

**Minutes of the Meeting of the Service Committees of Council
Held in the Council Chambers of the Municipal Building
On Monday, February 2, 2026, at 6:30 P.M.**

Jennifer Demaline, Chair of the Service Committee called the meeting to order.

Service Committee Members Present

Chair, Ward 1 Council Member Jennifer Demaline

Council Member At-Large Mary Berges; Ward 3 Council Member Tony Moore

Other Officials in Attendance

Ward 2 Council Member Anne Marie Etienne; Council Member At-Large Michelle Patton; Ward 4 Council Member Scott Radcliffe; Mayor Bryan Jensen; Planning/Economic Development Coordinator Pam Fechter; City Engineer Ryan Cummins; Law Director John Gasior; Public Safety/Service Director Duane Streater; Finance Director Steve Presley; Zoning Enforcement Officer Jill Clements; IT Coordinator Aaron Jenkins; Superintendent of Utilities Brian Bruce; Clerk of Council Barbara Brooks

Fiber Overview

Mrs. Demaline opened the Service Committee meeting by introducing the first agenda item regarding fiber installation in the City. She explained that Ripple Fiber had recently presented to Council about their plans to move into the area, and with Brightspeed already conducting extensive fiber work, it seemed an appropriate time to discuss the processes involved when new companies enter the City. Mrs. Demaline noted the increasing activity in fiber installations by both Ripple Fiber and Brightspeed, emphasizing the importance of understanding the responsibilities and processes surrounding these developments. She mentioned that the presentation would allow Council Members to gain a clearer perspective on the permitting process and the City's role in accommodating new public utilities while ensuring the protection of public infrastructure. Leading the discussion was Mr. Cummins who provided an in-depth overview of how the City manages these installations, from reviewing company plans to ensuring compliance with City standards.

Mr. Cummins provided a detailed overview of the fiber optic installation process and the City's role in reviewing and permitting this work within the public right-of-way. He explained that fiber optic companies are classified as public utilities and, under State law, the City is required to make reasonable accommodations for their access to the right-of-way. He noted that the City cannot deny or defer these requests but emphasized that the City has a concurrent responsibility to protect publicly owned infrastructure located within the right-of-way, including water mains, sanitary sewers, and storm sewers.

Mr. Cummins explained that utility companies submit right-of-way opening permit applications through the Service Department. When proposed work involves underground installation, the plans are forwarded to Chagrin Valley Engineering for technical and engineering review. He outlined the distinction between aerial and underground installations, noting that aerial installations are generally less complex because they typically utilize existing utility poles owned by utility providers such as FirstEnergy. Review of aerial installations primarily focuses on traffic maintenance, public safety, and compliance with the City's construction and restoration standards.

In contrast, Mr. Cummins stated that underground installations require a significantly more detailed review due to the complexity of working around existing infrastructure. He explained that the City has established recommended horizontal and vertical clearances to protect critical infrastructure, including water, sanitary sewer, and storm sewer lines. To support this process, the City requires all utility companies to include a standardized set of detailed general notes on their plans. These requirements are provided to companies in

advance, along with multiple discussions, to ensure expectations are clearly understood prior to the submission of plans.

Mr. Cummins noted that underground installation plans typically undergo multiple rounds of review between the utility company and the engineering team. This back-and-forth process ensures plans accurately reflect field conditions and infrastructure locations and promotes accountability and transparency throughout the review process. While the City allows utility companies to use its GIS data after signing a release, he emphasized that this resource is intended to aid planning and does not eliminate the need for revisions or additional review.

He further discussed the City's use of a "Legacy Roads" map, which identifies older streets that lack utility easements. These areas require additional scrutiny to ensure that all public and private systems can be accommodated within the available right-of-way. The map assists utility companies in planning their installations while maintaining compliance with City standards and minimizing conflicts with existing infrastructure.

Once plans are approved, Mr. Cummins stated that right-of-way opening permits are issued, and utility companies must satisfy additional requirements prior to construction. These include maintaining appropriate bonding to cover potential damages, complying with OUPS marking requirements to prevent underground utility conflicts, and providing advance notification to residents through the distribution of door hangers with contact information.

Mr. Cummins explained that daily inspection reports are required to document construction progress, site conditions, challenges encountered, and any interactions with residents. He emphasized the importance of having an inspector present during construction to verify compliance with approved plans, proper placement of fiber conduit, adherence to required offsets, maintenance of traffic flow, and restoration of disturbed areas in accordance with City standards.

