

## COUNCIL MINUTES

January 5, 2026  
Council Chambers  
7:00 P.M.

**President Harris called the meeting to order**

**ROLL CALL** – Mr. Barker, Ms. Bline, Mr. Chute, Mr. Cost, Mr. Houser, Ms. Ingold, Mr. Labutis, Mr. Marmie, Mr. Neely, Ms. Newman

**INVOCATION** – Mr. Houser

**PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE** - Natalie Drummond, 5<sup>th</sup> grade, Par Excellence STEM Academy

### CAUCUS

**Mr. Marmie** – Mr. President, I would like to make a motion to move the committees forward.

**Motion to approve committee appointments by Mr. Marmie, Second by Mr. Houser, Motion passed 10-0**

**Mr. Marmie** – Mr. President, we've got a couple Rule 11s that the minority leader and me as majority leader have approved to move forward. We approve for them to go on the agenda.

**By: Mr. Marmie, Mr. Cost, Mr. Barker, Ms. Ingold, Ms. Bline**

**25-86** A RESOLUTION APPOINTING A DISCRETIONARY CHARTER REVIEW COMMISSION PURSUANT TO ARTICLE 11.05 OF THE CHARTER OF THE CITY OF NEWARK, OHIO, AND DECLARING AN EMERGENCY.

**Motion to adopt by Mr. Marmie, Second by Mr. Cost**

**Mr. Marmie** - Thank you, Mr. President. This is something that we actually identified late in the ballgame with our last charter review, but we did not meet timing requirements. It's basically to remove some notification requirements that we have in the charter that are no longer required by the state of Ohio. We can use alternate terms, so it's going to save the money somewhere between \$25,000 to \$40,000, so that's why we want to get this on the ballot right away.

**Motion passed 10-0**

### PUBLIC HEARING

**By: Mr. Marmie, Mr. Cost, Mr. Barker, Ms. Ingold, Ms. Bline**

**25-85** A resolution approving the renewal application for placement of farmland in an agricultural district and declaring an emergency.

**Motion to adopt by Mr. Marmie, Second by Mr. Cost**

**Mr. Barker** - Why is this an emergency?

**Mr. Marmie** - This actually needs to be done every year and we're a little behind.

**Tricia Moore, Law Director** – They applied late, so we're just trying to get it through by the deadline.

**Motion passed 10-0**

**MINUTES of December 15, 2025, Motion to accept by Mr. Labutis, Second by Mr. Houser, Passed by acclamation**

## **APPOINTMENTS**

**City Council** – Appointing Kurt Harden, Todd Harrold, Jill Guanciale, Luke Burton, and Karen Pavone to the Discretionary Charter Review Commission. - **Passed by acclamation**

**President Harris** - That charter review meeting will be this Wednesday at 5 o'clock right here in City Hall. So, anybody that wants to attend, you're more than welcome.

## **REPORTS OF STANDING COMMITTEES**

Finance – **Received and Filed without objection**

Service - **Received and Filed without objection**

Ways & Means - **Received and Filed without objection**

## **REPORTS FROM CITY OFFICIALS**

**Brandon Fox, Water Administrator** - A list of properties being sent to lien for past due water, sewer, and stormwater bills, totaling \$3,587.66. - **Received and Filed without objection**

## **COMMUNICATIONS**

### **COMMENTS FROM CITIZENS**

**Crystal Stamper, 1298 Granville Rd.** - My home address is 1298 Granville Road, but I'm representing Par Excellence STEM Academy and that address is 1350 Granville Road. So yes, it's right in my backyard. So with that said, I'm here tonight to invite everyone here to the 29th Annual Community Breakfast being held on Martin Luther King Jr. Day, January 19th. The breakfast will be at the Reese Center and there are some flyers that if I have permission, I would like to leave them here at the table for you. The reason this breakfast is so endearing is because it was started in 1997, that's why it's 29 years old this year, by Reverend Charles Noble in an effort to bridge our Par community to the whole county community. The theme this year is called Dream in Action, STEM for Good, and it is all about bridging the community. You'll learn about different types of bridges and all that, see that in our displays. But our keynote speaker is Rick Platt, who as you know, is a great advocate for STEM in the community for industry and education. We're super excited to have him as our keynote speaker. I hope that you guys will all participate in attending our breakfast. Thank you.

