

**Cuyahoga Falls City Council**  
**Minutes of the Finance and Appropriations Committee Meeting**

**November 17, 2025**

**Members:** Mary Nichols-Rhodes, Chair  
Mike Brillhart, Vice Chair  
Meika Penta, Brian Ashton, Joe Siegferth

Ms. Nichols-Rhodes called the meeting to order at 7:33 p.m. All members were present.

**Legislation Discussed**

Temp. Ord. B-95  
Temp. Ord. B-96  
Temp. Ord. B-98  
Temp. Ord. B-89

**Discussion:**

**Temp. Ord. B-95**

An ordinance authorizing the Director of Public Service to enter into a contract or contracts, without competitive bidding, with JCI Jones for the purchase of liquid chlorine to be utilized for water treatment throughout 2026, and declaring an emergency.

Mr. Russ Kring, Water Utilities Superintendent, presented Temporary Ordinance B-95 to Council. Liquid chlorine is one of the four chemicals that the City uses to treat its raw water before distribution into the water system. Contract #9194—2025 Chemical Bid—Liquid Chlorine allowed the option to extend the contract's bid price for an additional year. JCI Jones has offered to extend the same unit price per ton for liquid chlorine for 2026. JCI Jones has been the lowest bidder of chlorine for at least the last 12 years.

The Director of Public Service will be authorized to enter into a contract or contracts, without competitive bidding, with JCI Jones for the purchase of liquid chlorine to be utilized for water treatment throughout 2026. The Director of Finance will be authorized to make payment for same from the Water Fund, Line Item Other Operations.

Mr. Kring stated that they went out to bid in 2024 for 2025 chemicals. JCI Jones was the low bidder, and they agreed to hold their 2024 price for the 2025-2026 calendar year. They are the only bidder when it comes to chlorine and have been the only bidder for many years, so they are going to go ahead and hold that price for 2026.

Ms. Nichols-Rhodes stated that the estimated cost total is \$106,000 and the budgeted amount is \$106,000.

Ms. Nichols-Rhodes asked if there were any comments or questions from the public. There were none.

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Mr. Brillhart moved to bring out Temp. Ord. B-95 with a favorable recommendation, second by Mr. Ashton. Motion passed (5-0).

**Temp. Ord. B-96**

An ordinance authorizing the Director of Public Service to enter into a contract or contracts, according to law, for the purpose of upgrading the underground subtransmission cables leaving Valley Substation, and declaring an emergency.

Mr. Rod Troxell, Electric Superintendent, presented Temporary Ordinance B-96 to Council. The Electric Department will be upgrading the subtransmission cables leaving the Valley Substation. The Electric Department has solicited and received public bids for this work. The Electric Department will be contracting out the construction of a new duct bank through Valley Vista Park with Premium Utility Contractor. Premium Utility Contractor will install underground conduit encased in concrete as well as construct a protective raceway for the cables to enter the Valley Substation. The Electric Department will pull in new cables through the completed duct bank and complete the cable terminations.

The Director of Public Service will be authorized to enter into a contract or contracts, according to law, for the purpose of upgrading the underground subtransmission cables leaving the Valley Substation. The Director of Finance will be authorized to make payment for same from the Electric Fund, Line Item Capital Outlay.

Mr. Troxell stated that they are going to install two new duct banks, get everything done and have minimal outages at the Valley Substation. Parks and recreation held off on Valley Vista Park, so Electric could complete this project. This is the underground that comes out of Valley Road and up over to Maitland.

Ms. Nichols-Rhodes stated that the estimated cost is \$145,000. It is part of a bigger project for which the budget is \$1.5 million.

Mr. Balthis asked if they have an updated timeline on when this project will be completed. Mr. Troxell stated that if Council approves this next week, they can get ahead of the contract to get everything in place. They are waiting to know exactly where this is going to be so they can lay out their infrastructure. Mr. Balthis stated that he appreciates the two departments coordinating to make sure this is an easier, more efficient project.

Ms. Nichols-Rhodes asked if there were any comments or questions from the public. There were none.

Mr. Brillhart moved to bring out Temp. Ord. B-96 with a favorable recommendation, second by Mr. Ashton. Motion passed (5-0).

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**Temp. Ord. B-98**

An ordinance authorizing the Parks And Recreation Board, or its designee, to execute a modification of Contract no. 9344, with Safe Slide Restoration to provide water slide paint and repairs at Water Works Family Aquatic Center, and declaring an emergency.

Ms. Sara Kline, Parks and Recreation Superintendent, presented Temporary Ordinance B-98 to Council. Under the authority of Ordinance 62-2025 and pursuant to the authority of Board of Control on or about September 29, 2025, the Parks and Recreation Board entered into Contract No. 9344, with Safe Slide Restoration to provide water slide paint and repairs at Water Works Family Aquatic Center. For the project to proceed, additional work on the anchor studs and nuts are required, which will increase the estimated total contract price by an amount not to exceed \$109,191.00.

The Parks and Recreation Board will be authorized to execute a modification of Contract No. 9344, with Safe Slide Restoration in an increased amount not to exceed \$13,804.00. The total contract price after modification as authorized herein shall not exceed \$109,191.00. The Director of Finance will be authorized and directed to make payment for same from Recreation Levy Fund, Line Item Capital Outlay.

Ms. Kline stated that, earlier this fall, Council approved a contract with Safe Slide to do slide restoration seam and bolt repair at Waterworks. They were locked into a price. Upon further investigation, there are 20 bolts and anchoring that have more structural damage than was assessed at the beginning of the project. Because of the project and timeframe, they have completed the rest of the project. Time is of the essence to get them to finish the rest before snow sets in. With Council's approval, they need to get that finished and, as it turns out, it is the most important part of the project safety-wise.

