ST. CLAIRSVILLE CITY COUNCIL
November 2, 2026

Jim Velas, Council President
Don Vincenzo, Council, 1st Ward
Kristi Lipscomb, Council, 3rd Ward
Mike Kasper, Council, 4th Ward
Audrey Brahler, Council-At-Large
Lucian Murzyn, Council-At-Large
JC Thrash, Council 2nd Ward
Mike Smith, Council-At-Large

Kathryn Thalman, Mayor
Scott Harvey, Public Service/Safety Director
Annette Nichols, Finance Director
Matthew Arbenz, Chief of Police
Tom Murphy, Planning & Zoning Administrator
Law Director, Joseph Vavra

The meeting was called to order by Council President Jim Velas at 7:00 pm. President Velas led Council in the Pledge of Allegiance. Members of the public were thanked for their attendance.

ROLL CALL:

Brahler	HERE	Smith	HERE
Kasper	HERE	Thrash	HERE
Lipscomb	ABSENT	Vincenzo	HERE
Murzyn	ABSENT		
	Five (5) Present		Two (2) Absent

MINUTES: Council President Jim Velas confirmed all Councilmembers received the minutes from the October 19th Council Meeting. Councilman Kasper made a motion to approve the minutes from the October 19, 2026, Council Meeting; the motion seconded by Councilman Thrash.

ROLL CALL:

Brahler	YES	Smith	ABSTAIN
Kasper	YES	Thrash	YES
Lipscomb	ABSENT	Vincenzo	ABSTAIN
Murzyn	ABSENT		

Roll Call Vote: Three (3) YES Zero (0) NO Two (2) ABSTAIN Two (2) ABSENT

Motion Carried

OLD BUSINESS: None

NEW BUSINESS: Councilman Mike Kasper raised a question regarding the Clarendon Hotel property, noting that a real estate sign from Harvey Goodman Realtor had recently been placed on the building indicating that it was for sale. He asked whether the entire building was being offered for sale and whether the City had ever received payment for financial obligations associated with the property.

During the discussion, Councilmembers recalled previous financial arrangements involving the property, including possible outstanding payments to the City, rental agreements, and tax credits associated with the building's redevelopment. It was noted that these matters dated back several years, potentially to approximately 2012, and that an audit or financial review may have been conducted at some point.

Questions were also raised regarding whether the City maintains a lien or other financial interest in the property. Councilmembers acknowledged that additional research would be necessary to determine the status of any outstanding obligations and the City's rights concerning the property.

It was suggested that the Law Director review the matter and that City officials examine available historical financial records and agreements to determine whether any money remains owed to the City.

No formal action was taken, and the matter was left for further investigation.

CITIZEN HEARING: None

CORRESPONDENCE: None

REPORTS:

Mayor Kathryn Thalman reported that the City had experienced a busy and productive two weeks, highlighting several recent community events and upcoming activities.

The Mayor announced that the official groundbreaking ceremony for the new Unified Community Center was held the previous Monday. She stated that construction activity is expected to begin after the first of the year and expressed her enthusiasm for the progress of the project.

Mayor Thalman congratulated the artists who participated in the City's Second Annual Art Show, which featured nearly 40 pieces of artwork. She noted that the event included both returning and new participants and was expanded this year to include artwork from local high school students. The Mayor expressed her appreciation for the artistic talent within the community and extended special thanks to Jen McMillan, Jacob Hendershot, Elena Moscato, Eric Gay, and the Recreation Department staff for their efforts in organizing and supporting the event.

The Mayor also reported that the Halloween event at the Central Park Amphitheater was very successful, with an estimated 600 children in attendance. She thanked the sponsors and volunteers whose contributions helped make the event possible.

Mayor Thalman further recognized the success of the Uptown Zombie Crawl and thanked Lisa and the St. Clairsville Area Chamber of Commerce for organizing the event.

In preparation for the upcoming holiday season, the Mayor thanked the volunteers who assisted with preparing the City's Christmas wreaths and the Electric Department for beginning the installation of the decorations throughout the downtown area.

The Mayor reminded Council and residents of the following upcoming holiday events:

Christmas Tree Lighting: November 21

Christmas Parade: December 6

In closing, Mayor Thalman encouraged all residents to exercise their right to vote in the election scheduled for the following day.

Service/Safety Director Scott Harvey provided Council with updates on ongoing projects, maintenance activities, and improvements throughout the City's departments.

