



Minutes of the Regular City Council Meeting
 Held December 15, 2025
 7:00 pm.

A regular meeting of the Oberlin City Council was held on December 15, 2025, in the Council Chambers of the Oberlin City Hall, located at 85 S. Main Street, Oberlin, Ohio. Council President Eboni Johnson called the meeting to order at 7:00 pm. Roll Call was taken as follows:

1. COUNCIL BUSINESS

- (a) Call Regular City Council Meeting to Order and Roll Call – 7:00 pm.

Council Members:	Present	Absent
Joseph Waltzer	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Jessa D. New	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Michael McFarlin, Vice President	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Ray English	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Libni Lopez	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Kristin Peterson	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Eboni A. Johnson, President	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Appointees:

- Greg Holcomb, City Manager
- Jon Clark, Law Director
- Marin Fowler, Finance Director
- Belinda Anderson, Clerk of Council

- (b) Approval of Minutes – Public Hearing and Regular City Council Meeting – December 1, 2025

The minutes were approved as submitted.

- (c) Schedule a Public Hearing for January 20, 2026, at 6:00 p.m. to consider a Recommendation from the Planning Commission Regarding the Approval of a New Draft Zoning Code and Zoning Map for the City of Oberlin.

English, seconded by Waltzer, moved to Schedule a Public Hearing for January 20, 2026, at 6:00 p.m. to consider a Recommendation from the Planning Commission Regarding the Approval of a New Draft Zoning Code and Zoning Map for the City of Oberlin.

orientation or gender identity, publicly or privately. Clergy and pastoral counseling are explicitly excluded. This agreement is not being criminalized here, but what is being regulated is professional conduct by licensed mental health practitioners in a very narrow and clearly defined way. As a therapist, I want to explain what ethical treatment looks like. Therapy, like medical practices, follows professional standards. We are also sworn to do no harm.

We conduct a psychosocial assessment, develop a diagnosis, and a treatment plan. That plan is collaborative, evidence-based, and most importantly, it is client-centered, especially when we work with minors. The goal of therapy is not to impose therapists' beliefs; the goal is to help the client reach the highest possible level of functioning, safety, and well-being. If a young person comes to me distressed because they came out, or because they don't want to be gay, or because they are questioning who they are, my role is to support the client in what they bring into the room as they are. I can disagree with a client, I can share my beliefs with a client, but the treatment is never dependent on my beliefs or what I think. Conversion therapy is fundamentally different. It centers on a provider's belief system, rather than the client's needs, and uses discredited practices to push a predetermined outcome. That is why every major medical and mental health association has found it to be ineffective and harmful to minors and to anyone. That is why when complaints are filed with the boards, the boards do take disciplinary action, including fines, revoking or suspending a license, and conducting supervisions.

Conversion therapy is something that every association has banned. This ordinance does not ban exploration, support, or difficult conversations. It does not prevent clients from seeking care or therapists from helping young people cope, reflect, or grow. It simply draws a clear boundary around what licensed providers should not do in treatment. Minors do not always have the power to refuse care, or switch providers, which is exactly why safeguards like this exist in pediatric and adolescent treatment. This ordinance stays in the City's proper lane, respects constitutional rights, and reflects our responsibility to protect young people using evidence-based practices. I hope that it is clear about what it is and what it isn't, and I think that it is important that we have people who are in the field speak about it. I have been practicing for 13 years, and I see the harm it causes when we don't check our biases. That is why our training is evidence-based.

Peterson commented that she is a retired, licensed independent social worker, and the NASW is one of the groups that has banned its licensed people from doing this; how that gets implemented, she doesn't know, as she has been retired for quite a while. She asked if they had any instances in Oberlin where this had occurred. McFarlin replied, no, we don't. Lopez replied that in his investigation, it hasn't; it typically happens under the radar. Usually, it is a situation where the person dies by suicide, and then it comes out that they went through this treatment, so it is very much under-reported.