Ms. Nichols-Rhodes stated that the estimated total cost for this is \$109,000. This additional amount is not to exceed \$13,804, and that brings it to the \$109,000.

Mr. Stams asked what the immediate need and urgency is of the nuts and bolts at \$10,000. Ms. Nichols-Rhodes stated that \$95,387 has already been spent, but, because of finding these additional needs, the additional cost is \$13,804.

Ms. Kline stated that this is in the Aquatic Center. The reason for the urgency is Safe Slide is a national company and mobilize all over. She is leery to have them leave the site to come back in the spring, because they are under extreme timelines in the spring. The amount of work to get this park open in time is intense and can be variable depending on the weather. She is insisting that, with Council's approval tonight, they get the project done this fall. It seems counterintuitive that, in November, they have an emergency at Waterworks Aquatic Center, but it is a logistics issue. Mr. James stated that he is glad she is continuing on and keeping them here to get everything taken care of for the safety of everyone that goes to Water Works next year. He is in full support of it.

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Ms. Nichols-Rhodes asked if there were any comments or questions from the public. There were none.

Mr. Brillhart moved to bring out Temp. Ord. B-98 with a favorable recommendation, second by Mr. Ashton. Motion passed (5-0).

Ms. Nichols-Rhodes recessed the Finance Committee Meeting at 7:44 p.m. and reconvened the meeting at 7:46 p.m.

**Temp. Ord. B-89**

An ordinance establishing annual appropriations of money for the current expenses, capital expenditures and other expenses of the City of Cuyahoga Falls for the fiscal year ending December 31, 2026, and declaring an emergency.

Ms. Nichols-Rhodes asked if anyone has any issues or questions from the previous two budget meetings. She thanked Mr. Paul Novelli and Mr. Scott Fitzsimmons from the Finance Department for always providing answers to her questions and for providing the weekly highlights.

**Capital Projects Fund (Page 113, Five Year Projection Pages 35-38)**

**Revenues** - \$5,491,230 increase. Revenues in this fund can fluctuate from year to year based on debt structure, grant awards, and transfers in. For fiscal year 2026 we are anticipating an increase in State Grants (44003) +\$5,379,000, which includes federal grants passed through the Ohio Department of Transportation \$5,639,000, and Ohio Public Works Commission state funding \$750,000 for Wyoga Lake Roadway improvements; Reimbursements - Other +\$958,000 for reimbursements from Tax Increment Financing PILOT payments, as project construction and start-up expenses were initially paid from the Capital Project Fund, and are reimbursed as revenue comes in (Portage Crossing TIF \$332,000, Pine Ridge TIF \$660,000, and The Glens \$150,000); Bond proceeds (49501) for additional Fire Station and Training Complex borrowing +\$567,000; and note proceeds for State-Seasons-Wyoga Lake improvements \$3,820,000, and Wyoga Lake Roadway improvements. These increases were offset by a reduction in transfers-in from net income taxes (\$524,917) from the estimated reduction in income tax revenue previously noted, and reduction of General Fund subsidy (\$4,302,010).

**Capital Outlay** - The Five Year projection 2026 - 2030 for the fund is presented on pages 35-38 and will be discussed in detail at the budget hearing. Capital Projects change from year to year and are generally not comparable, with the exception of some annual programs, which are the same as the 2025 budget unless otherwise noted: Street resurfacing \$4,000,000, concrete street repair \$500,000 (reduced \$100,000 from 2025), sidewalks \$500,000, curbs and ramps \$75,000, guardrails \$30,000 (reduced \$20,000), assessable tree trimming, and weed cutting \$30,000 each, and bridge work \$50,000. Some significant projects/items for 2026 are as follows: Wyoga Lake Roadway improvements \$8,335,000, Fire Engine \$2,500,000, Hudson Drive resurfacing

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\$1,000,000, Fire Station 4/State of the Art Training Facility \$1,000,000, and City Hall East Patio improvement \$538,000.

**Debt service** - \$3,595,813 increase. This increase is mostly related to bond anticipation notes issued in the current year, which will be paid in 2026: Wyoga Lake Road \$730,000, and State-Seasons-Wyoga Lake Intersection \$3,455,000, including anticipated interest expense of \$193,375 for a total of \$4,378,375. This amount is \$3,307,223 higher than notes due in 2025 due to the additional project spending. It should be noted that short-term borrowing is recorded in the related fund until it is converted to long-term borrowing, then will be paid from our Debt Service Fund (long-term obligations only).

**Debt Service Fund (Page 117, Five Year Projection for entire City Pages 49-58)**

**Revenues** - \$73,275 increase. Increase is related to General Investment Interest (47000) for fund share of pooled interest, as we are anticipating additional interest in 2026.

**Debt service** - \$4,863 increase. This fund accounts for the principal and interest payments on general government long-term debt (enterprise funds and some TIF funds are self-supporting). We last issued bonds on 10/16/2023, of which \$4,630,000 was related to general government. Therefore, the increase is related to differences in the amortization schedule between the two years.

**Information Services (Page 135)**

**Personal Services** - \$109,936 increase. Cost of living (COLA) increase and increase in benefits that are primarily related to pension and Medicare on increase in salaries and wages, merit increases for employees; and Insurance - Medical/Dental (51104), and Insurance - Medical/Dental (51104), and Vision +3.5%. Additionally, the FY 2025 budget included a portion of the Auxiliary Service Manager Salary and benefits (50%) who retired 3/21/2025, but the replacement position of Hardware/Software Support Specialist is charged entirely to Information Services, due to realignment of duties.

