

## COUNCIL MINUTES

February 17, 2026  
Council Chambers  
7:00 P.M.

**President Harris called the meeting to order**

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

**INVOCATION** – Mr. Labutis

**PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE** – Adeleine Gabriel, 5<sup>th</sup> grade, Carson Elementary

**CAUCUS** - Motion by Mr. Marmie to excuse Mr. Chute, Second by Mr. Houser, Passed by acclamation

**MINUTES of February 2, 2026, Motion to accept by Mr. Labutis, Second by Mr. Houser, Passed by acclamation**

### APPOINTMENTS

#### REPORTS OF STANDING COMMITTEES

Finance - **Received and filed without objection**

Street - **Received and filed without objection**

Service - **Received and filed without objection**

#### REPORTS FROM CITY OFFICIALS

**Ryan Bubb, City Auditor** – Operating report for the period ending January 31, 2026 - **Received and filed without objection**

#### COMMUNICATIONS

**Ohio Division of Liquor Control** - New liquor permit for Morning Harvest Café LLC., 19 S. Park Place, Newark, Ohio. - **Received and filed without objection**

**Park National Bank** - Statement of Account Newark Mem Bld/Cedar Hill Cemetery Trust - **Received and filed without objection**

**Dave Froelich** - Email communication containing a request to Council - **Received and filed without objection**

#### COMMENTS FROM CITIZENS

**Rochelle Volen-Smith, 237 Violet Ct.** - I'd like to acknowledge the great loss of Reverend Jesse Jackson, a great humanitarian and a great influence in all of us. He was just such an influence on the entire world, and I am greatly sorry for his loss. He's influenced me my entire life. Thank you.

**David A. Garrick, representative for AFSCME** - Thank you, Mr. President, members of Council. Good evening. My name is David A. Garrick. I am the staff representative for AFSCME Council 8 out of

Columbus. I'm the staff representative for AFSCME Local 2963, which is the Newark City employees. Newark City employees are the heart of this community. City employees keep streets clear, the water safe, the communities healthy. This work is not a job, it's a calling for the members of this Local. They are not just employees. Many of them are residents of this city. They raise family here. They care for loved ones here, and they care about what happens in their city. AFSCME Local 2963 has a proud history with this city. Our members have always stood shoulder to shoulder with Newark citizens and its leaders ready to face any challenge. While we have never given this city any reason to doubt our commitment or dedication, unfortunately we cannot say the same thing. During these negotiations, we've been offered proposals that make us question if the city administration has any respect or value for the people who keep this city running. Administration's current actions lead us to believe that they do not. They are acting unfairly. AFSCME Local 2963 members are not going to back down. We are prepared to stand together until we find a resolution that is rooted in fairness and respect. We are here to inform Council that we have no other choice but to petition for a fact finder with the State Employee Relations Board and continue forward with our contract and our contract resolution. We are asking Mr. President and City Council to please reach out to the administration and tell them to negotiate in good faith and respect our members that contribute to this city every day. Thank you for your time.

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

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

**25-49** An ordinance approving and authorizing the law director of the City of Newark or the law director's designee to take all necessary steps to annex the property, being 1.998 acres, more or less, known as 3131 Horns Hill Road, as recorded in instrument number 202212270029997; 0.546 acres, more or less, located in the Township of Newark, as identified by instrument number 202409130016055; and 1.231 acres, more or less, located in the Township of Newark, as identified by auditor's parcel number 058-290796-00.000 pursuant to Ohio Revised Code 709.16.

**Motion to adopt by Mr. Barker, Second by Ms. Bline, Motion passed 9-0**

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

**25-50** An ordinance to assume maintenance responsibility for the full width of Horns Hill Road from Wildflower Drive until Horns Hill Road exits the municipality's limits adjacent to 2250 Horns Hill Road, Newark, Ohio 43055, and to authorize the service director to enter into all necessary road maintenance agreements with the Licking County Board of Commissioners for the maintenance of Horns Hill Road.

