

**POLICE/FIRE/LEGISLATIVE COMMITTEE
& ALL OF COUNCIL
January 12, 2026**

Chairperson: Mr. Dimacchia called the meeting to order at 5:34pm.

Present: Dimacchia*, Drwal*, Springowski*, Torres*, Fallis, Kempton, Carter, Gonzalez, Bearer.

Absent: Arroyo, Thornsberry, Arredondo

*Denotes members of committee

1. Departmental Overview/Update from the following departments:

- 1. IT Department**
- 2. Human Resources**
- 3. Engineering**
- 4. Building, Housing, and Planning**
- 5. Public Property**
- 6. Utilities**
- 7. Fire**
- 8. Police**

Chairperson Dimacchia discussed the structure of this evening's meeting. Explained the need to put a face to the department for all new council members specifically.

- 1. Dave Comer, IT Director, gave an overview of the IT Department.** Mr. Comer explained the role of the IT Department, introduced his staff of five and how long they have been employed with the city. He explained the support IT provides to the public safety offices, Police and Fire, also all other departments within the city as well as all phones, printing and networking. Regarding cybersecurity, he stated they scan and monitor all incoming and outgoing messages and are currently working on their plan to deal with an attack, should one happen.

Councilmember Torres inquired about how advanced our cybersecurity is. Mr. Comer answered about their multi-layer approach. Councilmember Bearer inquired about staffing levels and the House Bill 96 regarding cyber security policy and the needs the IT Department may have. Mr. Comer stated they are in a good spot staffing wise and would be coming to council with requests in the future. Councilmember Fallis inquired about training to ward off breaches and what vendors we work with. Mr. Comer explained PERC training and quizzes, cyber security tutorials and lectures and fake emails that test employees. He also stated we have multiple vendors we work with. Councilmember Drwal inquired about the protocol to communicate with the IT Department. Mr. Comer explained calling, emailing, visiting, working through council clerks' office are all acceptable ways.

- 2. Lori Kokoski, HR Director, gave an overview of Human Resources.** Ms. Kokoski explained her job duties; she manages all employee needs for city workers, she runs background checks for all potential hires, is involved in most interviews with the exception of Police and Fire. She meets with new employees to go over all benefit information and provides necessary information to other city departments to get the employee established. Ms. Kokoski stated she works with the insurance broker to check market for insurance and keep costs down. She

meets with the Chamber of Commerce for safety council meetings and has meetings quarterly with city departments regarding safety concerns.

Councilmember Springowski asked what savings we have received due to Ms. Kokoski working closely with the broker and for how many years. Ms. Kokoski explained roughly \$200,000-300,000 per year for the last three years. Councilmember Fallis inquired about exit interviews and what has been learned. Ms. Kokoski stated it was done for a year, and the cost was more than it was worth, not much data was gathered.

- 3. Dale Vandersommen, City Engineer, gave an overview of the Engineering Department.** Mr. Vandersommen explained they are responsible for the planning, designing and managing of the city's infrastructure projects and act as the city's technical resource assuring things are built correctly. He discussed road improvements and how they navigate that as well as the brownfield projects and how they try to utilize grants for all projects possible. On the utility side, the Engineering Department manages long-term reinvestment in underground infrastructure and storm water systems. Also, they manage the city's GIS system.

Councilmember Springowski inquired how they address prioritizing which roads need resurfacing. She also asked that he explain how to handle the public's concern about a certain road if it is not a priority road. Mr. Vandersommen explained a firm does a pavement condition index (PCI), an update will be done in May, and they do take into consideration if multiple complaints happen about a road. Councilmember Gonzalez inquired who they contact for updates. Mr. Vandersommen answered his office, but he also will provide a link that people can check that has updates. Councilmember Fallis inquired about what the benchmark or goal is to get all roads up to a certain grade, asked for a list of upcoming projects for this year, and a ten-year forecast. Mr. Vandersommen explained we are at a 68 average, the more funding available, the more roads can be done; at \$2M a year, we would be only maintaining. Councilmember Torres inquired if there is an open-door policy or if setting up meetings is preferred. Mr. Vandersommen stated he needs time to prepare, an appointment would be best. Councilmember Kempton inquired how many staff, Mr. Vandersommen answered 11 people. Councilmember Springowski stated that on the yellow flags, it is not OOPS, it is OUPS. She also inquired about matching funds being a hold up. Mr. Vandersommen stated that is accurate. Safety/Service Director Carrion stated the city spends \$2M per year on road repairs but would like to see it be more. He is working with BHP to increase TIFs to support infrastructure improvements. A consultant was hired to identify additional grant dollars and opportunities. Mayor Bradley stated that since 2020, Engineering has secured an excess of \$66M in grants, many of which do not require matching funds.