**Operations expenditures** - \$9,138 increase. Increase to Computer System Support (54004) +\$7,256 for some general increases in costs, and new items for PC management software. This is coupled with an increase in Non-Operating expense group Reserve: Sick Leave (54875) +\$215, and Reserve: Vacation +\$1,957 for the department's share of contributions to the Compensated Absences Fund (707). Department allocation is based on the compensated absences liability in the City's 12/31/2024 audited financial statements.

Mr. Hoffman stated that that the Capital Projects Fund varies year by year, but, generally speaking, there are several line items in the budget that they do try to maintain year by year. On page 35, they started with Revenue and, every year, they put in regular income line items. The largest one every year is the Income Tax Fund. They bring in almost \$10 million a year in income tax receipts. The total gross income taxes are brought into the Income Tax Fund. Once they take all expenses out, they divide and send out the remainder, and this represents the amount of income taxes they

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project each year in the Capital Projects Fund. The reason they represent that in the Capital Projects Fund is that, currently, they have pre-funded the Department Services Fund and they are not funding that directly with General Fund dollars this year or for the next years because they have enough cash in the fund, but, at some point, that cash will run out and they will start to refund that again. To give the most flexibility as a city, they decided to move that cash into the Capital Projects Fund so they do not fall off the debt cliff and are required to move cash out the General Fund on the General Service Fund and run into an issue without having enough revenue versus expenses in the General Fund. The next few line items are either those proceeds or grants that they anticipate coming through ODOT and were awarded for bringing revenue into the city for road or other projects.

Mr. Hoffman stated that he has highlighted a few items on the expense side that might be of interest. In the Finance Department item, they plan to finish the Fire Station 4 project. That \$7.5 million is a debt expense, because they plan on bringing in some notes eventually and then debting it out in future years. In Infrastructure at page 336, the line item for Hudson Road resurfacing is \$1 million. In 2027, they are planning to spend \$1 million for Bailey Road from Front Street to Graham Road and those three roads Hudson Drive, Bailey Road and Munroe Falls Avenue, they do have a line item on the revenue side for ODOT funding they were able to secure.

Mr. Balthis stated that it is important to congratulate everybody for working with ODOT to obtain grant funds for the major street repaving projects. It is incredible that they have prepaid the debt obligations for so many years into the future that they are now so prepaid on debt that it doesn't make sense to make additional prepayments, and moving all that into the Capital and Infrastructure to make sure they have the money for additional road paving and other things is a good move.

Mr. Balthis stated that they are looking at the Bailey Road and State Road corridor improvement in the 5-year plan. They are now looking at 2030 for that \$7 million. He asked if there is an update on where they are with those and timelines with the Bailey Road and State Road projects. Ms. Diana Colavecchio, Community Development Director, stated that once the traffic analysis is complete, they would present those findings to the public and have another public engagement session to roll out what the traffic consultants have shown. They have a couple variations of what they could do on State Road, but not much on variation on Bailey Road. They want to gauge the public response to those analyses so they have the knowledge they need to give feedback to Council. Maybe by the end of next year, they will have some public engagement sessions going on, but she does not see that design will happen until 2027.

Mr. Hoffman stated that beginning on the second page of page 37 is the Police Department. Generally speaking, the Police Department has vehicle capital, and that is the majority again this year. A couple years ago, they started leasing of some vehicles in the city. One of the main ideas is leasing gives them some flexibility over time and will allow them to make changes where it makes a lot of sense. One item is a mid-sized electric SUV cruiser they plan on leasing and trying out with the Police Department. The pricing has come down to where, from a pure cost standpoint,

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it makes sense from a flexibility standpoint. The Police Department needs time to review that and put it into action to see if it works for them, but they do have that in the budget.

On the Fire Department side, the top of page 37, they do have a contingency line for the additional cost of \$1 million for the Fire Training Center that is under construction today. They are planning on doing some remodeling in a couple of stations over the next few years, Stations 5, 1 and 2. Those are drawn out through 2028. The big line item is the fire engine listed at \$2.5 million. That is a 20-year-old ladder truck that they are replacing. On the Street Department side, they have a one-man leaf machine. On the Building and Facility Department, the last department on page 37, the majority of costs are for repairs and capital improvements to City Hall. This year, it is the same. They put in a contingency line item for the Municipal Building repairs and they have that at \$215,000 for 2026. The larger item there is patio at the front of the building. There have been some ideas to revamp that patio to make it more functional into the future, so they are looking at ways now to try to do that. There are a couple vehicles that they are leasing and a couple of mowers.

Mr. Hoffman stated that, on page 38, they include the Parks and Recreation area. These two items they put into the Capital Projects Fund, the reason being is those items are for the Front Street area. The Parks and Recreation Department is taking care of the parking decks downtown, so they put it in Capital Projects; same thing as Front Street landscape. They label them as Parks and Recreation, but they are general city items as well. Under Community Development are normal programs of tree trimming and weed cutting. They have some art projects that they are planning on doing in 2026. They have River Loop public art, Broad Boulevard bridge, and selfie art. In the Information Service and Tech Service Department, they have a couple vehicles in there that they have leased. They need to do a server line repair in the Tech Building at \$12,000. The one item there they are replacing is a bucket truck in 2026 and then they have their normal program for traffic signal controller upgrades.

In the Garage Department, they had above-ground fuel storage tanks, and they moved forward with those in 2025. They now have to remove the fuel storage tanks that were underground. They have gate controllers. They are upgrading the security futures of the access in and out of the grounds of the Garage Services Complex.