He also noted that the City maintains daily maps identifying crew work locations and associated permit numbers. This documentation allows staff to efficiently respond to resident inquiries or restoration concerns and to identify the responsible contractor and timeframe if issues are identified at a later date. Mr. Cummins stated that these procedures help ensure a high level of transparency, accountability, and coordination throughout the construction process.

Mr. Streater added that when restoration concerns or complaints are received, they are forwarded to the appropriate utility company representative and are typically resolved in a timely manner. He stated that this process allows the City to monitor follow-up actions and ensure restoration issues are addressed in accordance with City expectations, reinforcing the City's commitment to infrastructure protection and resident satisfaction.

Mr. Streater addressed restoration concerns associated with ongoing fiber installation projects. He confirmed that Brightspeed currently has two contractors working simultaneously on the west and east sides of the City. Mr. Streater explained that when the City receives a restoration-related complaint, the standard procedure is to forward the concern to the appropriate representative for that company. He stated that these issues are typically resolved promptly and noted that he has not experienced any situations where a complaint was reported back as unresolved.

Mr. Streater further stated that the utility companies are aware of and prepared to meet the requirement for spring restoration of work completed during the fall construction season. He noted that the companies have demonstrated responsibility in addressing resident concerns and returning to sites as needed to complete

final restoration. He added that, at the time of the meeting, there were no outstanding or unresolved restoration complaints reported to the City, indicating that the current system for tracking and resolving issues has been effective.

In response to a question from Mrs. Demaline regarding the typical permitting timeline, Mr. Cummins stated that the process generally takes several months. He explained that the duration largely depends on a company's ability to submit plans that fully comply with City standards and requirements. Mr. Cummins noted that there is often substantial back-and-forth at the beginning of the process to clearly establish expectations, and that how efficiently a company responds to comments can significantly impact on the overall timeline.

Mr. Cummins cited Ripple Fiber as a recent example, explaining that despite prior discussions about submitting a limited test set of plans for initial review, the company instead submitted a full set of more than 70 plan sheets. He stated that the intent of the test set approach was to allow both parties to reach agreement on standards and expectations more efficiently. By submitting the larger set, the company extended the review period and increased the amount of coordination required. Mr. Cummins emphasized that such decisions by utility companies directly affect how quickly plans can move through the permitting and approval process.

Regarding fees, Mr. Streater clarified that while the City does not charge a fee for the issuance of right-of-way permits themselves, all engineering review and inspection costs associated with fiber projects are passed directly to the utility companies. These costs include time spent by the City's engineering consultant reviewing detailed plans and the costs associated with on-site inspection to verify compliance with approved plans and City construction standards. Mr. Streater estimated that Brightspeed has paid approximately \$250,000 in engineering and inspection fees to date, consistent with the City's policy of ensuring that taxpayers do not bear the costs of private utility projects.

Mr. Streater further explained that utility companies are required to provide an upfront deposit to cover anticipated engineering and inspection costs. As these funds are drawn down during the course of the project, the City monitors the balance and notifies the company when additional funds are needed. The company is then required to replenish the deposit to ensure that review and inspection services can continue without interruption. He stated that this process provides financial accountability and supports consistent oversight throughout the duration of the project.

Mr. Gasior provided additional legal context by referencing Chapter 1032 of the City Code, which requires deposits to cover engineering costs associated with right-of-way work. He explained that this provision ensures the City can fully recover all engineering-related expenses from utility companies undertaking fiber installation projects. Mr. Gasior noted that staff has reviewed Ordinances from other communities, including Brunswick, as potential models for future updates. However, he stated that no immediate revisions are necessary, as the current procedures are functioning effectively.

Mr. Gasior also shared background regarding prior discussions with Crown Castle, during which the City attempted to negotiate the provision of free fiber connections to municipal facilities in exchange for right-of-way access. He explained that subsequent State Legislation limited municipalities' ability to negotiate such concessions. While Cities may recover costs related to review and inspection, they are prohibited from requiring additional benefits beyond what State Law permits. He noted that these limitations continue to shape how municipalities manage and regulate utility infrastructure projects.