Audience – Aaron Knapp asked that Mr. Vandersommen explain what happens when one road gets moved up, and what happens below them in order of repair. Mr. Vandersommen explained they would be considered unfunded and would consider them the next funding cycle. Joseph Vaughn received a letter regarding his sidewalk, he questioned who is in charge of sidewalks and how long it takes to repair them. Mr. Vandersommen explained they are the frontage owner's responsibility and they are dealt with on a complaint basis, also explained the process. Tom Springowski inquired about another home being complained about regarding their sidewalk and nothing was done,

and stated Mr. Vaughns property had to be done; he asked how it is prioritized. Mr. Vandersommen stated it may have missed the initial list, but eventually it would be done. Councilmember Gonzalez inquired about adding the sidewalk replacement to their property tax and if it is just the cost or if there is interest accrued. Mr. Vandersommen stated there is interest and it is determined by the auditor through notes and bonds. Councilmember Springowski clarified Mr. Vaughns and Mr. Springowski's comments. Councilmember Kempton inquired about homes that have been demo-ed and also properties owned by the landbank and how that is assessed. Mr. Vandersommen answered it is the same situation, but stated BHP may have to weigh in.

- 4. Matt Kuznir, BHP Director, gave an overview of the Building, Housing and Planning Department.** Mr. Kuznir stated the BHP Department has 25 staff members, described the different divisions and introduced the staff leaders. He explained the most common division is Building and Code Enforcement and gave a brief overview of what they do. Mr. Kuznir introduced the three members of that division; he discussed the process and how that works. In the Planning and Zoning Division, he explained their roles and what they oversee. The Housing Division, Mr. Kuznir explained their roles and what they do, how to handle housing situations. Finally, the Community and Economic Development Division, he explained who handles things within that division as well as what they do, the different types of programs and federal funding that assists with these programs. Mr. Kuznir spoke about the BHP Department and their roles in bringing in development, along with other departments within the city.

Councilmember Kempton inquired how many grant dollars have been received since Mr. Kuznir became director. Mr. Kuznir stated he was unsure but could find out, on average, they manage \$2M per year, along with the \$32M ARPA, \$1.8M HOME ARP, and approximately \$1M of CDBG/CV funds. Councilmember Bearer inquired if a grant is being sought, if BHP informs the ward council person. Mr. Kuznir gave an example of a meeting with RAISE Up, formerly LMHA, to discuss the Choice Grant in wards 5 and 6, he stated Councilmembers Moon, Gonzalez and Arroyo had been a part of all the steering committee meetings. Councilmember Torres inquired how the Southside Gateway Project is leaning, if it looks like it may be a reality, and when will we know. Mr. Kuznir explained HUD tightened their restrictions, but the department is positive and has completed what it has needed to. Councilmember Springowski agreed with Councilmember Bearer and asked that at-Large Councilmembers be included as well.

Audience – Aaron Knapp applauded the work the department has done and inquired about lead abatement, and how that is checked. Mr. Kuznir explained the lead abatement program currently being operated is in conjunction with the Erie County Health Dept., they have been successful in obtaining tens of millions of dollars worth of funding from HUD's Healthy Home Funds. He also mentioned any Lorain resident can call the BHP Dept. to inquire about the lead abatement program, if interested.

Councilmember Fallis stated he participated in the lead abatement program, applauded the whole process.