Mr. Hoffman stated that on page 39 of the budget book is the start of the Debt Schedule. In the Debt Schedule, they list out principal that is outstanding in debt. They list out principal additions they planning on borrowing for and principal payments and interest payments and how much they have outstanding at the end of the year. From page 39 through a number of pages are listed all of the debts the City has outstanding, looking to borrow and then how much those debt service payments are throughout the city. Water, Sewer and Electric service their own debt. They do have notes outstanding for the Wyoga Lake Project, the Triangle Project that is going on at Seasons Road, State Road and Wyoga Lake Road, and they also have that for the Princeton Place Project in the debt schedule.

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On the Information Services page, there is minimal cost increases to the Operations Expenditures. They purchase the same sets of software every year and, occasionally, they will have some sort of service package drop-off where hardware that was bought a couple years ago, the warranty has run out, so they had to purchase service plans. They had a \$7,000 rollover from a vendor because they are no longer using their services. This year, they upgraded all of the switches throughout the city and they are, at the end of the year, now updating the heavy-duty battery backup system. Next year, they intend to update the firewalls. Every five or six years, they have to go through and replace their consumable items that outlive their useful life. Many of the folks in the city are going to be excited that they are going to transition e-mail providers. They are going to transition to Outlook from Zimbra.

Ms. Nichols-Rhodes stated that most departments have some new expense this year related to a computer upgrade of everyone's system that they each pay proportionately. They have several hundred units, whether they be computers or cell phones or tablets, that users use throughout the city and, every year, in various departments, they will meet with their department and they have a running list of how many computers are in the department and upgrades that need done. They keep them on pretty standard replacement schedules.

**Technical Services (Page 139)**

**Personal Services** - \$52,678 increase. Cost of living (COLA) increase and increase in benefits that are primarily related to pension and Medicare on increase in salaries and wages, increase in overtime related to stand-by pay +\$30,712; and Insurance - Medical/Dental (51104), and Vision +3.5%, offset by a reduction from the Auxiliary Services Manager salary and benefits previously charged to this department (50%), who retired 3/21/2025, and was replaced by a Hardware/Software Support Specialist who is charged entirely to Information Services.

**Operations expenditures** - \$96,397 increase. Mostly related to Property/Building Maintenance and Repair (53021) +\$10,750 for increase in recurring tower site management, and some one-time items (tree removal in front of building, paint and ceiling tiles, gate opener, and building security); Tools & Equipment (53047) +\$51,980 for some additional one-time items, with the largest being RTC school clock controllers over the next five years \$44,980; and Tools & Equipment Maintenance & Repair (53048) +\$30,000 mostly for industrial batteries \$25,000.

Mr. Josh Kington, Director of Information Services, stated that in Tech Services, there is an increase this year which is pretty sizeable. Every four years, they are on a schedule in Tech Services to replace a bunch of industrial batteries throughout the city. They do it all at the same time so they know exactly what the schedule is. Even though it is a high-dollar amount, they cannot capitalize it, because, individually, there is not enough to capitalize. The second component every five years are RTC School Clock Controllers, which give them connectivity to the school signs, the flashers, and give them the ability to communicate with them. Those make up for some of the major



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increases in Operations this year along with some other one-time expenditures. They have a tree that needs to be taken out in front of the Tech Services building and a couple small things.

Ms. Nichols-Rhodes asked Mr. Kington to give an overview of what his department does. Mr. Kington stated that they support all of the users in the city, the folks who are connected to the network, and the people that work for the city. They are making sure that everybody stays connected, has the devices that they need and use them in a safe, responsible way. One of the big things that they have been focused on in the past couple years is cyber security. So far, they have not dealt with any malware. They are constantly having to reassess and reevaluate what their stance is and how they can better position it to make it as safe as possible.

Ms. Nichols-Rhodes stated that they have seen increased security since Mr. Kington has come to the department, so that is appreciated. Tech Services also deals with traffic lights, et cetera. Mr. Kington stated that they do anything that is communication related. There are four people in the department, three separate crews and one person who works exclusively on all the radios in the city for the Safety Forces. Another gentleman deals almost exclusively with fiber in the city. They have two folks whose main job is to handle traffic-related issues. They are the folks out there changing traffic lights and anything that comes up concerning traffic.

**Utility Billing Fund (Page 287)**

**Revenues** - \$181,000 increase. This increase is due to Internal Service Charges (45401) to other City departments estimated to be \$153,000 greater in 2026, and Credit Card Processing Fee revenue account (46021) increase of \$28,000. This fund is an internal service fund, and operates under a cost recovery basis. Therefore, as expenses increase, cost recovery charged to other departments does as well. The Credit Card Processing Fee revenue account (46021) increase is due to an increase in the volume of accounts choosing to pay by credit card.

**Personal Services** - \$105,241 increase. Cost of living (COLA) increase and increase in benefits that are primarily related to pension and Medicare on increase in salaries and wages, merit increases for employees, increase in overtime +\$2,000; and Insurance - Medical/Dental (51104), and Insurance - Medical/Dental (51104), and Vision +3.5%, coupled with an increase due to changes in employee health plan selection being different than what was budgeted in the prior year.

**Operations expenditures** - \$77,727 increase, which is mostly due to Banking Fees (53004) +\$43,000, relating to increased volume of customers using the on-line payment option, and Vehicle Rent/Lease (53030) +\$27,000 for lease of three vehicle replacements #651, 652, 654.

**Capital Outlay** - (\$7,600) decrease is related to the replacement of the department's copier in 2025. There is no capital request for 2026.