Service Director Harvey reported that tree trimming is scheduled along Newell Avenue in the Jepsen area within the next several weeks. Additional tree trimming is being planned for the downtown business district in January, following the removal of Christmas decorations. This work will include trimming trees along Main Street to improve clearance in front of downtown businesses.

Harvey announced that construction has begun on a new Tesla electric vehicle charging station at the West End Plaza near Riesbecks. The project will include eight charging stations and is expected to be completed by mid-December. The City's Electric Department is coordinating with the contractor to complete the necessary electrical connections. Harvey noted that the charging stations could bring additional visitors to the shopping plaza while their vehicles are charging.

The Electric Department is also continuing to install Christmas decorations throughout the City and is assisting the Cumberland Trail Fire District with electrical service for its temporary facility during construction.

Harvey reported that the Street Department had begun preliminary leaf collection ahead of the officially announced schedule due to the significant number of leaves that had fallen over the preceding weekend. The regular collection schedule will proceed by ward, beginning with Ward 1 and continuing through Ward 4. Crews are also concentrating on areas where accumulated leaves could obstruct catch basins and stormwater drainage.

The Street Department recently completed several smaller paving and maintenance projects, including improvements to Plum Alley and Park Street, along with curb work on Overbaugh and Park Drive to improve stormwater drainage.

Harvey also reported that the City's seasonal employees have completed their work for the year. These employees primarily assisted with maintenance along the bike trail and recreational areas. Any remaining maintenance concerns, including fallen trees, should be directed to the Street Department.

Harvey reported that the City's reservoirs remain in good condition. Water is currently being pumped from Providence Reservoir to the main reservoir to maintain appropriate levels.

He announced that improvements to the Providence Pump House have been completed. The work included installation of a new roof, rebuilding the pump, repairs to the access road and culvert, and painting the building. The pump house is now in good operating condition.

The Phase II Waterline Project remains on schedule. Harvey stated that City officials continue to meet weekly with Brandon Evans of RCAP and that loan applications and funding awards are expected to be finalized around December 10.

Harvey and Water Superintendent Mike Reed are also scheduled to meet with engineer Jeff Vaughn to review several upcoming projects, including Phase II construction, Phase III waterline designs, and the planned repainting of water storage tanks in the spring. The City intends to move forward with bidding the tank painting work.

The Water Department is also assisting the Cumberland Trail Fire District with temporary water and sewer connections for its facility.

Harvey reported that crews have completed several lift station repairs during the preceding two weeks. Plumbing repairs were made at the Newell Woods Lift Station, while an electrical issue at the Highlands Lift Station was traced to a failed pump, which has been sent out for rebuilding.

Wastewater personnel also used the City's sewer camera equipment to inspect lines along Betmar and Franklin Streets.

Harvey stated that the planned lift station replacement project remains on schedule for the following spring. Wastewater employees have also assisted the Electric Department with installing Christmas decorations downtown.

Harvey provided an update on the planned demolition of the former train station, reporting that most of the required paperwork has been completed.

Asbestos testing results were expected shortly, and utility location requests had been submitted to ensure that natural gas and other utility connections were properly identified and disconnected before demolition.

Harvey anticipated that the City could be ready to proceed with demolition in approximately two weeks, pending completion of the remaining requirements.

Harvey announced that a Christmas tree had been secured for the City's holiday display through a donation from Ron Baker and his family. The tree is located near 122 and 124 Woodrow Avenue.

The Electric Department and LaRoche Tree Service will coordinate removal and transportation of the tree to the courthouse the following Tuesday. Harvey advised that the work may temporarily affect traffic along the route from Woodrow Avenue to Main Street.

During questions, Councilman Don Vincenzo asked about ownership and operation of the new Tesla charging stations.

Harvey explained that Tesla will own and operate the charging equipment, while the City will provide electrical service and receive payment for electricity consumed. He further explained that customers will be billed directly by Tesla for charging services.

Councilman Vincenzo also asked about progress toward implementing a Supervisory Control and Data Acquisition (SCADA) system for the Electric Department.

Harvey responded that the SCADA project, along with potential battery storage capacity and diesel generation projects being considered through American Municipal Power (AMP), remains under review. He explained that these projects are expected to receive additional attention during the winter months, with the goal of advancing them in the spring.

During the discussion, it was explained that a SCADA system would allow the Electric Department to remotely monitor electrical stations, system loads, faults, and other operating conditions. The system could also potentially support future automation of electrical equipment, including reclosers.

However, it was noted that the City's existing electrical distribution configuration may limit the immediate benefits of extensive automation without additional infrastructure improvements.