Mr. Kuznir circled back to answer Councilmember Kempton's earlier question regarding sidewalks on demo-ed properties, the city mandates that contractors replace the sidewalks if they break them. He was unable to speak to the landbank demolition projects.

5. **Lori Garcia, Public Properties Director and Mindy Stoyka, Parks Superintendent, gave an overview of the Public Properties Department.** Mrs. Garcia explained that the Public Properties Department does more than streets; they do cemetery, building maintenance, traffic signals, paint and sign, city garage. She explained the potholes are the biggest complaint council people will receive, also the plows and residents concerned they are not plowing their streets. Mrs. Garcia explained the budget is \$375,000 for paving repairs and the process of determining which streets get repaired. During 2026 they will only be able to do roughly 3 streets, normally they can do around 12, Root Road being the road that will absorb most of the street budget in 2026. They will only handle trees if they go over the street or sidewalk, if the tree is dead, the homeowner will be assessed the removal. Also, they will be handling all damage from the plows over the winter. Parks superintendent Mindy Stoyka explained the Parks Department are responsible for maintaining and enhancing city parks, playgrounds and athletic fields. The city has 56 parks that span over 800 acres, and 17 baseball fields that hosted over 1000 games during 2025. Three football fields are heavily used and maintained. The Parks Department has many activities that promote health, wellness and community engagement.

Councilmember Dimacchia praised the departments and commented on the costs of road repairs and doing the repairs internally, as well as snow removal. Councilmember Springowski stated that Mrs. Garcia is very responsive around the clock with any concerns. Also discussed East/West Erie and the necessity to keep it clean. Mrs. Springowski commended the department for seeking grants and the willingness from Mrs. Garcia and Mr. Darnos to work well with everyone. Councilmember Bearer questioned if the Street Department handles concrete and asphalt, and if that is in the department's budget. Also inquired about staffing and about donations for renovations, along with advertising that people can donate. Mrs. Garcia explained that they have a paving crew and a concrete crew. She also stated that they are very lean staffing wise, and that they have 9 staff to handle all the parks and 800-some acres. They try to have 14 seasonal workers during the summer months. She explained there is an outside company that handles the lifeguards at the pool, but the city handles the front door and concessions. Mrs. Garcia stated the Streets Dept. is short 4 employees, they are having a hard time finding people. For donations, a person would just need to reach out to the appropriate department, and they would be willing to advertise. Councilmember Torres inquired about the drinking fountains and if repairs are needed at the parks. Mrs. Stoyka explained not all parks have drinking fountains but if the public notices broken fountains, they need to reach out. Mrs. Garcia explained all parks with water have drinking fountains, and they are all only 4-5 years old. Councilmember Carter applauded the parks, where they have come since 2016, and the great job that they do. Councilmember Fallis mentioned the improvements he noticed in the parks.

Audience – Aaron Knapp inquired about the Homewood Park, asked that they explain the app for reporting, and also asked for clarification on the city doing work at the schools. Mrs. Garcia explained the app is SeeClickFix, and mentioned it is the best way to report potholes. She also explained the partnership with Lorain City Schools; the city can do work for the schools, and the schools pay the city for it. Chairperson Dimacchia stated the school district does work closely with the city and they are a help to each other. He recommended to all new council members to utilize the app to communicate with city departments.

Councilmember Kempton asked that someone explain the salt brine and also inquired how many plows are in service. Mrs. Garcia answered that if there is a snowstorm, with no rain expected before the snowstorm, it lasts 72 hours; it cuts down on staff overtime for 2-3 hours. She stated they have 24 5-ton trucks, 3 1-ton trucks and 4 f-350. Councilmember Drwal inquired if Root Rd. is being done in asphalt and asked about sewer replacement. Mrs. Garcia explained there will be no sewers replaced. They will be monitoring the aprons of driveways affected.

