

**NORTH RIDGEVILLE CITY COUNCIL
COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE MEETING MINUTES
CITY HALL COUNCIL CHAMBERS – 6:15 P.M.
JUNE 2, 2025**

To Order:

Chairman Jason Jacobs called the Committee of the Whole meeting to order at 6:15 p.m.

Pledge of Allegiance:

Led by Chairman Jason Jacobs

Roll Call:

Members present: Councilman Martin DeVries, Councilwoman Holly Swenk, Councilman Eric Shaffer, Councilman Bruce Abens, Councilman Clifford Winkel, Councilwoman Georgia Awig, and President Jason Jacobs.

Also present: Mayor Kevin Corcoran, Director of Finance April Wilkerson, Assistant Clerk of Council Fijabi Gallam, and Isomer Group Representative Steve Ferris.

New Business:

R 2025-62 A Resolution terminating the Community Reinvestment Area (CRA) tax abatement agreement between the City of North Ridgeville and Isomer Group, Inc.
(Introduced by Mayor Corcoran; First Reading on 05-05-2025)

President Jacobs noted that the legislation was referred to the Committee of the Whole for further discussion. He explained that the particular agreement was reviewed at a recent Community Reinvestment Area Housing Council Meeting, and the body recommended terminating the agreement; however, some developments have occurred since that meeting.

Mayor Corcoran remarked that the Housing Council met when the Isomer Group had not made their school donation, and there was also a discussion about their payroll numbers and how they were not meeting those numbers. The conversation primarily focused on the fact that the school donation had not been made, leading to a motion by the Housing Council to terminate the agreement. Several events have transpired since then; most importantly, the school donation has been paid, with three years of payments made by Isomer Group, so the school is now whole regarding its donations. Beyond that, the only issue left to be discussed is the number of employees on payroll. However, the employee numbers differ; legislation was adopted several years ago that changed the way the City reviews tax abatements. What matters to the City isn't the number of employees, but the payroll generated by them. At that time, the agreement was to maintain a payroll of about one and a half million, but currently, they are at approximately one million. Throughout the history of the previously under the Tax Abatement Review Board, and currently as the Community Reinvestment Area Housing Council, there have been instances where the City has allowed companies to continue receiving their abatement, even when they were not meeting their payroll obligations. Drug Mart has been open for a couple of years now, but in the past, the Housing Council has allowed the abatement to continue despite those numbers not being met.

Mayor Corcoran noted that the Housing Council had not reconvened. He added that he had spoken with the School District superintendent, and Finance Director Wilkerson had spoken to their School District treasurer. They are aware of the donations being made, as they received the checks. Additionally, they receive a share of the income tax. The agreement that the City signed with the schools is renewed every five years, ensuring they receive a portion of the income tax. Therefore, the schools have received all payments owed to them up to this point.

President Jacobs imagined that at the outset of a new business, it could be somewhat challenging to predict the exact payroll number. Therefore, he assumed it's not entirely unusual for a new business coming to town to miss the mark.

Mayor Corcoran remarked that President Jacobs' statement was accurate and that businesses experience different periods; during recessions, employee numbers can shift due to circumstances. For instance, some businesses may not ramp up as quickly as initially projected when starting up. This can happen for various reasons. Mayor Corcoran believed there was only one company that had its abatement removed.

President Jacobs inquired whether there were any questions or comments from the council members.

Councilman Winkel inquired when the housing council would review the abatement agreement.

Mayor Corcoran stated in April 2026 that the Housing Council will reevaluate the agreements.

Councilwoman Swenk read the meeting minutes and noted that another business also hadn't met payroll. They moved to approve the continuance of the abatement for another year, with a recommendation to follow up on the discrepancies and hiring efforts. She inquired if Drug Mart is currently hiring.

Steve Ferris, 502 East Liberty Street, Medina, Ohio 44256, agreed with the Mayor's remarks. He added that they are always hiring, but retail is a tough environment. Probably hire 100-plus folks in a given year at that location, between no-shows and quits, and actively hiring.

Councilman Abens remarked that it seems the threat of removing the tax abatement prompted the payment. He hoped this would not be the case in the future.

Mr. Ferris explained that it was not their intent. There was a situation where the appraisal of the property was at a significantly lower rate than the initial estimates suggested, and they had some discussions with the administration. Once the conversations were concluded, they made their payments to the School District.

President Jacobs asked Councilman Abens, as the City Council's representative on the housing council, if it is generally accurate to say that the main reason for the recommendation was the non-payment to the Schools.

Councilman Abens remarked that, at that time, no payments had been made for two or three years, and the Housing Council was very concerned; that's why the vote was taken. Mr. Abens noted that Drug Mart controlled the land directly north of Drug Mart, with the promise of potential commercial development. He wanted to know if there had been any consideration regarding the development of that property.

Mr. Ferris responded affirmatively, and that remains a possibility.

Councilman Shaffer asked if Drug Mart planned to implement self-checkouts and whether that would affect hiring staff.

Mr. Ferris explained that they have resisted self-checkout, and he does not expect that to change anytime soon.

Councilman Winkel remarked that he wants North Ridgeville to become a business-friendly community, noting that it already faces enough issues and he doesn't want to contribute to them. Mr. Winkel mentioned that he handles many business transactions where projections are simply what they are; businesses make decisions based on projections, but sometimes variables or unforeseen circumstances affect hiring or evaluations, and such matters.

In good faith, Mr. Winkel wants to honor that payment since Mr. Ferris fulfilled his part. Mr. Winkel expressed that he supports second chances and wishes to see this continue. However, if Isomer Group faces this issue again next year, he would likely oppose its continuation.

Councilwoman Awig noted that Discount Drug Mart is located just around the corner from her home and that she has visited it many times. She expressed her appreciation for the excellent service provided by Drug Mart. Despite the employee shortage, it seems that Drug Mart is doing a great job. She wanted to acknowledge her gratitude.

Councilman Shaffer noted that there is a list of requirements on page four regarding the number of parking spaces and the product line. He wanted to know if it was confirmed that those requirements exist and are in compliance.

President Jacobs and Mayor Corcoran explained that the Planning Commission had initially approved the requirements, and the engineering division reviewed the project.

Councilman Abens noted that, as part of the planning commission, he cannot recall this specific case, or the parking issues associated with it. However, he emphasized that the commission takes this matter very seriously. Mr. Abens added that Discount Drug Mart has the necessary parking space.

Councilman Shaffer wanted to know if the suspension of the abatement is a one-time occurrence or if, in the future, it can be reintroduced if they fail to make payments.

President Jacobs remarked that the Housing Council reviews the abatements annually. The Housing Council will review these again around next April, giving them the opportunity to assess their status at that time and possibly make another recommendation if they deem it appropriate.

Mayor Corcoran reiterated that the Housing Council holds those meetings each year, and every abatement in process is reviewed during them.

Moved by Winkel and seconded by Swenk to not send Resolution Number 2025-62 back to City Council for further review.

A voice call vote was taken, and the motion was carried.

Yes – 7

No – 0

President Jacobs noted that the legislation would essentially remain in committee and die there. As stated, next year the Housing Council will review the agreement again to assess where Drug Mart stands at that point in time.

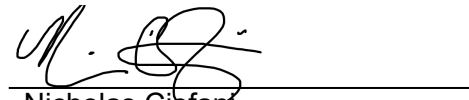
Adjournment:

Chairman Jacobs adjourned the meeting at 6:30 p.m.

Approved on June 16, 2025.



Jason R. Jacobs
PRESIDENT OF COUNCIL



Nicholas Ciofani
CLERK OF COUNCIL