**Motion to adopt by Mr. Barker, Second by Mr. Houser, Motion passed 9-0**

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

**By: Ms. Newman, Mr. Cost, Mr. Marmie, Mr. Labutis, Ms. Bline**

**26-03** AN ORDINANCE VACATING A SIXTEEN (16) FOOT WIDE ALLEY AS SHOWN ON THE PLAT OF FAIRVIEW ACRES ADDITION, AS RECORDED IN PLAT BOOK 4, PAGE 96 OF THE LICKING COUNTY PLAT RECORDS; SAID ALLEY IS LOCATED BETWEEN MORGAN AVENUE AND BONER STREET, EAST OF STATE ROUTE 13.

**Held until 3.2.26**

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

**26-04** AN ORDINANCE CHANGING THE ZONING CLASSIFICATION OF CERTAIN REAL PROPERTY, GENERALLY DESCRIBED AS 1509 DITMOOR STROLL, A PROPERTY CURRENTLY BEING ANNEXED FROM NEWARK TOWNSHIP TO THE CITY OF NEWARK, LICKING COUNTY, OHIO, PARCEL TAX ID #058-291228-00.000, TO SINGLE-FAMILY RESIDENCE RM-MEDIUM DENSITY ZONING DISTRICT, ZONING CODE OF THE CITY OF NEWARK, OHIO.

**Referred to the Planning Commission**

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

**26-05** TO PROVIDE FOR THE ISSUANCE OF NOT TO EXCEED \$1,060,000 OF BOND ANTICIPATION NOTES IN ANTICIPATION OF THE ISSUANCE OF BONDS FOR THE PURPOSE OF PAYING THE COST OF CHURCH STREET AREA IMPROVEMENTS AND REPAIR, INCLUDING ELECTRICAL, SIDEWALK, STREET AND STREETScape, AND ALL NECESSARY APPURTENANCES THERETO, AND DECLARING AN EMERGENCY.

**Motion to adopt by Mr. Marmie, Second by Mr. Barker, Motion passed 9-0**

**By: Mr. Marmie, Mr. Cost, Mr. Barker, Mr. Labutis**

**26-06** TO PROVIDE FOR THE ISSUANCE OF \$155,000 OF BOND ANTICIPATION NOTES IN ANTICIPATION OF THE ISSUANCE OF BONDS FOR THE PURPOSE OF PAYING A PORTION OF THE CITY'S COST FOR HORNS HILL ROAD SANITARY SEWER PROJECT IMPROVEMENTS, AND DECLARING AN EMERGENCY.

**Motion to adopt by Mr. Marmie, Second by Mr. Barker, Motion passed 9-0**

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

**26-07** TO PROVIDE FOR THE ISSUANCE OF \$485,000 OF BOND ANTICIPATION NOTES IN ANTICIPATION OF THE ISSUANCE OF BONDS FOR THE PURPOSE OF PAYING THE COST OF CONSTRUCTION OF THE STREAMBANK PROTECTION PROJECT, INCLUDING replacement of the sheet pile dam on Raccoon Creek, SITE PREPARATION AND ALL NECESSARY APPURTENANCES, AND DECLARING AN EMERGENCY.

**Motion to adopt by Mr. Marmie, Second by Mr. Barker, Motion passed 9-0**

**By: Mr. Marmie, Mr. Cost, Mr. Barker, Mr. Labutis**

**26-08** AN ORDINANCE CONSOLIDATING UP TO THREE BOND ANTICIPATION NOTE ISSUES OF THE CITY OF NEWARK, OHIO AND DECLARING AN EMERGENCY

**Motion to adopt by Mr. Marmie, Second by Mr. Barker, Motion passed 9-0**

#### **RESOLUTIONS ON SECOND READING**

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

**26-01** A RESOLUTION APPROPRIATING MONIES FOR THE CURRENT EXPENSES OF THE MUNICIPAL CORPORATION.

**Motion to adopt by Mr. Marmie, Second by Mr. Barker, Motion passed 9-0**

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

**26-02** 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 REPLACEMENT UTILITY BILLING SOFTWARE (UBS) FOR THE WATER, SEWER AND STORMWATER DEPARTMENTS.