**Brandon Myers, 371 O'Bannon Ave.** - It seems like a lot of times I bring tough things to the table, and I'm going to hold that today also. We're staring at a new year, and one of the things that I like to do is I like to be able to judge what we call help through a lens that will measure and say whether it did actually help or not. So, what I'm going to talk about tonight is vouchers. And before I do that, I'm going to give you some comparison data. So, you guys know that one of the things that I had issues with in the past was that Patricia Perry was handing out needles down on Main Street and calling it help, and that bothered me a lot. So, we did a lot of work to try to get that stopped. And again, the reason I think it's an issue is because if we say we're helping, then we should be able to look back and say, well, then this help actually gave this metric and it should be able to be measured. Another example would be San Francisco, California spent five million dollars last year giving out free alcohol to people who have what they would call Alcohol Use Disorder. That would fall under like the harm reduction or the wet housing is what they would call it. I know this isn't San Francisco, so I'm just trying to make a case of when you look at the five million dollars was spent on roughly 55 people you have to ask yourself was there really help given there or did we just help these people stay alcoholics, right? Knowing that some people's mindset would like to see those sorts of things come to Newark, I feel the need to stand and speak out against that mindset. This is a very different topic because it's vouchers, but it also has to do with when we measure it is it helping. Here are some statistics for you. There's

roughly 18,000 units that are rentals in Newark, and of those 18,000, there's about 10 to 12 percent that are being funded by some sort of voucher with, you know, aid—help for housing. My issue with that is not that we're helping people, because I like to help people. I don't like to be forced to help people, but I do like to help people. What we see is that the cost of that drives housing prices up. To give you some real numbers, if, say, I'm going to rent a single-family apartment for \$750 and then somebody comes along and says, "Hey, I have a voucher here. I'll give you \$950, or \$1,000, or \$900, or whatever," then I, as a landlord, would be very tempted to take that. Why? Because it's higher—I make more money. But in the end, if you think about it in terms of supply and demand, what that's doing is actually driving the price of housing up in Newark, which, as you guys know, we do have somewhat of a housing shortage. There's a lot going on in Newark, especially with all the building and Intel and all the stuff that's happening. When you couple those two things together— supply-and-demand issues with the vouchers—I think, in the end, if you look back, you might be helping people initially, you know, right there in the immediate. But fast-forward that over the span of a longer period, and you find that if you actually bring the cost of housing up significantly, then are we really helping? That's just something that I want us to consider as a community. I would like to see my children be able to get into houses. You know, they're getting older, getting married one of these days. It's hard to get started now—I think everybody understands that. So I want us, as a community, just to step back. I'm not trying to throw anybody under the bus, but let's think about what we're doing and then actually measure it and say: Is it really helping, or does it actually have a negative effect as well? Thank you for your time.

#### **ORDINANCES ON SECOND READING**

There are none this meeting.

#### **ORDINANCES ON FIRST READING**

**By: Ms. Bline, Mr. Barker, Mr. Cost**

**25-48** An ordinance levying an additional income tax of one-half of one percent for the purpose of raising general operating revenue specifically dedicated to police and fire protection, on all salaries, wages, commissions and other compensation earned by the residents of the City of Newark; on all salaries, wages, commissions and other compensation earned by non-residents of the City of Newark for work done and services performed or rendered in the City of Newark; on the net profits earned on all businesses, professions, or other activities conducted by the residents of the City of Newark; on the net profits earned on all businesses, professions and other activities conducted in the City of Newark by non-residents and on the net profits earned by all corporations doing business in the City of Newark as the result of the work done or services performed in the City of Newark; requiring the filing of returns and furnishing of information by employers and all those subject to said tax; imposing on employers the duty of collecting the tax at the source and paying the same to the City of Newark; providing for the administration, collection and enforcement of said tax; declaring violations thereof to be a misdemeanor, and imposing penalties therefor, and declaring an emergency.