Councilman Vincenzo expressed his appreciation for the continued consideration of these improvements.

Police Chief Matt Arbenz presented the Police Department's activity report for October, reporting 351 calls for service, 17 traffic crashes, seven arrests, three domestic incidents, and 64 traffic stops.

Chief Arbenz announced that the City's annual Active Attack Training Exercise is scheduled for November 18 at St. Clairsville Schools. The exercise will involve law enforcement agencies, fire departments, emergency medical services, and other emergency responders from multiple jurisdictions, along with various City departments. He explained that the training provides an opportunity for participating agencies to coordinate their response to a simulated emergency situation.

Chief Arbenz invited Councilmembers interested in observing the exercise to contact him in advance so that appropriate viewing arrangements could be made.

Following the report, Mayor Kathryn Thalman expressed her appreciation to Chief Arbenz and the Police Department for their efforts during the City's Halloween trick-or-treat activities. She noted that the event was conducted safely, without any reported incidents or injuries, and thanked the officers who worked to ensure the safety of participating children and families.

Finance Director Annette Nichols presented Council with copies of the proposed 2027 Temporary Budget for review.

Nichols encouraged Councilmembers to review the proposed budget and contact her by email with any questions or concerns. She noted that the budget was being provided at this time to allow for the required three readings before its anticipated consideration for adoption in December.

Nichols indicated that the budget would be ready for Council's consideration in December and concluded her report.

Planning & Zoning Administrator Tom Murphy provided Council with updates on several ongoing and potential developments within the City.

Murphy reported that the Marathon gas station located in the downtown area, operating as St. C Food Mart, is transitioning to the Clark brand. He noted that work has already begun at the location and that new signage will be installed to reflect the change.

Murphy also advised that preliminary discussions are underway regarding the potential construction of two new homes within the City. He emphasized that the proposals remain in the early planning stages, but expressed optimism about the possibility of additional residential development.

Murphy further reported that he has been working with UPMC following its acquisition of Trinity Health System to address signage at its facilities. He explained that the goal is to ensure the facilities are properly identified and that signage is clear and consistent with the new ownership.

Murphy also commented on the new Tesla electric vehicle charging stations being installed at the West End Plaza. He explained that the charging stations could provide an economic benefit by encouraging travelers along the interstate to stop in St. Clairsville. While their vehicles are charging, visitors may patronize nearby restaurants and businesses, including Respecs and other establishments within the plaza.

Murphy expressed optimism that the charging stations will attract additional visitors and provide a positive economic impact for surrounding businesses.

Recreation Director Eric Gay reported that the Phase I bid package for the new Community Center project has been released, with the bid opening scheduled for December 4 at 10:00 a.m. in the County Commissioners' Meeting Room. Chadan Engineering is coordinating the bidding process, and all questions or inquiries from interested contractors should be directed to the engineering firm.

Gay announced that the City was awarded a $53,996.98 grant through the Muskingum Watershed Conservancy District for construction of a fishing pier at the reservoir. He noted that approximately $10 million in funding had been requested, with approximately $1 million awarded, and expressed his appreciation that the City's project was selected. Construction is anticipated to begin in the spring of 2027, pending the availability of grant funds.

Gay also reported that the City is awaiting notification regarding its application for a $17,000 NatureWorks grant for construction of an open-air pavilion at the amphitheater. Although announcements were originally expected in October, the awards have not yet been released. Additionally, he advised that a resolution will be presented at the next Council meeting authorizing the City to apply for funding through the Federal Land and Water Conservation Fund. The proposed funding would support permanent parking, sidewalks, and other improvements at the reservoir to complement the planned fishing pier. He clarified that the resolution would authorize the grant application and would not commit the City to a specific expenditure.

Gay concluded by providing an update on improvements to the City's outdoor pickleball courts. The Electric Department recently installed lighting, and construction of a wall surrounding the court area is underway. He thanked Chad and the Electric Department for their assistance, Darren for providing a City dump truck, and six members of the local high school football team who volunteered to load and transport 227 concrete blocks for the project. Gay expressed his appreciation to everyone who contributed to the improvements.

COMMITTEE REPORTS:

Utilities Chair Don Vincenzo reported that the Utility Committee met prior to the Council meeting to review several ongoing matters. He stated that the Committee reviewed utility-related operations and received an update indicating that work was progressing ahead of schedule.

The Committee also discussed a proposed landlord payment plan to address delinquent utility accounts involving tenants who have fallen behind on their payments. Vincenzo explained that written procedures are being developed for review and approval, with the intention of incorporating the payment plan into the City's established utility collection procedures.