**Motion to adopt by Mr. Barker, Second by Ms. Bline, Motion passed 9-0**

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

**26-03** A RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING AND DIRECTING THE DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC SERVICE FOR THE CITY OF NEWARK, OHIO, TO ENTER INTO AN INTERGOVERNMENTAL AGREEMENT WITH THE LICKING COUNTY TRANSPORTATION IMPROVEMENT DISTRICT AND THE CITY OF HEATH FOR THE CONSTRUCTION OF CERTAIN IMPROVEMENTS TO THORNWOOD DRIVE KNOWN AS THE THORNWOOD DRIVE - FAYE DRIVE IMPROVEMENTS PROJECT, PHASE 2 WORK.

**Motion to adopt by Mr. Barker, Second by Mr. Houser**

**Motion to amend by Mr. Barker**

**Mr. Barker** – There was an error found that had the Mayor’s address as Newark, New Jersey not Newark, Ohio.

**Second by Mr. Houser, Motion to amend passed 9-0**

**Motion to adopt passed 9-0**

#### **RESOLUTIONS ON FIRST READING**

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

**26-04** A RESOLUTION APPROPRIATING MONIES FOR THE CURRENT EXPENSES OF THE MUNICIPAL CORPORATION.

**Held until 3.2.26**

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

**26-05 Exp** A RESOLUTION APPROPRIATING MONIES FOR THE CURRENT EXPENSES OF THE MUNICIPAL CORPORATION.

**Motion to waive the 2-day reading rule by Mr. Marmie, Second by Mr. Barker, Motion passed 9-0**

**Motion to adopt by Mr. Marmie, Second by Mr. Houser, Motion passed 9-0**

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

**26-06** A RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING AND DIRECTING THE DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC SERVICE TO NEGOTIATE AND ENTER INTO CONTRACT WITH DWA RECREATION FOR PLAYGROUND EQUIPMENT AT WELLS PARK AND WAIVING COMPETITIVE BIDDING AND DECLARING AN EMERGENCY

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

**Mr. Barker** – Thank you, Mr. President. This is an emergency. The emergency clause is there because we are trying to time this up with a grant we received.

**Motion passed 9-0**

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

**26-07** A RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING AND DIRECTING THE DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC SERVICE OF THE CITY OF NEWARK, OHIO, TO ACCEPT BIDS AND ENTER INTO CONTRACT, SUBJECT TO THE APPROPRIATION OF FUNDS, FOR CONSTRUCTION OF THE GRANVILLE ROAD SANITARY SEWER RELOCATION, PROJECT 2021-11 PROJECT.

**Held until 3.2.26**

### **COMMENTS FROM CITIZENS**

**Rochelle Volen-Smith, 237 Violet Ct.** - This weekend, eight people lost their lives due to an explosion of fireworks, and I have seen a number of stores in our community between Heath and Newark that have signs on the front of their stores asking people not to shoot fireworks within 300 feet of their store. Some people have entire garages full of fireworks, and they're now being used not just for the 4th of July, but for just about every holiday or personal holiday that they can think of, without necessarily knowing what they're doing. In some cases, they're letting their kids use them. This is inappropriate, and I think the City ought to consider a regulation on that. Thank you.

### **MISCELLANEOUS**

**Michael Cox, Assistant Law Director** – I have nothing to say this evening. Thank you.

**Mayor Hall** – I will pass this evening. Thank you.

**President Harris** - We're going to go out of order tonight and start with Mr. Houser.

**Mr. Houser** – Thank you, Mr. President. I appreciate that. I've got some news to share but I think I'll touch on something more important first. I'm not sure if you just mentioned this prayer. I just want to say my thoughts and prayers are with the Stanley family. They have a huge impact on a ton of people and that was pretty heartbreaking news to get over the weekend. So, I just want to say my prayers and thoughts are with them. Unfortunately, I'm going to be moving outside of my district into the 5th Ward. And due to that, this is going to be my last meeting on council, which is certainly very sad for me. I've really enjoyed working with you all and some members who aren't here any longer. I've really enjoyed working with all of you. I've enjoyed representing the 1st Ward. Hopefully I've done right by them. I look forward to this next phase, but I look to stay engaged and still be around. I want to thank you for all the patience and education and just the help you've provided me. So, thank you.