Mr. Will Bezbatchenko, Utility Billing Superintendent, stated that there are some increases in revenue. They will also be increasing their credit card users fee this year and continue to see an uptick in adoption of that. People have opted to pay online via credit card. The increase to the fee

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is modest, only 25 cents, and it is the first time they have raised it since 2016. That is \$3 a year for a customers who decide to do that every 12 months. Those fees go to the company they pay to collect those monies with credit card fees. The van they have is about a decade old. It still runs, but it is sitting in the garage more and more. Their other vehicles are typically transferred from other departments because they don't put the miles on that other departments do. They are trying to get away with that, and trying to lease a few vehicles to keep up with transportation. They don't have any capital requests this year.

Mr. Balthis asked if there are other ways people can use to pay their bills such as a debit card. Mr. Bezbatchenko stated that any bank cards, credit or debt, they charge that fee. However, if they sign up for a bank draft, that is free. It comes out of their account on the due date every month. If they pay in person with cash, there is no fee with that. Checks or drop boxes, there is no fee. There are options and he encourages people to do that.

**Street Construction, Maintenance and Repair Fund (Page 223)**

**Revenues** – (\$36,165) decrease. This is mostly related to the projected decrease in Cable Television Franchise Fees (46000) (\$68,200), as with the recent popularity of streaming services, cable franchise fees have continued to decline. The last three complete years of this revenue source for 2022, 2023, and 2024 was \$577,644.52, \$538,792.50, and \$494,257.76, respectively, and current year is trending to be \$448,369. This was offset by increases in the Hotel/Motel Taxes (42001) +\$34,510, as this account has seen moderate growth in recent years with the last three complete years of this revenue source for 2022, 2023, and 2024 being \$260,290.88, \$268,800.85, and \$302,530.63, respectively.

**Personal Services** - \$323,242 increase. Increase in staffing for two additional Street Maintenance Workers, cost of living (COLA) increase and increase in benefits that are primarily related to pension and Medicare on increase in salaries and wages, merit increases for several employees; and Insurance - Medical/Dental (51104), and Insurance - Medical/Dental (51104), and Vision +3.5%, coupled with an increase due to changes in employee health plan selection being different than what was budgeted in the prior year.

**Operations expenditures** - \$257,714 increase. Increase is mostly related to Rock Salt (54103) +\$223,230 for price increase. White salt is increasing from \$43.70/ton to \$62.89/ton. We traditionally fund salt for the Winter Program first from the State Highway and Municipal License Funds, and then from S.C.M.R. Fund as needed, based on revenues and available fund balance. FY 2025 total budget was \$165,000 (State Highway Fund - \$42,000 and Municipal License Fund - \$123,000), and we are requesting a total of \$440,230 for 2026 (State Highway Fund - \$42,000, S.C.M.R. Fund - \$223,230 and Municipal License Fund - \$127,000). Therefore, due to additional funding needs we are requesting to increase S.C.M.R. allocation.

Mr. Charles Novak, Street Commissioner, stated that one of the largest price increases in 2026 is because of salt. Salt is going from \$43.70 up to \$62.89, a 44-percent jump in salt prices over last

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year. In years past, they have had mild winters and didn't see any money for salt from the three accounts used for salt, but, this year, all three of those accounts are funding the salt purchases. They have proposed two additional workers in the Street Department this year. That would take their union numbers up from 26 to 28 employees. In his first years here, he had 30 or 31 employees, and that was reduced over time, and they have been slowly building those back up.

Ms. Nichols-Rhodes stated that revenue is down, but over the last several years, there has been a decrease in cable TV franchise fees because people are streaming more than using cable. There is an offset because the Hotel-Motel tax is up, so that is more revenue. In years past, they have purchased salt ahead of time, so they always had it. They have gotten to the point now that they have to buy it. They have done well in managing it. It is unfortunate there is a 44 percent increase.

Mr. Ashton asked Mr. Novak to highlight the job responsibilities of the two new employees. Mr. Novak stated that they are going into the mix with everyone else. Whatever their title is, in the wintertime, they have their snow and ice route and they are helping patch and doing the daily stuff. In the summertime, when they split up into all their different crews, it will be a matter of there will be more hours they can put towards road repair on a given day or week, more time they will spend being able to replace signs and make signs and that sort of thing. Where they intend to use a lot of that work is in the road maintenance part of it and trying to do more work to keep up with the maintenance of utility patches and the regular pothole calls that come in.

**State Highway Improvement Fund (Page 225)**

**Revenues** - \$2,473 increase. This increase is entirely related to the projected increase of State Levied Shared Taxes group (Gasoline Excise (43010), Gasoline Excise - Added (43011), Motor Vehicle License (43012), and IRP Compensation Distribution (43013)). For these revenue items, Ohio Revised Code allocates 92.5% to S.C.M.R. and 7.5% to State Highway Improvement.

**Operations expenditures** – No change.

**Capital Outlay** – No change. We began funding additional street resurfacing from this Fund in 2025, and are requesting the same amount of \$250,000 in 2026. The accounting for this will be similar to the Permissive Tax Fund, where expenses are redirected to the fund, from Capital Projects fund at the end of the year.

**Municipal License Tax Fund (Page 229)**

**Revenues** - \$1,000 projected increase associated with License Surtax- Addition (43009).

**Operations expenditures** - \$52,000 increase, which is related to the share of Rock Salt (54103), from this fund based on available resources. This increase will reduce the need for salt from State Highway Improvement Fund (202), so we can use those resources for street resurfacing.