Members of Council heard from Brandon West, 1125 West 17th Street, Lorain, Ohio, who remarked that he is an activist from Lorain and expressed his support of the conversion therapy ban. He remarked that he had spearheaded a number of coalitions resulting in the banning of conversion therapy in the City of Lorain and in Cuyahoga County. He remarked that after the passage of those bans, he received hundreds of messages from families saying that their children finally felt safe enough to get proper mental health support from licensed therapists. By passing this ban, Oberlin will see the same result. Tonight, Oberlin has the chance to join a Northern Ohio safety net. One of the areas of protection, education, and care that he and his team, along with many other activists and unsung heroes, have been working to establish across the region. He asked Oberlin to please expand this safety net to Oberlin and protect LGBTQIA+ youth from the dangers of a discredited and dangerous practice. One that deserves to stay in the history books.

Fowler provided the background and overview as follows:

- The first grouping consists of transfers within the same fund and between departments, primarily related to salaries.
- The second grouping includes various departmental adjustments, also largely attributed to salaries.
- The Building Department requested \$30,000 for the acquisition of Open Gov software.
- Two requests from the Income Tax Fund, totaling \$276,460.45, were reviewed, including \$223,000 for the municipal parking lot project.
- An additional \$25,000 was requested from the Stormwater Replacement/Reserve Fund for the same project.
- Requests were submitted to increase funding for both the Indigent Alcohol Treatment Fund and the Indigent Interlock Monitor Fund.

English, seconded by Peterson, moved to waive the three-reading rule for Ordinance No. 25-70 CMS.

Roll Call: 6 Ayes 0 Nay Motion Carried
(Suspension of Rules)

English, seconded by Peterson, moved that Ordinance No. 25-70 AC CMS go into immediate effect to ensure that the annual appropriations ordinance for the City of Oberlin, Ohio, is timely amended in order to provide for the usual daily operation of the municipality.

Roll Call: 6 Ayes 0 Nay Motion Carried
(Effective Immediately)

G. RESOLUTION No. R25-17 CMS: A Resolution Amending the Procedural Rules Relating to the Meetings of the Oberlin City Council to Go into Immediate Effect

The Clerk read the Resolution by number, title, and substantive portions.

New, seconded by Lopez, moved for passage on the first reading of the Resolution.

Clark reviewed the proposed changes:

- Article XVIII: Transition of Leadership: *In conjunction with the special meeting to be called at the end of a council term to discuss Board and Commission liaisons, said meeting will also allow the incoming and current council members to discuss roles and expectations of the President and Vice President for the next term.*

New remarked that it made sense to remove the portion about the Board Liaison, but leaving the special meeting to discuss roles and expectations for the next term should remain. However, she believed they could make that language an option rather than requiring it.

Clark asked why Council would want to constrain itself to a special meeting to discuss this, because then if Council wanted to talk about it at a regular meeting, they would have to wait for a special meeting. This would be an unnecessary constraint. He suggested removing the entire section.

Council concurred.

New seconded Peterson by moved to strike Article XVIII: Transition of Leadership and renumber the subsequent sections accordingly.

Roll Call: 6 Ayes 0 Nays Motion Carried
(Amended)

- Article XV: Boards and Commissions: Clark suggested striking the following language: *After the Council's organizational meeting following each election, the members of Council shall designate a liaison from its membership for each board or commission.* Because it implies that this discussion would occur at the end of the Council term in conjunction with the incoming Council. So, there is a conflict between those two provisions. It seemed to him that it didn't make sense for an outgoing Council to appoint liaisons for the next term. Secondly, there was some question in his mind about how a meeting would be structured between the outgoing and the incoming Councils, which has no authority to take any official action.

He suggests that if Council agrees it should be done at the beginning of the term, then this section should be removed, along with the list of boards and commissions that do not have liaisons. New remarked that the list of boards and commissions that are listed here was not meant to be in the final draft. Those were left over from her notes.

New seconded by Lopez moved to strike the list of committees.

Roll Call: 6 Ayes 0 Nays Motion Carried
(Amended)

English, seconded by Lopez, moved to waive the three-reading rule for Resolution No. R25-17 CMS.

Roll Call: 6 Ayes 0 Nays Motion Carried
(Suspension of Rules)

English, seconded by New, moved that Resolution No. R25-17 CMS goes into immediate effect to facilitate the efficient conduct of the meetings of the Oberlin City Council.

Roll Call: 6 Ayes 0 Nays Motion Carried
(Immediate Effect)

5. COUNCIL COMMUNICATIONS:

(A). Referrals

(B). Advocacy

(C). Correspondence

(D). Reports