**President Harris** - Is there somebody else you'd like to thank for supporting you?

**Mr. Houser** - Oh, my wife too. She is here.

**Ms. Bline** – Thank you, Mr. President. I'd certainly like to thank everyone for coming out tonight. In alignment with what Ms. Volen-Smith had stated, we do mourn the loss of Reverend Jesse Jackson and all that he has brought to our nation. I thank you for bringing that up tonight. It's very important. I also want to keep everyone in a mind of prayer for the Stanley family. It's a great loss to them. Also, for the resident on Summit Street who lost her life in the fire, it's been very difficult for the neighborhood. So we certainly want to keep that family in mind, but we also want to thank the fire department for their quick response and all they did during that time of grief and tragedy. I'm very grateful to them. I'm also grateful to the community for the Night to Shine event. It was great. There were hundreds who came out from the special-needs community to be honored and loved during a very special time. I can see people here who were present. None of that would have occurred if not for you volunteers. So I appreciate you, and thank you.

**Mr. Cost** – Michael, I want to thank you for your service. You've done an excellent job. You've been a good councilman. I hope to see you back here in one capacity or another. With that, I will pass.

**President Harris** – Did you want to say something Ms. Bline?

**Ms. Bline** - To Mr. Houser? Yes. It's been an honor sitting next to you this very short time and I hoped for longer, but I wish you all the best. And I know, I know you have a bright future ahead of you and however you choose to pursue it, you're going to succeed. Thank you, sir.

**Ms. Ingold** – First of all, Michael, when we began our relationship, I was your mentor. You have been my mentor here. I thank you very much for everything you've worked to help me do to get my feet on the ground and kind of get to know what goes on. Most importantly, I'm going to miss you. But you're not far away. Thank you for your service. I also just wanted to tell you that I am working with the Licking County Foundation. The foundation does not go out and do things, but they help to make things happen. And right now they are talking about convening and having opportunities to talk about housing in Newark and Licking County. I had the opportunity to go to Columbus to a tiny house village with about 20 houses. It was really interesting to see. I was so surprised that the tiny houses really were well suited for one person, and that's all they were made for. I think that that is one way we can look at housing here. It's at least a part of the discussion now. The foundation will also be having a meeting in March that I'm attending that will also be talking about housing in Newark and Licking County. So with that, I'll pass.

**Mr. Labutis** - Thank you, Mr. President. Mr. Houser, thank you for your service on council. You have done a fine job representing the residents in the First Ward. Your professional career in banking has helped the City Council capacity from a finance perspective and your analytical skills have been great as well. So while I will hate to see you leave council, I know you've got big things ahead and I'm excited for you and Lynae. You guys get to move to a new area, but I know you'll be around. You've done a fantastic job. With that, I will pass.

**Mr. Marmie** – Thank you, Mr. President. I need to call a Finance Committee meeting for March the 2<sup>nd</sup>. I first want to start out by just giving my condolences to the Stanley family and my thoughts and prayers. I can't even begin to imagine the grief that they are going through, and just know that there's a lot of folks surrounding them. They are very well known in the community because they were involved in the community, and all of the children just contributed significantly to the community. I just want to add some additional prayers to them as well. The next thing I want to talk about—unfortunately, I was a little under the weather during Valentine's Day, but I did have some feelers out there and the downtown was hopping. It is great to see that our community is doing so well between Get the Lead Out and just the Valentine reservations. With every restaurant booked, I just like to see that the downtown is being fully utilized in that capacity. I think that it was just a great day for the community. And with the day being representative of love, the folks that love this community really do appreciate that—and I am one of those. Speaking of love, Michael, I've loved serving with you, and I have truly gained a lot of respect for what you have done and what you have brought to the table with City Council—and also representing your ward. I also have gotten to know you well enough that this is just one chapter, and this is just the technicality that's removing you from council. In some way, shape, or form, you are going to still contribute to this city—whether it be on council in the future or in some other role. And you will continue your support of the city with all the endeavors and the involvement that you are currently in. Moving to a different location is not going to change that, and I appreciate what you do. I look forward to working with you in one way or another in the very near future—and hopefully, maybe even back up here on council. Although, with our age span, I might be gone by then. But no, I really do appreciate you. Thank you very much, and I wish you good fortune in your next chapter. Thank you, and with that, Mr. President, I pass.