**Sanitation Fund (Page 231)**

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**Revenues** - \$642,526 increase. This mostly relates to the Charges for Services - Residential (45001) +\$616,684, of which \$588,024 is estimated to be received from a planned rate adjustment for 2026. We are requesting a rate increase of \$3.00/month, which will provide the department with additional resources for operations and capital purchases. It is our plan to introduce legislation for the proposed rate change.

**Personal Services** - \$110,151 increase. Cost of living (COLA) increase and increase in benefits that are primarily related to pension and Medicare on increase in salaries and wages, merit increases for several employees, and three progress promotions from full-time Laborer to Refuse Collector; and Insurance - Medical/Dental (51104), and Insurance - Medical/Dental (51104), and Vision +3.5%, offset by a reduction from employee health plan selection being different than what was budgeted in the prior year.

**Operations expenditures** - \$96,548 increase. This is mostly related to Vehicle Rent/Lease (53030) +\$27,000 for lease of two vehicle replacements #802 and 803; Tools & Equipment (53047) +\$21,000 for new recurring item for small roll-off boxes which do not meet capitalization criteria (10-15 yard size); and Refuse Disposal - Residential (54110) +\$50,100 for anticipated refuse tipping fees associated with our current contract which expires in 2027.

**Capital Outlay** - (\$102,000) decrease. Department vehicle needs change from one year to another, and we are planning to purchase a new Automated Side Loader Refuse Truck \$850,000, and Hook-lift roll-off truck \$290,000 in 2026. In 2025, our vehicles budget was \$1,221,000, and our purchases were: Residential Front Loader \$495,097.39, Automated Side Loader \$272,993, and we have an open purchase order for a 310 Cubic Yard Sidewinder \$406,000.

Mr. Novak stated that Sanitation has some prices going up, as well. Large garbage truck prices have been going up for a number of years. In a separate ordinance, they do have some proposed rate increases that are involved in keeping their overall revenue up, but they have to keep pace with the costs of everything from the vehicles. They have trash contracts and recycle contracts that are costing more. The trash contract will be year four of a five-year contract starting next year, but those prices will go up. Right now, they are paying just shy of \$50 a ton for tipping fees for trash. Those will go up to \$51.33 per ton. Roughly, they have 1,800 tons of trash that they pick up every year. The recycle contract is also in year four of year five next year. That recycle area has taken a downturn. They hit a high in April, and then the market started to change and, since July, they have been paying a little bit for each ton of recycle, so they have started to have costs associated with that. Their blended average this year is they are paying between \$6 and \$7 dollars a ton as a tipping fee to get that processed. They expect that to continue into next year as being a cost for them. Their yard waste costs are staying roughly the same. They pay MRLM about \$29.04 a yard. That price was only a small increase this year and it should take stay the same for the next year or so. They take leaves to Brimfield Aggregate, and there has been a minimal price increase on that end.

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Ms. Nichols-Rhodes stated that, on Capital Outlay, as far as purchasing new vehicles, it indicates a new automated side loader refuse truck, which cost \$850,000 and also an automated side loader for \$270,000. Mr. Novak stated that that \$850,000 is for two side loaders and not one. They are \$425,000 each. That will be two side loaders and one hook lift roll off truck for \$290,000. Ms. Nichols-Rhodes asked if those are replacing some that have outlived their useful life. Mr. Novak stated that all of those are replacements. Nothing is additional. Ms. Nichols-Rhodes asked what they do with the old ones. Mr. Novak stated that a front-line truck is good for five years. It then goes into a backup mode for three years and then those are sold off at auction most of the time.

Ms. Nichols-Rhodes stated that recycling has gone up and down, so there is no way to tell what it is going to do. Mr. Novak stated that a lot of that goes into the equation. It typically follows whatever a barrel of oil costs. If oil is on its way down, the value of recycles is on its way down. On one end, they are not getting as much value out of recycles; on the other end, they are paying cheaper fuel. The garbage trucks only get three or four miles a gallon.

Mrs. Penta asked if the residents are following the rules with the recycle and the brown bin collections. Mr. Novak stated that they have been doing pretty good. They have not been notified about any of the people not taking their recycles. If they see truckloads that come in that are contaminated, they will call them and let them know that it is too much. They have not done that, so, in that, respect they are doing pretty well. They have not done any audits this year. As far as the brown bin goes, the yard waste that is collected, they have got a few calls from them. They do not like to take leaves where they take the yard waste most of the time, because they charge different rates. So, if they get too many leaves, they charge a little more for those. It is just a matter of where they take them. They like to try to take leaves to Brimfield and pay less for them, but they will take them anyway that they can.

Mr. Balthis asked how many front-line trucks they have in Sanitation at any given time. Mr. Novak stated that the route is around a dozen. They have 4 trash, 7 recycle, 2 yard waste and then a bulk truck that goes out and then a couple of small pickup trucks, super trucks and a cart deliver truck.

Mr. Stams thanked Mr. Novak. The amount of road surface there is in Ward 8 has to present a lot of challenges. It is the single biggest issue he has in the ward, and they do a great job.

**Police (Page 149)**

**Personal Services** - \$769,219 increase. Cost of living (COLA) increase and increase in benefits that are primarily related to pension and Medicare on increase in salaries and wages, merit and longevity increases for several employees; and Insurance - Medical/Dental (51104), and Insurance - Medical/Dental (51104), and Vision +3.5%, coupled with an increase due to changes in employee health plan selection being different than what was budgeted in the prior year.

