion on appropriating additional funds for the Chestnut Lift Station project.
Mr. Finney presented an ordinance appropriating an additional $300,000 for the Chestnut Street Lift Station project. He explained that Ordinances 2025-31 and 2025-32 previously authorized up to $500,000 in Water Pollution Control Loan Fund financing through the EPA. The City has spent approximately $175,850, leaving sufficient funds for the additional appropriation and approximately $24,000 remaining after the project is completed. Mr. Finney clarified that the funding had previously been approved but had not all been formally appropriated.

- Motion to move forward with legislation for number 9 by Mr. Marovich, 2nd by Ms. West- **All Ayes**
- All Council present responded in favor to move the item forward for legislation.

The tenth item was an ordinance approving the insurance renewal for Love Insurance.
Ms. Lorence reported that the renewal quote had not yet been received but was expected within several days. Based on current industry conditions, the preliminary estimate was a 10% increase. Ms. Lorence explained that the renewal includes the City's general insurance and aviation coverage for its drones, with additional work required to update coverage for newer equipment and department needs. She also planned to provide Council with an explanation of factors contributing to any increase and review the budget to determine whether additional appropriations may be necessary.
The committee agreed to move the ordinance forward but leave it off the consent agenda until the final quote and contract are available.

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

The eleventh item was a resolution accepting the amounts and rates for the 2027 budget cycle.
Ms. Lorence explained that the annual resolution accepting the amounts and rates for the 2027 budget cycle is a required housekeeping measure following the tax budget process. The amounts and rates must be certified and submitted to the County.

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

The twelfth item was an ordinance authorizing the execution of Then and Now Certificates.
Ms. Lorence reported that there was only one then-and-now certificate for the month, reflecting continued improvement in the City's accounting process. The committee approved the ordinance and placed it on the consent agenda.

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

The thirteenth item was an ordinance Topics for a Council workshop with Bricker, Graydon and Wyatt.
Mr. Kairis reminded Council that the City engaged the law firm of Bricker, Graydon & Wyatt for two separate purposes: a Council governance workshop and assistance with data-center issues. Jeff Harris will assist with the governance workshop, while Amy Blankenship will work with the City on data-center matters. The total engagement was estimated at $8,000 for both services.
Mr. Kairis proposed workshop topics including public comment, executive sessions, the difference between ordinances and resolutions, social media use, and emergency clauses. Council members suggested additional topics to discuss.
Ms. Laudato recommended adding public records requirements.
Mr. Marovich emphasized the need for guidance on public-records requests, including verbal requests, and requested a deeper discussion of resolutions.
Ms. Michael suggested addressing chronic nuisance and property-maintenance issues and possible best practices.

Mr. Calfee suggested asking the attorney's to identify additional governance and procedural issues that Council should be aware of based on his experience working with governmental bodies.
Mr. Kairis explained that the emergency-clause discussion would be particularly useful because emergency legislation can eliminate the normal 30-day period during which residents may petition against an ordinance. He emphasized the importance of ensuring emergency clauses are used appropriately while recognizing that legitimate emergencies do occur. Mr. Kairis said the workshop would be open to the public and could also benefit city boards, commissions, and committees. He will provide the additional topics to Harris and update Council on the workshop plans.

- The item was for discussion only

- Motion to adjourn at 7:27 pm by Ms. West, 2nd by Mr. Marovich- **All Ayes**

There being no further business before Council, the meeting adjourned at 7:27 pm

ATTEST:

Clerk of Council	**Council President**