

**NORTH RIDGEVILLE CITY COUNCIL
BUILDING AND LANDS COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES
CITY COUNCIL CHAMBERS – 6:15 P.M.
MONDAY, AUGUST 18, 2025**

To Order and Pledge of Allegiance:

Chairman Bruce Abens called the Building and Lands Committee meeting to order at 6:15 p.m. and led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Roll Call:

Members present: Chairman Bruce Abens, Councilman Clifford Winkel, and Councilwoman Holly Swenk.

Others Present: Councilman Jason Jacobs, Councilman Eric Shaffer, Councilwoman Georgia Awig, Councilman Martin DeVries, Planning and Development Director Kim Lieber, Law Director Brian Moriarty, and Deputy Clerk of Council Tina Wieber.

Action on Minutes:

Chairman Abens asked if there were any corrections to the minutes dated August 19, 2024. No discussion was offered. The minutes stand approved as submitted.

{Clerk notes: The Chair began with the second item of new business.}

Discussion regarding 2025-115:

2025-115 An Ordinance amending Chapter 628 Fair Housing of the North Ridgeville General Offenses Code.
(Introduced by Mayor Corcoran; First Reading on 08-04-2025)

Chair Abens asked the Planning and Development Director Kim Lieber to explain Ordinance Number 2025-115.

Director Lieber explained that a question was raised through the Council's office regarding the City's Fair Housing Board. Upon reviewing the City's Fair Housing Ordinance, it was noted that the Ordinance had originally been established in 1989 and had seen little change since. This prompted a more in-depth review, as is often the case with older legislation. Director Lieber added that the goal became not only to address the Fair Housing Board but also to ensure the Ordinance was current and aligned with both federal and state law. Maintaining a local fair housing Ordinance demonstrated the City's commitment to protecting residents' rights. It also helped the City qualify for federal funding, such as Community Development Block Grants or other HUD-funded programs.

Director Lieber noted that federal law prohibits discrimination based on race, color, religion, sex, national origin, familial status, and disability, while Ohio law also includes ancestry and military status. The City's existing Ordinance did not fully reflect these protected classes and was outdated. The updated Ordinance was designed to reflect recognized federal and state protected classes, without adding any others. The proposal is to eliminate the Fair Housing Board, which was previously staffed through the Treasurer's Office, because there was no clear understanding of its roles and duties. The Board's intended function was not related to home rehabilitation or

physical improvements, but rather to ensure access to selling, purchasing, or renting housing and to ensure that landlords met their federal obligations.

Director Lieber mentioned that neither the Board nor City officials have the expertise needed to investigate and enforce fair housing laws. The proposed Ordinance aims to promote partnerships with nonprofit organizations or other government agencies. These agencies are better equipped to handle enforcement and education, demonstrating the City's commitment. The City reached out to Lorain County, which manages fair housing through its Community Development Department, and received positive feedback about forming a memorandum of understanding or agreement to provide fair housing services for North Ridgeville. Lorain County already receives calls from across the county, including North Ridgeville. Director Lieber reiterated that the Ordinance aligns with federal and state laws, ensuring equitable housing access for all residents, reducing legal liability for the City, and creating a partnership with Lorain County for fair housing services.

Chair Abens inquired whether the Law Director had any comments.

Law Director Moriarty stated that he reviewed the proposed legislation, and it complies with current state law.

Chair Abens inquired whether any members of City Council had questions or comments.

Councilman Winkel asked if the Fair Housing Board would be dissolved under the proposed Ordinance. He understood it would no longer be in effect, noting it had not met in years and had no active members.

Councilman Winkel raised a question regarding the scope of fair housing ordinances in other jurisdictions, specifically whether they addressed housing conditions such as unsafe living environments caused by landlords. He acknowledged that such matters would normally be under the Building Department's jurisdiction.

Director Lieber clarified that, with the elimination of the Fair Housing Board, any issues not related to discrimination—such as housing conditions—would be directed to the Building Department. She added that the Department's goal is to implement a rental registration program to maintain the integrity of the neighborhoods.

Chair Abens asked if the fair housing Ordinance affects HOAs that have rules against renting properties within their HOA.

Director Lieber responded that the Ordinance does not regulate HOAs. This defines the obligations of landlords when they rent, but it doesn't require rental or prohibit rental in any way.

No further comments from the Administration or the Committee.

Moved by Winkel and seconded by Swenk to send Ordinance Number 2025-115 back to City Council for consideration as submitted.

A voice vote was taken, and the motion carried.