**Operations expenditures** - \$12,715 increase. Mostly related to Property/Building Maintenance and Repair (53021) +\$48,200 for some one-time justifications in 2026, such as Jail lighting

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replacement, range security camera system, and key card entry system upgrade; Increase to Computer System Support (54004) +\$57,087 for some general increases in costs, including the department's share of E mail and Spam Filter and new items for PC management software, Accurint, and TIP 411; Miscellaneous Contractual Services (54005) +\$26,812 for increase in recurring items such as Direct Indictment Services +\$20,000, Polygraph \$3,000. Offset by reductions Non-Operating expense group Reserve: Sick Leave (54875) (\$58,755), and Reserve: Vacation (\$32,251) for the department's share of contributions to the Compensated Absences Fund (707). Department allocation is based on the compensated absences liability in the City's 12/31/2024 audited financial statements.

**Transfers & Advances** - (\$25,000) decrease, attributable to Transfers Out - General Operations (54701) to the Police Pension Fund (204) for pension associated with certain personnel costs, as pensionable overtime decreased while non-pensionable comp time sellback increased. Increases for associated with the 27th pay have already been reserved in the Police Pension Fund. The Police Department has several Special Revenue Funds under their management including Drug Law Enforcement Fund (Fund 214), Law Enforcement Trust Fund (215), Enforcement and Education Fund (217), Federal Law Enforcement Trust Fund (220), Law Enforcement Assistance Fund (222), and the newly created OneOhio Opioid Settlement Fund (228). The nature of these funds is to account for specific revenues that are legally restricted to expenditure for particular purposes. These funds are budgeted at the Chief's discretion based on restriction of use and available resources. The following fund descriptions are from excerpts from our City's Annual Financial Report, or Ordinance creating the fund.

**Drug Law Enforcement Fund - 214 (Page 161)**

To account for fines received by the City that are restricted under the Ohio Revised Code to subsidize law enforcement efforts that pertain to drug offenses.

**Law Enforcement Trust Fund - 215 (Page 165)**

To account for proceeds from the sale of contraband that are restricted to subsidizing law enforcement efforts.

**Enforcement and Education Fund - 217 (Page 169)** To account for proceeds realized from fines to pay only those costs incurred in enforcing Section 4511.19 of the Ohio Revised Code or a substantially similar municipal ordinance and in educating the public of laws governing the operation of a motor vehicle and the dangers of operation of a motor vehicle while under the influence of alcohol and other information relating to the operation of a motor vehicle and the consumption of alcoholic beverages.

**Federal Law Enforcement Trust Fund - 220 (Page 173)**

To account for the subsidy received by the Police Department for its efforts pertaining to (1) complex investigations/prosecutions by the City's Police/Law Departments; (2) provision of

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technical training or expertise of a law enforcement nature for Police Department members; (3) provision of matching funds to obtain federal grants; and (4) for such other law enforcement purposes that are deemed appropriate.

**Law Enforcement Assistance Fund - 222 (Page 181)**

To account for the reimbursement of professional training costs for law enforcement officers. This is no longer being funded by the State of Ohio Attorney General, due to policy changes.

**OneOhio Opioid Settlement Fund - 228 (Page 177)**

This was a new fund in 2022, authorized by Ordinance 84-2022. The purpose of which is to use settlement funds for evidence-based forward-thinking strategies, programming and services used to (i) expand the availability of treatment for individuals affected by substance use disorders, (ii) develop, promote, and provide evidence-based substance use prevention strategies, (iii) provide substance use avoidance and awareness education, (iv) decrease the oversupply of licit, and illicit opioids, and (v) support recovery from addiction services performed by qualified and appropriately licensed providers. Although specific plans have not been determined, we appropriated current fund balance of \$81,631 in Refunds and Reimbursements (54301), so funds are available for use.

The most notable changes to Police Special Revenue Funds were in the Drug Law Enforcement Fund (214) +\$12,390 mostly for Computer System Support (54004) for Celebrite detective software +\$11,790 (moved from the General Fund department); Education and Education Fund (217) +\$13,100 related to Tools & Equipment (53047) for dash mount moving radar, speed sign and laser; and OneOhio Opioid Settlement Fund (228) (\$231,031) for decrease in appropriations, as we will bring legislation forward when use of resources is determined.

Chief Norfolk stated that they are excited about the electric SUV and are excited to evaluate that and see how that works out. He has yet to find an agency in the area that has one, so they may be the first doing it. They have some concerns about the size of the charge and if it is going to be able to run 12-hour shifts that overlap. They are adding a couple drones to their fleet for when they have to go out and find missing persons. That is a really important tool for them. They also use it at times when looking for suspects. They are adding a couple additional Flock cameras. They have a weak spot with Route 8 coming through and Flock updated their technology so they can put one on the highway. They are trying to look for criminals after the fact, which is an avenue that was not covered, but they are going to be able to get that covered this year with approval of the budget. They have done a little bit of updating such as painting and flooring. They have some basic maintenance things in the jail that are a slight increase in Operations because of requirements by the State to keep the jail up and running. They are seeing a decrease in the amount of prisoners in the jail, so the prisoner meals have gone down. They have some computer-based things for software they use in investigations and other things that are their share of city-wide cost for the firewalls and the e-mail project. The Training Center is still going strong. In November, their range rental had done a hair more last year at this point. That is offset by hosting a tremendous

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number of courses this year. They have been able to offer 8,000 hours of training for the police officers this year across the board and at no impact to their budget because of hosting courses and getting free training staff. They get free seats, so their officers have top-of-line training in the city.