**Ms. Bline** - Mr. President, before I make a motion, I'd like to make the comment, for clarity, that the attached emergency clause is solely for the purpose of getting the legislation on the ballot by the February deadline. And so, with that, I'll make a motion.

**Motion to adopt by Ms. Bline, Second by Mr. Barker**

**Mr. Barker** - Thank you, Mr. President. I would like to amend this ordinance. In our discussions and in the committee discussion, we talked about some language changes and one of them was how the half percent was actually introduced. So, I'd like to make an amendment and all council members have this in your packet. The only change on it is one half of one percent, making it an income tax of a half percent. It's taking out a few words but it gives clarity to the voters. With that, I make a motion to amend.

**Motion to amend by Mr. Barker, Second by Ms. Bline, Motion passed 10-0**

**Mr. Marmie** - Thank you, Mr. President. I'm in support of moving this forward for the voters to decide to see if an additional tax of a half percent would be beneficial for our safety forces. I am here to say that I am only in support of moving this forward if the money is to be spent on those safety forces as it is legislated here in the language. I have further talked with the auditor's office and we will be coming up with a manner in which we can track the half percent and this council will have the authority to either move it to something that is justifiable towards our safety forces so it is dedicated as it is being legislated. Currently, our safety percentage, as far as what we spend on our safety forces, is at about 53% of the General Fund. That includes the Safety Department and Adult Probation. Now, there are other amounts that can be justifiable and will be justifiable in my mind, because departments like our HR department provide support to those departments, and so does our auditor's office. It will be proportionate to the number of employees, or we'll come up with a formula that is justifiable. I don't want any of our taxpayers to think that this is anything other than a safety tax levy, in which it will go toward our safety forces. Therefore, because I have confidence that the auditor's office and this council will make sure that the funds go where they are voted to go toward, I am in support of putting this on the ballot. Thank you.

**Ms. Bline** - Thank you. I appreciate Councilman Marmie's pledge to trust, because truly that's what this is about. It's about trust and transparency. Transparency is a public record, and everything we do here in the Finance Committee and on council is visible to anyone and everyone who would like to see it. But trust is earned through relationship and consistency, and we have to be sure that we do just that—that we are trustworthy, that we are consistent, and that the money does go exactly where it is legislated for. So, I'm grateful for Mr. Marmie's charge on this. This is for the voters to decide, but truly this trust is on all of us, and we need to make sure that it comes to fruition. Thank you, sir.

**Motion to adopt passed 10-0**

## **RESOLUTIONS ON SECOND READING**

**By: Mr. Marmie, Mr. Cost, Ms. Ingold, Mr. Rath**

**25-81** A RESOLUTION APPROPRIATING MONIES FOR THE CURRENT EXPENSES OF THE MUNICIPAL CORPORATION.

**Motion to adopt by Mr. Marmie, Second by Mr. Barker, Motion passed 10-0**

## **RESOLUTIONS ON FIRST READING**

**By: Mr. Rath, Mr. Cost, Ms. Ingold, Mr. Marmie, Ms. Bline, Mr. Barker**

**25-82** A RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING AND DIRECTING THE DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC SERVICE OF THE CITY OF NEWARK, OHIO, TO ENTER INTO CONTRACT WITHOUT COMPETITIVE BIDDING, SUBJECT TO THE APPROPRIATION OF FUNDS, FOR THE PURCHASE OF A NEW DUMP TRUCK AND BED FOR THE WATER DISTRIBUTION/SEWER MAINTENANCE DEPARTMENT THROUGH SOURCEWELL, THE STATES COOPERATIVE PURCHASING PROGRAM.