**Mr. Neely** – Thank you, Mr. President. Michael, I knew you well before either of us was on council. He would watch our house while we were on vacation—and such a gentleman, this guy. My dog ate his entire wallet. When I say his entire wallet, I mean his entire wallet. He didn't say a word to any of us

until we were sitting on the couch a week later, saw something under the couch, and realized it was part of his credit cards and his ID. Then he finally came clean about that and never said a word, though. Michael, thank you for your service to the city. You have represented your ward very well. I've been approached by members of your ward who are just very upset about you leaving. But I know it's a good thing for you and your wife, and I congratulate you on that. Just thank you, and know that there's more in store. I appreciate your friendship. With that, I will pass.

**Ms. Newman** – Thank you. So first off, I wanted to say thank you to so many faces who are here today. Democracy is not a spectator sport, and it's incredibly important that our citizens and our employees show up when there are big issues at play. I'm sure there are a million other things you could be doing on a Tuesday evening, and so I appreciate seeing you all here. I did want to say thank you to everyone who took time out to participate today. In addition, while I am not a member of the Newark Kiwanis, I am a big fan of pancakes, and I am a big fan of getting people together. So on Saturday, February 28<sup>th</sup>, at The Grove by the River, it is their annual pancake event. This is incredibly important: pancakes for all. It is \$10 for adults; kids 10 and under eat free. It's a great fundraiser for them to ensure that Newark Kiwanis can continue to do great work around the community. It goes from 7 a.m. until 1 p.m. And the Grove happens to be in the 7th Ward, which is very exciting too. Lastly, Mr. Houser, I am really sad to hear that you are going. You were the first person I ever played golf with, and I'm still just as terrible. I was in a foursome with Mr. Barker and his wife and Mr. Houser, and it was probably one of the worst games of golf ever played. But I know that I made good friends that day, and so you're not going anywhere. But I am sad that I won't be able to see you across the room. So with that, I will pass.

**Mr. Barker** – Thank you, Mr. President. Ms. Newman, thank you for reminding me of that round of golf. I try to forget that on a daily basis. I think at one point, Michael and I were just hitting them in the sand just to get along the course. Michael, I don't know what more can be said. You're truly a great friend. I will miss you here on council. I know this is not the end of your story here with our local community, as you are well entwined in different aspects of our community. And I appreciate everything you do. I welcome you and Lynae to the Fifth Ward—you've got my number. If you need anything, you let me know. It is the most desirable ward now since you and Lynae have moved there. I think I can coin that for that move. So, I appreciate you coming. I'm sure I will hear that from Mr. Rath. I'll get a text message, I'm sure. I want to send my family's prayers to the Stanley family. I had the pleasure during COVID of serving at the food pantry with Monica, Mackenzie, and Brooklyn. They're a great family. My wife worked with them through Newark Catholic at different events. It's just a huge loss for their family and the overall community—they're a great family. And with that, I need to call a Service Committee meeting for March 2nd. I will pass.

**President Harris** – I'd like to send my condolences to the Stanley family. Like everybody said, they're a really good family, and I just couldn't imagine. I'd like to wish Molly a happy birthday. Today's her birthday—and I will not tell her age. I will say Bill Cost is glad that you're on council because he's not the oldest now. It is Black History Month, and this is my last opportunity. So, I always like to share some fun facts about Black History Month. I think I've shared these before, but some black inventors: I think we all would be glad that this was invented—the air conditioning unit. Frederick M. Jones in 1949. Thank God he invented the air conditioning unit. Traffic lights—Garrett Morgan in 1923. And of course, he'd probably be upset with roundabouts now, but you know. And the elevator—Alexander Miles in 1887—invented the elevator. So everybody here doesn't have to take the steps. Mr. Houser, I met Mr. Houser around 2018–2019 at Park National Bank, and that's when I started running for council then. Mr. Houser would get off at 5 o'clock, dressed just like that, come meet me, and go door to door in his suit and dress shoes about every night. You have represented the First Ward well. Everybody's—I got phone calls saying, 'Is this true?' And I said, 'Unfortunately, it is.' Hate to see you leave, but happy

for you. You've been a good friend to me, to council. You're a good husband, a good man, and now the Fifth Ward has somebody else to pick from if you want to run for council. Our next meeting is March the 2<sup>nd</sup>.

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

**Jeff Harris, President of Council**