

## Service Committee Minutes

Honorable Council  
City of Newark, Ohio  
January 20, 2026

The Service Committee met in Council Chambers on January 20, 2026 with these members in attendance:

Spencer Barker – Chair  
Dustin Neely – Vice Chair  
Bill Cost Jr.  
Beth Bline  
Bradley Chute

### We wish to report:

1. **Ordinance No. 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

**Brian Morehead, City Engineer** – These are two pieces of property that the City of Newark owns that we would like to annex into the City of Newark. They are currently in the Newark Township. 3131 Horns Hill Road is a property that the City acquired a year or so ago on the west side of Horns Hill Road, south of Stewart Road. The other parcel is strips of land, basically on the east side and on the south side of the intersection of Horns Hill Road and Waterworks Road that are now encompassed by the roundabout that we constructed there. By annexing these strips here, the entire roundabout will then be in the City of Newark. I've been working with Tricia and Jared Rose as outside attorney on this to get this through the process.

**Ms. Bline** – I have to ask, will there be any more construction on that property?

**Mr. Morehead** - No construction on the roundabout property. I think there's probably future construction at 3131 Horns Hill Road, but no plans for that yet.

**Ms. Bline** – So you're saying there is a possibility? You don't have an identified possibility yet?

**Mr. Morehead** - I do not. No.

**Doug Marmie, 6<sup>th</sup> Ward council member** – I do. It's a possibility that that could be a location for a safety services facility there on that side of the river, given the growing population out in that area. It's not anything in concrete, but it's one of those things where we need something out there, possibly, it's available.

**Motion to send to full Council by Mr. Neely, Second by Ms. Bline, Motion passed 5-0**

2. **Ordinance No. 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 The Trout Club 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.

**Mr. Morehead** - Yes, along with the annexations, there's typically a road maintenance responsibility ordinance, and that's what this is. We've worked with Jared Knerr, the County Engineer, on this. There are several pieces of Horns Hill Road in that segment that are under the county's jurisdiction, so it kind of goes city, then county, city, county, city, county. It makes sense for us to take over the maintenance of that all the way from, as it says, Wildflower Drive on the south end up to the newer corp limit on the north side of the Trout Club property.

**Mr. Barker** - Just a general question. We have the Law Director—since the entity that is the Trout Club no longer exists, it's now Licking Springs Country Club—does that need to be adjusted?

**Tricia Moore, Law Director** – We can amend that. This has been pending for a while, so we can make that change. Thank you.

**Mr. Barker** - So we can amend that now?

**Director Moore** – Sure, if you'd like to. Or we can simply put in an address of the property. That probably would be more official.

**Mr. Barker** - The address would be more official?

**Director Moore** – Probably. Would you agree, Brian?

**Mr. Morehead** – Yeah.

**Motion to send to full Council by Mr. Neely, Second by Ms. Bline**

**Mr. Neely** – I will make a motion to change the wording from “the Trout Club” to the address of “2250 Horns Hill Road, Newark, Ohio 43055.”

**Motion to amend by Mr. Neely, Second by Ms. Bline, Motion passed 5-0**

**Motion to send to full Council passed 5-0**

3. Consider **Resolution No. 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.

**Brandon Fox, Water Administrator** - Good evening. So I've talked about this a few times, but it's kind of coming to fruition now. So, requesting this legislation to replace our current utility billing software that was purchased in 2006. So, the software we currently use—we maintain it on a server at Alphalink. Our IT professionals maintain it there. The new software that we're recommending is a cloud-based system, so we no longer have to maintain that. But the current system will no longer be supported by Tyler—it's an Eden product by Tyler—in 2027, so they're sunsetting the software. So, we had to do something. Last year in July, we put out a request for proposals soliciting vendors that would be interested in replacing our software. We received 11 submissions, and we had a review committee from the Water Department, as well as the Mayor was on it. And thanks to the Auditor's Office, Jim Weisent was on that review committee as well. We reviewed all those, and we shortlisted down to three. The shortlisted three actually presented and had an hour to present to the City, to our review committee, so that we could hopefully make an educated decision on this because it is a 10- to 20-year commitment that we're looking to use this software. So, we shortlisted down to two, and then those final two also came back and did a second presentation to us. And so, out of those two, we are