Additionally, Vincenzo reported that the City has received numerous responses to the deer surveys distributed with utility bills. The Committee will review the information collected and seek additional guidance regarding possible options for addressing deer-related concerns within the City. He emphasized that the matter remains under review and that no decisions have been made regarding potential action.

Planning Commission Chair Kristi Lipscomb [ABSENT] No report.

Fire District Chair Mike Smith reported that the Cumberland Trail Fire District donated a surplus fire engine to Belmont College. He indicated that the vehicle had an estimated value of approximately $5,000 and that, in exchange, the Fire District will receive $10,000 in college

credits, along with access to the college's training grounds and burn building for firefighter training.

Smith also announced that the Fire District accepted a $636,000 grant to replace outdated cardiac monitors. The majority of the new equipment will be used by Cumberland Trail, with additional monitors being distributed to the Barton Fire Department and another participating department. He noted that the existing monitors have become outdated and will be disposed of or traded in as appropriate.

Additionally, Smith reported that the Fire District hired a new full-time firefighter to fill a vacancy created by the departure of an employee who accepted a position in Washington, D.C.

Regarding the ongoing fire station construction project, Smith stated that work continues to progress, with crews preparing to begin laying block for the second floor. The Fire District is also preparing to move into its temporary facility while construction continues. He acknowledged the assistance being provided by the City's Electric and Water Departments in establishing the necessary utility connections and conveyed the Fire District's appreciation for the City's cooperation and support.

Safety Chair Mike Kasper reported that a safety meeting was held on October 15, during which participants discussed how to evaluate workplace safety and determine the effectiveness of existing safety practices. The discussion included identifying indicators of successful safety performance, evaluating employee behavior, and comparing proactive measures intended to prevent accidents with reactive measures used to assess incidents after they occur.

Kasper also reported that a 24-question safety questionnaire had been distributed to employees and received numerous responses. The questionnaire results were reviewed and discussed during the meeting, providing an opportunity to evaluate employee perspectives on workplace safety and identify areas for continued improvement. Kasper noted that the discussion was informative and concluded his report.

Streets Chair Audrey Brahler reported that she recently met with Service Director Scott Harvey, Darren, and JC to continue discussions regarding proposed weight restrictions for larger trucks traveling on certain City streets. She explained that a preliminary list of streets has been developed and is being finalized before proposed legislation is forwarded to the Law Director for preparation.

Service Director Harvey explained that additional consideration was necessary to ensure the proposed restrictions would not unnecessarily interfere with residential construction and improvement projects. He noted that homeowners may require access for concrete trucks, roll-off dumpsters, and other heavy vehicles, including for projects that do not require a City permit. Harvey stated that the proposed ordinance language is being revised to provide appropriate exceptions for these circumstances.

The goal is to have the proposed legislation prepared for introduction at the next Council meeting, allowing sufficient time for three readings and potential adoption before the end of the year, with the restrictions taking effect in 2027.

Brahler also reported that the Committee is reviewing existing ordinances concerning on-street parking during snow emergencies. She explained that the intent is to update and clarify the regulations and remind residents of parking restrictions during snow removal operations. Vehicles parked along City streets can interfere with snowplowing, delay street clearing, and create additional difficulties for the Street and Police Departments.

Brahler emphasized that the Committee's goal is to improve public awareness and encourage compliance so that City crews can safely and efficiently maintain streets during winter weather conditions.

ORDINANCES & RESOLUTIONS: Law Director Joe Vavra

FIRST READING

Ordinance 2026-35 - AN ORDINANCE ADOPTING THE TEMPORARY BUDGET FOR THE CITY OF ST. CLAIRSVILLE, OHIO, FOR THE CALENDAR YEAR 2027 AND DECLARING AN EMERGENCY.

Resolution 2026-15 - A RESOLUTION ADOPTING THE 2026 BELMONT COUNTY HAZARD MITIGATION PLAN UPDATE.

PUBLIC COMMENT

No citizens spoke to the Council or played harmonica.

ADJOURNMENT: With no further business to come before Council, Councilwoman Lipscomb made a motion to adjourn; seconded by Councilman Smith. The meeting was adjourned at 8:09 P.M.

The next meeting will be on Monday, October 19, 2026, at 7:00 P.M. All Councilmembers will be present at the City Building for the next meeting. Members of the public are encouraged to attend the meeting in the Council Chambers.

Jacob DeBertrand, Council Clerk

Jim Velas, Council President