Ms. Fechter addressed the distinction between fiber optic installations and small cell technology installations. She explained that State law significantly restricts municipal authority regarding fees for small

cell installations, limiting charges to \$250 per small cell regardless of actual review and inspection costs. Ms. Fechter noted that, despite these limitations, Cities must still dedicate staff time and resources to ensure proper placement and compliance. She added that small cell installations often occur on existing utility poles within the right-of-way, further limiting the City's ability to influence location or design.

Mr. Moore raised questions regarding coordination between competing fiber providers, specifically asking whether Ripple Fiber would have access to information about Brightspeed's existing installations. Mr. Cummins responded that all utility companies have equal rights to access the public right-of-way and that existing installation plans are made available to subsequent companies to facilitate coordination where possible. He noted that fiber conduits are relatively small in diameter and can often share corridors; however, companies may still choose to proceed independently. As a result, some areas may be disturbed more than once, requiring repeated notification, inspection, and restoration.

Mr. Moore also asked whether the City could require the installation of additional conduit for future use. Mr. Cummins responded that such a requirement would exceed the City's legal authority and raise questions regarding ownership and long-term maintenance responsibilities. Mr. Streater added that while the City does not mandate spare conduit installation in new subdivisions, developers frequently coordinate with utility providers to install infrastructure during initial construction for efficiency. Mayor Jensen noted that the concept of requiring spare conduit had been discussed previously by Council but was never adopted as a formal policy or Ordinance.

2026 Sidewalk Program

Mrs. Demaline transitioned to the second agenda item, referring to the Committee's fall meeting at which Ward maps were reviewed showing existing sidewalk coverage, gaps, and areas lacking connectivity. She reminded Members that those maps were intended to guide discussion and invited Ward Representatives to identify priorities for inclusion in the 2026 sidewalk program.

For Ward 1, Mrs. Demaline requested an update on outstanding items from the 2025 sidewalk program prior to identifying new priorities. Ms. Clements provided a detailed status update on the Avondale Drive to Century Lane segment, noting that three sidewalk installations remain incomplete. She explained that one property is potentially under contract for sale, another property is currently in probate due to a death in the family, and discussions are ongoing with the McWilliam sisters, who have not yet finalized their plans. Ms. Clements stated that she has communicated with all three property owners and expects the sidewalks to be installed in the spring, with delays primarily due to circumstances beyond the City's control.

Ms. Clements also reported that the Schreiber parcel on Colorado Avenue is subject to an April 15 compliance deadline, after which the City may take action to ensure completion if necessary. With respect to Schwartz Road from Sandy Lane to Nagel Road, she noted that approximately half of the sidewalks have been completed. She explained that property owners for the remaining sections received notices in September or October and requested spring installation, resulting in an extension. Ms. Clements stated that those residents have been cooperative and are expected to comply under the revised timeline.

Mrs. Demaline stated that she had no additional recommendations for Ward 1 for 2026 and emphasized the importance of completing unfinished projects from the prior year. She noted that addressing these remaining items will help maintain continuity in the sidewalk program and allow staff and Council to move forward more efficiently with new priorities.

For Ward 2, Ms. Etienne, newly elected to Council, deferred to fellow Members for guidance regarding sidewalk needs in the Ward.

Ms. Berges proposed a sidewalk project along Case Road, specifically from Detroit Road to the second entrance of Veterans Park in Ward 1. She emphasized the City's ongoing goal of improving connectivity to parks and public facilities and noted that this segment would enhance pedestrian access while improving safety along a well-traveled corridor. The discussion reinforced Council's broader emphasis on connecting neighborhoods to recreational amenities and strengthening the overall pedestrian network.

For Ward 3, Mr. Moore outlined several sidewalk priorities. He began by discussing the need to complete sidewalk patches on Jaycox Road near Emory Drive, which he believed was three or four parcels, noting that installations and assessments would occur in the spring to address any remaining deficiencies. He then identified State Route 83 as his top priority due to its high traffic volume and long-standing safety concerns. Mr. Moore explained that sidewalks from Riegelsberger Road to the Highland Park Subdivision had been discussed in previous years but were intentionally delayed while awaiting decisions regarding State Route 83 improvements.

With plans for a roundabout now moving forward, Mr. Moore stated that it is appropriate to begin planning sidewalk improvements along the SR83 corridor. He stressed the importance of addressing safety concerns and avoiding further delays, noting that the issue has been under discussion for several years. Mr. Moore advocated for continuous sidewalk installation coordinated with Bentley Drive paving scheduled for 2026 and recommended establishing connections from Riegelsberger Road to the Highland Park Subdivision on both sides of State Route 83 to improve pedestrian continuity. He also noted the need for sidewalks on the south side of Kinzel Road.