recommending SpryPoint. SpryPoint has been around for almost 15 years—like 13 years. They're fairly new, but we felt very comfortable with them. They're basically—not a Cadillac. It's kind of a Cadillac. It's not the Mercedes; it's more of a Cadillac. And what we have now is a Pinto, so we're looking to upgrade significantly. A few things that we wanted to do: we wanted to improve our billing processes. Obviously, this takes care of our water, sewer, and stormwater billing and revenue collections, so this would make those processes more efficient. Reporting—the revenue reporting. So, we collect about \$25 million in revenue. That's outside of the normal General Fund. And so, with that revenue, we have to do daily deposits into New World as part of that tracking. So, this system would help automate that process. It would directly link with New World and help automate those daily deposits. Backflow prevention. So when the City took over the backflow preventer program around the city from the Health Department, we had about five or six hundred backflow preventers. We're now managing about 2,500 backflows, so that process has gotten much more cumbersome than what it was when it started. So, this system will automate and allow that process to work much more efficiently. Certified plumbers will be able to automatically upload their backflow prevention tests and pay that bill remotely when they're on-site at a business. We no longer have paper copies going back and forth, so that process we think will be extremely more efficient. Service order generation. So for our field crews, when we have a customer call in and say they have a water leak, currently we print out a paper copy, give it to a service guy, and he goes out and turns the water off. This will be a remote system where our customer account reps will say, "Hey, 123 East Main Street has a leak." It'll automatically get reported to their phone or their tablet. They'll be able to be out in the field, go close that work order, complete it, and as soon as they close it, it'll update in our system that it's off. Same thing with (inaudible) and all those kinds of service order generation-type things. Customer interface. If you pay your bill, or if you look at your account now as a water customer, it's not very good. So that process will improve significantly. Payment processes. You'll be able to use PayPal, Venmo, Zelle—you know, whatever else is to come—as well as ACH, checks, and debit cards. We'll also have credit card payments at our water office through this system. We have a lot of folks come in and want to do that. We don't have that ability currently. Also, being able to see the history of your account. You know, if you go on your electric account now, you can probably look back over the last 12 or 18 months and see your history. We'll now have that for our water system as well, where you can go back and see your historical water usage, billing, and all those types of things. So, the customer interface will be greatly improved. Customer notification system—another huge improvement that we're looking to roll out in this. Currently, we don't have an adequate way to notify customers of water outages, construction updates, road closures, or whatever those things might be. This will give us a GIS map that we can, again, if we have 10 customers down on South 2nd Street that are going to be out of water tomorrow, we can circle those 10 customers and send out a notification text, email, or phone call that says, "Hey, your water may be interrupted tomorrow from 8 to 4." So, we're hoping that that will greatly improve our communication for residents and customers. All this is great, but it does come at a cost. As you can see, the cost is about \$463,000 for the actual implementation. The implementation is expected to take 12 to 13 months, so we're hoping to start that in May of this year, and it won't be fully implemented until early 2027. Also, there's an annual service fee of \$126,000, which will be an ongoing annual fee that we pay. The initial upfront cost is just a single one-time fee for the implementation, the training of our staff, the archiving of our current data, and all those things to get us to the new system. We do have budget for it. It's about double what I had actually budgeted, but I've scraped together some money that we're going to be able to cover that cost this year and, obviously, in the future. Credit card fees—I wanted to mention that. Currently, we absorb all credit card and debit card fees when a customer pays with those types of processes. That will go away, and the customer will now

absorb those costs. So, if there's a 2% rate—if you use American Express or whatever you use—the customer will now absorb those costs. We pay over \$200,000 a year in customer credit card fees, which I don't personally think we should be absorbing. So, we are going to look to abandon that program. I think I covered it all. Happy to answer any questions. The cost—I did want to mention that—\$463,000 is significant, but out of the 11 vendors, it ranged from \$46,000 to \$1.7 million. So, we're kind of in the middle. We're not that high; we're not that low. On the annual fee, it was very similar, anywhere from \$52,000 to about \$220,000 a year. Our committee felt very comfortable with this system. We hope that it's a 10- to 20-year commitment. That's what we're purchasing. They have an office in Pennsylvania, in Pittsburgh, so they are close. During the implementation process, they're going to be on-site, as well as available remotely. So, happy to answer any questions on that.