6. **Carmen Lozano, Utilities Office Manager, gave an overview of the Utilities Department (in Utilities Director Joe Carbonaro's absence).** Ms. Lozano explained the operations, as well as they provide water and wastewater services, with 26,000 total customer accounts in Lorain, Sheffield and Elyria Townships, Sheffield Lake, Amherst Township, New Russia Township and intermittent services for Vermilion and Amherst. She explained the different sub-departments within the Utilities Dept., and what each does. Black River WWTP, the larger of the two WWTP, provides wastewater treatment to approx. 80% of customers, avg. 13M gallons per day. PQM WWTP provides wastewater treatment to the remainder of the city and primarily Amherst, New Russia Township, treats an avg. annual volume of 3M gallons per day. Water Purification provides water treatment services for customers, provides 8M gallons per day. Emergency services are between 7am-3pm, as well as after hours.

Chairperson Dimacchia asked that the documents get shared with Council that Ms. Lozano read off. Councilmember Springowski thanked them for opening up the billing office to pre-Covid hours. She asked about Engineering and Water Dept and if they work together so when streets are being repaired, if laterals have to be replaced after, they aren't tearing up the street again. Ms. Lozano said it would be distribution and recommended following up with one of those departments. Safety/Service Director Carrion explained that yes, they do and explained the process they follow. Councilmember Torres inquired about underground water retaining tanks, and the expense. Dale Vandersommen stated they are above ground, nothing underground, also, that it was around \$1.5M of grant money to construct.

Audience – Aaron Knapp inquired about the years the updates were done, and stated it appeared 20-year increments, asked if we are due for an update. Mr. Vandersommen stated those were renovations to the water plant, not the main, and that the new water plant is under design.

7. **Chris Radman, Fire Chief, gave an overview of the Lorain Fire Department.** Chief Radman thanked members of council for approving the fire levy. He explained what the levy has been used to pay for. In 2026, services would be expanded for water rescue due to the Coast Guard leaving the City of Lorain. He discussed the smoke detector program, the Red Cross donates the smoke detectors, residents can call the department and receive them installed by LFD, they do not do commercial buildings or apartment complexes, only residential homes.

Chairperson Dimacchia inquired how many firefighters are on staff. Chief Radman answered 68, four had retired and they are currently in the process of replacing them. Councilmember Springowski made everyone aware of the fundraiser for the fire levy. Councilmember Torres inquired how long the Coast Guard was in Lorain, and what made them leave. Chief Radman answered they had been here for a while, and they left due to budget cuts; closest stations are in Cleveland and Toledo. Councilmember Kempton asked

if residents could pick up smoke detectors or if they had to be installed. Chief Radman answered they have to be installed by LFD.

8. **Michael Failing, Police Chief, gave an overview of the Lorain Police Department.** Chief Failing explained the duties of Lorain Police Dept. He explained it is best to make appointments if needing to meet with him. With any traffic concerns, he recommended reaching out to the Chief's Office. Chief Failing explained all of the different departments/teams within LPD. He explained the community engagement officers are always hosting events and attending events within the city. They are planning to revitalize the neighborhood block watch this year. LPD is planning to reactivate social media pages and provide crime trend reports.

Chairperson Dimacchia inquired about staffing level and what level we would like to be at. Chief Failing said currently 92, 7 in a training program, 3 going into the academy, and planning to be at 104 this year. Councilmember Springowski encouraged all members of council to do a ride along with LPD. She stated they are the best police force in the State of Ohio. She inquired if they will be doing the Police Citizens Academy. Chief Failing answered he isn't sure if they will be doing that again.

Audience – Aaron Knapp inquired how to notify and invite the Community Engagement Officers to events. Chief Failing explained you would go through the Chief's Office to inform them of any events.

Councilmember Carter also spoke regarding the ride-a-long and how informational they can be, also that the block watch will be a great addition. Chairperson Dimacchia stated the safety of the city is a number one priority, and we have the best trained officers. Councilmember Fallis thanked LPD for bringing back and helping with the block watches.

Mayor Bradley explained the managers' meetings he holds on Monday mornings, and how all departments collaborate. He applauded all of the workers within the city and the good jobs that they do. Safety/Service Director Carrion stated the city has 559 full-time employees within the city. Mr. Carrion explained how they monitor the performance of employees and the jobs that they do. He mentioned the need for responses when something is reported to help with communication.

Chairperson Dimacchia adjourned the meeting at 7:17pm.