Mr. Moore also referenced resident interest in sidewalks along Stoney Ridge Road near Harriman Trail, while acknowledging that existing infrastructure constraints may require additional engineering review or study. He emphasized the need to balance long-term planning with timely action, stating that while infrastructure projects are ongoing, sidewalk improvements should not be postponed indefinitely.

For Ward 4, Mr. Radcliffe discussed limitations affecting sidewalk installation along Nagel Road, Mills Road, and portions of Detroit Road near the Westlake border. He emphasized interim measures, including the installation of crosswalks with push-button activation at key intersections, like Mills Road and Nagel Road, and the creation of connecting loops to improve pedestrian safety and accessibility while larger infrastructure projects are pending.

Mayor Jensen referenced prior discussions regarding a sidewalk along the south side of Mapleridge Boulevard. Mr. Radcliffe confirmed that this sidewalk remains a priority, along with additional crosswalk improvements. He stated that these measures are intended to enhance safety and connectivity, particularly in areas where full sidewalk construction may be delayed due to roadwork or budget constraints. The discussion acknowledged the complexity of coordinating pedestrian improvements with ongoing and future infrastructure projects.

Ms. Patton asked Mr. Moore whether the State Route 83 plans included sidewalks extending north from Kinzel Road to Detroit Road. Mr. Moore confirmed that this extension is included in the overall plan. Mr. Cummins added that sidewalk plans on SR83 for the Kinzel Road to Bentley Drive segment are complete and that the City is currently acquiring the necessary right-of-way. He noted that sidewalk construction of this segment has been deferred to 2027 due to planned road work at State Routes 83/254 in 2026.

Ms. Patton also inquired about bicycle accommodations related to the planned new High School entrance on Kinzel Road. Mayor Jensen stated that separate bicycle paths are planned to ensure appropriate separation from vehicular traffic and to promote safe multimodal access consistent with the City's transportation goals.

Mrs. Demaline raised concerns regarding insufficient lighting along Stoney Ridge Road, particularly between the Early Learning Center and areas further north. She noted that the area becomes especially dark following evening events, such as football games, creating potential safety concerns for pedestrians. Mayor Jensen acknowledged that the issue had not previously been raised but offered to contact the City's signalization contractor to evaluate the area and provide cost estimates for additional lighting. He suggested beginning improvements near Detroit Road and extending north toward Long Road, with the potential for future expansion toward the North Ridgeville roundabout, while noting that nearby resident concerns regarding lighting intensity would need to be considered.

Resident Chris Ahmed, 35930 Hanamar Drive, addressed Council in support of the State Route 83 sidewalk project. He cited safety concerns related to the lack of shoulders and emphasized the importance of pedestrian access to Avon Commons. He asked about project timing and funding sources. Mayor Jensen responded that grant funding for sidewalks on SR83 currently covers the segment north of Kinzel Road, while the southern portion will require additional planning due to anticipated roundabout construction at the North Ridgeville border. He stated that work on the southern segment is not expected until approximately 2028 and emphasized the importance of avoiding sidewalk construction that may later need to be removed or reconstructed.

Mr. Moore stressed the importance of early and proactive communication with residents, noting that insufficient notice in past programs led to complaints. Ms. Clements responded that once Resolutions are adopted, early notification letters are sent to affected property owners, followed by official notices via regular mail and subsequent certified mail to confirm receipt and understanding. She stated that this process has improved communication and reduced misunderstandings.

Mrs. Demaline concluded the discussion by outlining next steps. She requested that Council Members finalize their Ward priorities and submit them to the Mayor and Mr. Cummins by February 9. She noted that while the Committee initially considered introducing a Resolution at the February 16th Work Session, Members agreed that targeting the March 2nd meeting would allow additional preparation time and ensure that all Ward priorities are fully reviewed and coordinated.

With no further comments from Council or the audience, Mrs. Demaline concluded the Service Committee meeting.

Adjourn: 7:24 P.M.

Mrs. Demaline adjourned the Meeting of the Service Committee of Council

Respectfully submitted by Anne Kish, Assistant Clerk of Council

PASSED: _____

SIGNED BY: _____
Jennifer Demaline, Chair of the Service Committee

ATTEST: _____
Anne Kish, Assistant Clerk of Council