**Mr. Barker** - I just want to clarify, year one is actually \$589,000?

**Mr. Fox** - Correct. That is not a day one cost. We will pay those fees as milestones are met. So, there're about 12 milestones that they'll meet. After they do the first phase of the data analysis, we'll pay a portion. And that's all laid out in a, you know, we have a master services agreement that we'll agree with them.

**Mr. Barker** – Got it. The first year is the initial fee plus the service fee.

**Mr. Fox** - Correct.

**Mr. Barker** - I just wanted to make sure everyone understood that.

**Ms. Bline** - Will there be any security upgrades needed? Because this is a lot. Personal data is huge. So where are we with that?

**Mr. Fox** - I'm not an IT guy, but they tell me that all of the security needs are met. Basically, all they will need from the IT part is a secure link between the IP—whatever the IP address is that the City will use—connected to their cloud-based system. And then from there, that's a one-way communication, I guess. Again, I'm not an IT master by any means. But they were very upfront with that; they feel very secure. And most software now is cloud-based. Any software you use, you know, New World, for example. So it's not uncommon.

**Mayor Hall** - And that's a big win. When you house the data yourself, that's where the big costs are—on the server side—and I can tell you, Alphalink is ahead of that. So cloud-based gives some advantages. We are very secure now. I would say we took steps long before the big city west of us for security across that. The selection committee was six people from a variety of backgrounds, if I want to call it that—literally. You know, mostly within the Water Department, and I think they did a wonderful job of researching this. Kudos to Brandon and his team. The final people we met with a couple of times, because, you know, the whole process takes months. And then, you bring them back at the end, and those things pop up again. I would tell you that a lot of it was based on back-office efficiencies, because that's dollar savings. It's also good for the employees to have good tools to work with to do what they need to do. So, while their costs are there, the less costly software didn't offer some of those advantages, and we'd still be labor-intensive on a few things. And then, also very important on the customer side—for our water customers—they, you know, friendly software, people tend to pay more—as crazy as that is—pay more if it's easy and quick. They can go in as a guest. They don't have to set an account up. I wore a lot of that hat through the process a little bit, not knowing all the back office. And so Brandon and Andrea were from the inside, and Jim was thinking from the accounting side. We had dollars similar to this when we brought the accounting software on, I would say, several years back—New World. So it's just what the software costs. What you don't want to do is save money and then, down the road, go, “Gosh, you know, this is a pain in the butt, and I wish we had done something different.” A very professional company. We would look forward to having a good arrangement with them.

**Mr. Fox** - I think it will be a good long-term relationship.

**Motion to send to full Council by Mr. Neely, Second by Ms. Bline**

**Mr. Marmie** – Yeah, just a couple questions. You mentioned the efficiencies. So, is this going to help in possibly restructuring your workforce and possibly eliminating the position if we have that much in efficiencies?

**Mr. Fox** - That's not our current plan, no.

**Mr. Marmie** - The second one is, are we saving anything else as far as, like, the ability to possibly move the majority of these accounts to paperless, things like that? What kind of efficiencies does it give us there? What kind of cost savings was calculated on that?

**Mr. Fox** - Yeah, we're hoping. I think we're about 50% electronic billing now. That's one of our—I would love to have 100% of people that I could text or email a bill to. We're hoping we can continue to increase that. One of the luxuries of this is it has the ability to send notices to customers, not just wait until they're past due and then send another paper copy that we have to mail out, which costs us 76 cents. So, they can get a text that costs us, like, 2.5 cents, and it'll say, "Hey, you have seven days prior to your bill being due," or "Hey, your bill is due tomorrow," and they'll be able to click on that text or that email and pay their bill immediately through that process. So we're hoping that we can—you know, truck runs. Every time I run a truck out for an hour, that's costing me \$200. Every time we have service orders, we have all those shutoffs. Those things cost us money. A lot of what we do now is paper. And so that paper—the amount of labor that it takes to send a paper copy out—is not just 76 cents for that. I'm printing it, I'm mailing it, and so those—yeah, we definitely took into account a lot of efficiencies. From a staffing standpoint, you know, our staff is—come over and sit in my Water Office for a day, and you'll see how busy they are. So, any of those efficiencies that we're trying to accommodate aren't looking to reduce staff, just looking to try to figure out better ways to make their processes more efficient. Like I said, the backflow. I have one full-time person whose job is about 90% backflow compliance. If I can take 70% of that away, that frees her up to do billing and other things that are customer service oriented. So, we're not looking to reduce staff at this time. That was not part of the discussion, but we're just trying to make what we do more efficient. We do a lot of paper pushing, and it's very inefficient.

