



Ravenna City Council
Community & Economic Development Committee Meeting Minutes
September 14, 2026

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

Council present: Council President Rob Kairis, Amy Michael, Paul Moskun, Tyler Marovich, Tim Calfee, Christina West, Carmen Laudato

Also attending the meeting: Mayor Frank Seman; Police Chief; Jake Smallfield; Fire Chief, Mark Chapple; Service Director, Tim Contant; City Engineer; Bob Finney; Finance Director, Tami Lorence; Council Clerk, Chelsea Gregor; Captain Dustin Svab; Administrative Assistant, Ron Fields; Larry Silenius, Barbara Niemiller, Cynthia Miller, Larry Selinius, Rod Flauhaus, William Barber, Trisha Schun, Steven Farhat, Heidi Timmers, Cathy Klein

The Community & Economic Development Committee Meeting was called to order at 6:00 P.M. by Chairperson, Christina West.

The first item was Wayfinding Signs (Main Street Ravenna & the Chamber).

Ms. West introduced a presentation on downtown wayfinding and noted that the proposal would help connect the City's downtown area, improve navigation, and encourage visitors to explore local businesses.

Bill Barber explained that the proposal was developed following research and workshops focused on retail, tourism, foot traffic, downtown economic development, facades, lighting, and signage.

Rod Flauhaus discussed his experience with wayfinding and signage projects and emphasized that effective wayfinding should provide directions while also helping visitors discover businesses and attractions.

Mr. Barber explained the proposed three-part approach of directional signage, discovery signage, and increased dwell time. The goal would be to help visitors find parking and destinations while encouraging them to walk downtown, discover lesser-known businesses, and spend more time in the community. Proposed signage included vehicle and pedestrian directional signs, pedestrian directories, and promotional displays that could highlight businesses, events, and attractions.

Mr. Flauhaus reviewed several potential sign designs and materials, noting that the proposed options would be more cost-effective than previously considered fabricated metal signs.

Estimated costs discussed included approximately \$5,500 per smaller pole sign, \$6,500–\$7,500 for larger signs, and approximately \$30 per printed pole-mounted banner when produced in quantity. The designs would also consider visibility, accessibility standards, and ease of reading for both drivers and pedestrians.

Ms. West clarified that the proposal would not replace existing signs or veterans' flags on City poles. The proposed signage would be an addition and could utilize existing poles without taking up sidewalk space.

Mr. Barber noted that tree trimming may be necessary in some locations to improve visibility of the signage and downtown buildings. He also recommended that City staff help identify

appropriate locations and confirm available public parking before parking is included on wayfinding signs.

Mr. Contant explained that approximately one-third of the large parking lot behind the theater is rented to downtown residents.

Council members discussed the proposal and potential next steps.

Ms. Michael supported the concept and suggested that some signs be placed higher to reduce the possibility of vandalism. She also suggested incorporating Ravenna school spirit into some gateway or welcome signage, such as identifying Ravenna as the home of the Ravenna Ravens.

Mr. Kairis noted that funds from the Jack Schaefer bequest may be available for a separate community welcome-sign project and could potentially complement the effort.

Mr. Calfee asked whether street signs were included in the proposal.

Mr. Barber stated they were not included but could be addressed with the City.

Mr. Calfee emphasized the importance of ensuring streets are clearly identified throughout the downtown area.

Mr. Moskun asked about implementation and financing. Discussion noted that the City already has a 2023 wayfinding ordinance, which includes a policy, design, and \$4,000 allocation, but the ordinance has never been implemented.

Mr. Kairis stated that because the ultimate goal would be to revise the existing wayfinding ordinance, he believed a special committee of Council should be established.

Mr. West explained that she envisioned a working group involving Council, Main Street Ravenna, the Chamber, and City staff to develop a practical and affordable plan before bringing recommendations forward.

Ms. Laudato expressed interest in serving on the committee and noted that wayfinding is included in the City's 2050 Comprehensive Master Plan. She also noted that potential funding sources could include existing economic development funds and other previously allocated funds.

Mr. Kairis stated that a Council special committee could include representatives from Main Street, the Chamber, City departments, and other interested individuals.

Ms. West and Mr. Marovich agreed to serve, with Mr. Kairis indicating that additional participants could be invited.

Mr. Moskun offered to provide technical assistance.

Mr. Barber requested that Engineering or Service Department representatives participate to help identify technical requirements and appropriate sign locations.

Mr. Flauhaus suggested a phased approach that could begin with lower-cost pole banners or other signage and expand as funding permits.

Mr. Kairis confirmed that the group could continue developing the technical and design recommendations informally and bring its work to the special committee. He stated that the committee would ultimately develop proposed changes to the existing ordinance before presenting them to Council and the Economic Development Committee.

- The item was for discussion only.

The second item was a Chamber of Commerce update.

Matt Ferrell, President of the Ravenna Area Chamber of Commerce, introduced the Chamber's quarterly update and was joined by Rod Flauhaus. A video presentation from Executive Director Ryann Cline was provided.

Ms. Cline reported on several recent Chamber activities, including the June 3rd Raven Award ceremony, a downtown business group that was established to address business concerns, the July 11th Only in Ravenna scavenger hunt held in conjunction with the City's America 250 celebration, and the August 28th Chamber golf outing. The golf outing had 24 teams, compared with 17 the previous year. Ms. Cline also reported on the Community Cup Challenge, a three-day business competition conducted in partnership with Parks and Recreation. Five businesses participated, with Eric Schlabach/State Farm and Books-A-Go-Go winning the Community Cup. She stated that the Chamber had been working with downtown businesses to address concerns regarding wayfinding and foot traffic. Ms. Cline introduced RVNA Explore, a new monthly program designed to encourage residents and visitors to explore Ravenna businesses, parks, attractions, and other community destinations. The program will begin the second Saturday of October and feature approximately five to eight stops each month, with different themes and locations throughout the community. Ms. Cline also provided updates on the Ravenna Youth Leadership Program, which will continue in partnership with the high school and Principal John Lane's Principal Advisory Committee. Students will visit local organizations and City facilities and complete a capstone project. She thanked Eric Schlabach and Cheryl Wood for helping lead the program. Upcoming Chamber events include the October 31st Halloween Walk and Scarecrow Contest from noon to 3:00 p.m., and the Midnight Madness Ravenna holiday celebration on November 27th from 5:00 to 10:00 p.m. The holiday event will include vendors, the Balloon A-Fair light-up parade, Santa and Mrs. Claus, the Christmas tree lighting, a sleigh hayride, and a downtown merchant window decorating contest. A new community holiday lights tour will also allow residents to register their homes for inclusion.

Mr. Calfee asked how RVNA Explore would be promoted.

Mr. Flauhaus stated that the Chamber planned to use radio, social media advertising, traditional media, press releases, participating merchants, and other promotional opportunities.

Mr. Marovich asked whether the Chamber planned to collect feedback from participants and provide it to businesses.

Mr. Flauhaus stated that collecting feedback was important and that the Chamber was considering options such as QR codes, online feedback, or printed forms.

Mr. Ferrell added that increased reviews, social media activity, and customer activity would also help demonstrate the program's impact.

Mr. Marovich suggested including a simple rating or feedback form with printed materials, which Mr. Flauhaus supported.

Ms. West thanked Mr. Ferrell and Mr. Flauhaus for the presentation.

- The item was for discussion only.

There being no further business for discussion, the meeting was adjourned at 7:05 P.M.

ATTEST:

Clerk of Council

**Christina West, Chairperson
Community & Economic Development**