Ms. Nichols-Rhodes stated that it is great to hear about the training center. Last year, they were able to hire more officers and a sergeant or lieutenant. Chief Norfolk stated that they added a sergeant and added four officers. Ms. Nichols-Rhodes asked if they were able to fill those in-house. Chief Norfolk stated that the sergeant position has not been filled, but will be filled December 14th or 15<sup>th</sup>. They are still going through the process of hiring right now. They had a number of retirements and are six officers down from the budget staffing. Ms. Nichols-Rhodes stated that they hope the training center helps that. Chief Norfolk stated that when they interview, nearly every candidate that has any police experience asks how much training officers get in the department, so that is something they use as a recruitment tool.

Ms. Nichols-Rhodes asked why there are fewer people in the jail. Chief Norfolk stated that one reason is the Court is sentencing less people to commitment. In the past, a lot of people were committed to the jail for traffic offenses such as driving under suspension or failure to appear. They had people in jail a lot of times that were unable to function in society mostly due to either mental health problems or substance abuse problems. It became a high liability for them to house them in the jail. They do not have 24-hour jailors and some of them required constant observation; They are trying to reduce liability to the City and for people that maybe incarceration is not the best route where they could be on a home confinement on ankle monitor.

Mr. Hoffman stated that they spend about \$1 million on gasoline. The department that uses the most gasoline, either diesel fuel or unleaded, is Sanitation and then the Police Department.

Ms. Nichols-Rhodes asked if information is shared with the Flock cameras. Chief Norfolk stated that the way Flock works is the information from the Flock cameras goes into a data base shareable to law enforcement only.

Mr. Balthis asked if the drones have infrared technology. Chief Norfolk stated that one of the two they are getting does have that technology. Mr. Balthis asked how long the data is held. Chief Norfolk stated that it is held 30 days and then it is purged unless sworn law enforcement goes in and pulls that piece of data.

Mr. Balthis stated that it is obviously a great tool to find a stolen vehicle, but it has also been used to help law enforcement find people with dementia or who are some harm to themselves and get in the car and get lost. Chief Norfolk stated that that is the number-one thing they use it for.

Mr. Stams asked Ms. Diana Colavecchio, Community Development Director if the packet she referred to earlier were arrests regarding the vape shops. Ms. Colavecchio stated that they were incident reports for the last three years. There were 75 total incident reports, 60 actual incident reports, 15 of which were false alarm drops.



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Mr. Stams asked Chief Norfolk if that is an extraordinary number of incident reports for any retail establishment. Chief Norfolk stated that being these are different separate businesses making incident reports, he would have to dive into it a little further to see how many are criminal incidents and many of them are non-criminal incidents. That would be the deciding factor. He stated that he would be happy to dig into that and provide a deeper answer to all of Council.

**Fire (Page 179)**

**Personal Services** - \$837,239 increase. Cost of living (COLA) increase and increase in benefits that are primarily related to pension and Medicare on increase in salaries and wages, merit increases for several employees; and Insurance - Medical/Dental (51104), and Insurance - Medical/Dental (51104), and Vision +3.5%, coupled with an increase due to changes in employee health plan selection being different than what was budgeted in the prior year.

**Operations expenditures** - \$52,530 increase. Increases in the following accounts: Tools & Equipment (53047) +\$74,500 mostly for 8 new spare portable radios and spare batteries +\$62,500, Trot equipment +\$24,500, and AEDs for Administrative vehicles +\$18,000, less some one-time items in the previous year, such as thermal imagers (\$25,000); Tools & Equipment Maintenance & Repair \$14,500 for general increases in recurring items. Offset by reductions Non-Operating expense group Reserve: Sick Leave (54875) (\$111,036), and Reserve: Vacation (\$17,782) for the department's share of contributions to the Compensated Absences Fund (707). Department allocation is based on the compensated absences liability in the City's 12/31/2024 audited financial statements.

**Transfers & Advances** - \$30,000 increase, attributable to Transfers Out - General Operations (54701) to the Fire Pension Fund (205) for pension associated with additional pensionable personnel costs.

Chief Martin stated that they did onboard six new members this year. They are all phenomenal and it is already having an impact on their operations. Mr. Hoffman mentioned that they are looking at a remodel at Station 5. That is a longstanding goal to get fire administration from Station 1 on Front Street to move out to Station 5. The Fire Prevention Battalion Chief's office would all move out to Station 5. Concurrently, they are going to redesign a model for Number 1. The outside looks amazing and the memorial enhances Front Street. They are going to make the second floor of Station 1 all fire station, living quarters, training room, and the second floor would be a museum. There is a ladder truck they are buying. Two and a half million dollars seems like a lot because it is a lot. The last ladder truck was bought in 2000 at just under \$1 million and to replicate that truck is \$1.8 million to \$2 million. Because of the industrial setting it is in, they are looking at a beefier truck.

Ms. Nichols-Rhodes stated that some of the highlights mentioned are operational things like portable radios and batteries, AED for vehicles and thermal imagers. Chief Martin stated those are AEDS for the chiefs' vehicles that are long overdue. The equipment is starting to wear out in

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technical rescue and the portable radios are concurrent with the additional six personnel. They want to replenish their spare portable radios.

Mr. Stams inquired about the possibility of adding a mobile stroke unit. Chief Martin stated that there are very few stones they leave unturned in Fire. What has held them back is their proximity to a stroke center. By the time they get a patient loaded up, they are 8 to 10 minutes to the hospital. By the time they get intensive care in the back of the med units, they are pulling into the hospital and they are waiting for them there. They continually look at that. They are looking to take delivery of three new med units by summer this year. It's going to be a big vehicle year for them.

The meeting adjourned at 8:57 p.m.