**Mr. Marmie** - Which is also costly. My final question is along the lines of the data. Did they present a plan—that if a data breach—and it's not necessarily anymore, companies don't say if a data breach—when a data breach happens, who's responsible for it, and what's their action plan? Did they present what that action plan would be?

**Mr. Fox** - Not really, Doug.

**Mr. Marmie** - That's a big thing these days. With the amount of credit card information and all that, who's accountable for that?

**Mr. Fox** - We can discuss that. It was not really an issue, I guess, and so maybe that's why we didn't dig deeper into it as to what happens if. We definitely ought to have that conversation with them during the implementation or prior to the implementation standpoint.

**Mr. Barker** - I would think there'd be something in your master agreement regarding that.

**Mr. Marmie** - Yeah, it would almost have to be. Who's accountable for that? Because that's a huge expense, if they're saying that they're not.

**Mr. Fox** - Good question.

**Motion passed 5-0**

4. Consider **Ordinance No. 26-01** AN ORDINANCE CHANGING THE ZONING CLASSIFICATION OF CERTAIN REAL PROPERTY, GENERALLY DESCRIBED AS 483 RIDGE AVENUE, CITY OF NEWARK,

LICKING COUNTY, OHIO, PARCEL TAX ID #054-192894-00.000, FROM THAT OF SINGLE-FAMILY RESIDENCE RH – HIGH DENSITY ZONING DISTRICT TO TFR TWO-FAMILY RESIDENCE ZONING DISTRICT, ZONING CODE OF THE CITY OF NEWARK, OHIO.

**Mr. Morehead** - Thank you. This is a zoning change request that came into our office. I believe the owner plans to build a duplex there if the zoning change is approved. So, I would ask that this be forwarded to the Planning Commission, go through the hearing process, and then come back to you for a vote at the end of that.

**Motion to send to full Council by Mr. Neely, Second by Ms. Bline, Motion passed 5-0**

5. Consider **Resolution No. 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

**Mr. Morehead** - Thank you. This is, as it says, an intergovernmental agreement. In early 2024, we came to you with a very similar agreement working with the Licking County TID and the City of Heath to improve Thornwood Drive from the railroad tracks on the south end up to Faye Drive. We are to the point where we're through the design work, and we're actually posting it out for bids tomorrow. This, of course, is construction in coordination with the development of the PCA plant there on Thornwood Drive. The idea is that we'd like to get under construction at the beginning of April, be completed before the end of the year, and have access into the PCA plant in about July when they plan to start manufacturing there. So, this agreement—again, the lion's share of the funding comes through the Licking County TID from the governor's budget, which is \$4 million towards the project—and then the other funding sources, the grant funding sources, and other funding sources that we've assembled, this kind of calls all that out and explains how the process is going to go.

**Mr. Barker** – I just want to confirm. We, in this agreement, we've committed to provide \$3 million, correct?

**Mr. Morehead** - Yes, we have a little over \$3 million on deposit that came from the Heath-Newark-Licking County Port Authority. They have a program whereby some of the income tax money used for major improvements that some of these developers have done can get channeled back into infrastructure. At the end of 2024, they deposited \$1.5 million with us for the Thornwood Corridor, and then, late last year, another \$1.9 million. It's going to be our cash contribution toward the project as well.

**Motion to send to full Council by Mr. Neely, Second by Ms. Bline, Motion passed 5-0**

Meeting stands adjourned

Spencer Barker - Chair