**Held until 1.20.26**

**By: Ms. Bline, Mr. Cost, Mr. Barker**

**25-83** A resolution providing for the submission to the electors of the City of Newark, Ohio, of the question "Shall the Ordinance providing for a one-half of one percent additional levy on income specifically dedicated to police and fire protection within the general revenue fund of the City be passed?" and declaring an emergency.

**Ms. Bline** - Mr. President, this is the same process as the previous. The emergency clause is attached for the purpose of getting the legislation to the ballot by the February deadline. So with that, I'll make a motion to adopt Resolution 25-83.

**Motion to adopt by Ms. Bline, Second by Mr. Barker**

**Mr. Barker** - Thank you, Mr. President. Again, I'd like to make a motion to amend this legislation 25-83 to reflect the same change where we're taking out the language of one-half of one percent and replacing it with a half percent. So with that, I'll make a motion.

**Motion to amend by Mr. Barker, Second by Ms. Bline, Motion passed 10-0**

**Motion to adopt passed 10-0**

**By: Mr. Neely, Mr. Cost, Mr. Marmie, Mr. Barker, Ms. Bline, Ms. Ingold**

**25-84** A resolution appointing a new member to replace a citizen member vacancy; reappointing a citizen member and the local government member to the Board of Trustees of Newark Downtown New Community Authority; and declaring an emergency.

**Motion to adopt by Mr. Neely, Second by Mr. Barker, Motion passed 10-0**

### **COMMENTS FROM CITIZENS**

**Jeff Rath, 1685 Greer Dr. W.** – Good evening president, members of council, residents of Newark. Like I said, my name is Jeff Raff. Thank you for the opportunity to speak tonight. I'm here to formally announce that I am running for Licking County Commissioner. For the past 16 years, I've served Newark City Council, working on budgets, infrastructure, land use, economic development often during times when growth placed real pressure on our roads, services, and our neighborhoods. That experience has prepared me to lead when long-term planning and accountability matter most. Licking County is growing, and I believe that growth should be managed reasonably and responsibly. We can support jobs and economic opportunity while also protecting farmlands, neighborhoods, and the quality of life that makes our county a great place to live, work, play, and pray. Careful planning and smart infrastructure investments are essential to getting this right. As county commissioner, I'll bring proven local government experience, fiscal discipline, and a commitment to smart, balanced growth. Growth that strengthens our communities rather than overwhelms them. I'm running to put experience to work, to plan responsibly for the future, and to ensure Licking County's growth benefits all of our residents. Thank you to this council for the work you do, and thank you for allowing me to make this announcement tonight.

### **MISCELLANEOUS**

**Tricia Moore, Director of Law** – Happy New Year everyone. Welcome to the new members, Council member Ingold and Council member Newman. I look forward to working with you. With that, I'll pass.

**Mayor Hall** – Happy New Year also to everyone, and I hope your holidays were good. It's always good when they come, but sometimes it's also kind of nice when they move on. This will be the last time you

see all the beautiful decorations out here. They will be gone next time. Welcome all council members to the first meeting in 2026. I look forward to working with each and every one of you as we continue to move Newark forward. Thank you for serving, and again, I look forward to working with you. With that, I'll pass.

**Mr. Barker** – Thank you, Mr. President. Happy New Year, everybody. Welcome to Molly and Michelle. Happy to have you here. I need to call a Service Committee meeting for January 20th, and with that, I will pass.

**Ms. Bline** – Thank you, Mr. President. I'd like to welcome my neighbor, presently Ms. Ingold, and Ms. Newman to council. Thank you. It's going to be a great experience. It really is. Thank you for your service. There's a lot of things that happened over Christmas break. We had a community dinner at a local church on 5th Street. We had over 350 meals served there. It was a great time. And then I was also called by several members in the community to get to play Santa, so to speak, to pass funds out to those who were in need, children who otherwise would have gone without. Although I can't name those folks, I want to thank them for their generosity. There were a lot of needs met in the community because of their kindness. I'd like to thank Mr. Meyer for coming. You bring up a needed topic, and it's going to take work, but it is a very needed discussion, and I thank you for bringing it up. Thank you, sir.

**Mr. Chute** – Thank you, Mr. President. I wish everyone a Happy New Year. Welcome new members. And with that, I will pass.

**Mr. Cost** – Happy New Year. Welcome to Michelle, to Molly. I'm very happy to have you both here. We look forward to a good year. Thank you.

**Mr. Houser** – Thank you, Mr. President. I won't say anything other than just thanking Molly and Michelle for joining us. And with that, I'll pass.

**Ms. Ingold** – With all those wonderful “Thanks for being here” and welcoming, you all have been very welcoming and very helpful. I'm grateful and blessed to be here, and I thank you all. I thank my committees, my friends, and everybody who helped me get here. I look forward to serving the Third Ward and the City of Newark. With that, I'll pass.

**Mr. Labutis** – Thank you, Mr. President. Happy New Year to everyone. Welcome to Molly and Michelle. I look forward to working with both of you. With that, I will pass.

**Mr. Marmie** – Thank you, Mr. President. I need to call a Finance Committee meeting for January the 20th. I, too, want to wish everyone a very happy New Year. Welcome, both Molly and Michelle, to Council. I, too, along with the Mayor, am anxious for 2026. I think great things can definitely happen in the year to come. A couple of items. I want to say thank you to Mr. Myers for coming and talking about the voucher system and how that system is in play. If there was a little bit more within our control, I would say that you would have a lot more support. Unfortunately, a lot of that is outside of our control. The only thing we can do as far as on our end is making sure that we support the right and the correct nonprofits that are not engaging in the activity that is driving those prices up. The final thing that I want to mention is just the safety levy. I'm going to talk a little bit about that. First, I want to make sure that everybody's aware that it's only on earned income. It is not on any type of pensionable income or anything along those lines. The other thing, I was on Council when the previous safety levy passed. Those of the police and the fire knew back then how I was and I will continue to be this time around. At that point, 27% of the general fund went towards our police and fire and I made sure that they had 27% of the general fund after that levy. Now, you see where it's gone to at this point. I don't have to track it anymore. We've exceeded that and we've done well by our safety forces and we want to continue to do that. I am here to make sure that the levy, it is done correctly, it is managed correctly and monitored correctly. With that, I will pass.

**Mr. Neely** – Thank you, Mr. President. I will simply welcome Michelle, welcome Molly, and then I will pass.

**Ms. Newman** - I would like to thank all of my fellow council members for really, truly being welcoming as we kind of started on this journey together. I also want to say to the community as a whole, democracy isn't a spectator sport and I want to be able to hear from constituents. I look forward to hearing folks who are interested in civil discourse about building a really great community together. So, thank you to everyone here who has welcomed me and I look forward to doing great work for the City of Newark. With that, I will pass.

**President Harris** – I'd like to welcome Molly and Michelle. I forgot at the last Council meeting we had three birthdays at the end of December: Beth, Brad, and Amy. So happy belated birthday you guys. I want to thank everybody who attended the swearing-in ceremony. I thought it was a really nice ceremony, nice crowd. It's always an honor and a pleasure to do a public swearing-in for everybody. I also want to congratulate the Newark basketball boys. They are number one in the state right now. They are really good. So, get up there and support the boys. Our next meeting will be Tuesday, the 20th, because the 19th is Martin Luther King Day. And the best Christmas present I got this year was the Browns beating the Steelers and then they beat the Bengals, so it was a great Christmas.

**ADJOURNMENT - Motion to adjourn by Mr. Cost, Second by Mr. Houser, passed by acclamation**

**Jeff Harris, President of Council**