Yes – 3

No – 0

Discussion Regarding Ordinance Number 2025-110:

2025-110 An Ordinance amending Sections 1268.02, 1270.02, and 1272.04 of the North Ridgeville Zoning Code to update use regulations for automobile service stations and gasoline stations.
(Introduced by Councilman Abens; First Reading on 07-21-2025)

Chair Abens explained his reasoning for supporting legislation to limit the number of gas stations in North Ridgeville. The following highlights his reasoning.

- While traveling throughout the city, there are a large number of existing gas stations, as well as several vacant lots and corners that could potentially accommodate more gas stations.
- Some gas stations have closed, leaving behind environmental and redevelopment challenges due to the need for soil reclamation and tank removal.
- Once a property becomes a gas station, it is difficult to repurpose if the business fails or closes.
- Although the State mandates removing underground tanks upon closure, bankruptcies often prevent proper removal, leaving the City liable. Examples include the former BP station at Center Ridge Road and State Route 83, and the Marathon station near Cook Road and Lorain Road, which remained vacant for years due to improperly removed tanks.
- The number of gas stations has a similar issue to the car washes in North Ridgeville, which have also been limited by prior legislation.
- The proposed Ordinance would not apply to gas stations that are part of a larger development project, such Giant Eagle or Meijer.
- The legislation is a “win-win” for the city, highlighting the need for long-term planning and drawing lessons from past zoning decisions that heavily favored residential development.
- The City could limit the number of gas stations to prevent ending up with many abandoned, unusable stations until environmental cleanup is finished.

Chair Abens inquired whether the Administration had any comments.

Mayor Corcoran understood the reasoning for the legislation. He noted that the City is currently going through a zoning code change. He wants to avoid introducing legislation that would prevent a particular business from entering the city. Mayor Corcoran cautioned against trying to enforce the legislation.

Director Lieber provided the following positives and negatives of the legislation.

Positive Impacts of Ordinance:

- The Ordinance would reduce the number of gas and service stations, helping to prevent oversaturation.
- It aligned with community preferences to limit auto-oriented uses that contribute to traffic and congestion.
- Reclassifying gas stations as conditional uses would give the City, staff, and Planning Commission greater control over design, buffering, traffic flow, and lighting. Conditional use status allowed for more thorough review compared to permitted uses by right.
- The Ordinance would help preserve the character and aesthetics of commercial corridors by preventing gas stations from dominating key commercial areas.

- Limiting gas stations could gradually phase out underperforming stations.
- The Ordinance would be consistent with the City's car wash policy, the one-mile spacing requirement.

Negative Impacts and Considerations:

- Existing gas stations within one mile of another would become non-conforming under the new Ordinance. If a non-conforming station remained vacant for over a year, it could not reopen as a gas station.
- Vacant stations posed a risk of blight due to high cleanup and redevelopment costs.
- Non-conforming gas stations seeking to reopen or change ownership would need to appeal to the Board of Zoning and Building Appeals (BZBA), placing BZBA in a difficult position.
- Ordinance could impact redevelopment, especially if lenders were hesitant to finance properties that could not be rebuilt after damage.
- Lenders often requested zoning letters to confirm rebuild eligibility, and the Ordinance could complicate this for commercial properties.
- The City's non-conforming Ordinance limits expansion or continuation of non-conforming uses, which should be reviewed for compatibility.

Director Lieber encouraged thoughtful planning aligned with the City's ongoing zoning code update. She believed the Planning Commission should discuss the issue. She suggested quantifying the impact by mapping affected gas stations to understand better which properties would be affected. The zoning districts impacted by the Ordinance include B-3 and B-4, which would become conditional; B-5, which would eliminate gas stations; and B-2, which already lists gas stations as conditional, but without spacing requirements specified in the Ordinance. Further discussion is needed on how properties in B-2 would be affected and if it was overlooked.

Chair Abens inquired whether the Law Director had any comments.

Law Director Moriarty stated that he had no comments.

Chair Abens inquired whether the Committee had any comments.

Councilman Winkel suggested that, rather than immediately changing legislation, Council could consider implementing a temporary moratorium on new gas stations. This would allow time to complete the ongoing zoning code update and assess whether permanent changes were necessary.

Director Lieber noted that moratoriums typically last six months.

Law Director Moriarty confirmed that a moratorium can be renewed if needed, but extending beyond a year might present legal challenges.

Councilwoman Swenk asked whether the non-conforming status applied to car washes, referencing the corner of Lorain Road and Lear Nagle Road, where four car washes were located.

Director Lieber confirmed that similar non-conforming rules would apply.

Councilwoman Swenk remarked that the BP gas station at Center Ridge Road and State Route 83 had closed due to road widening, which had removed the gas pumps.

Mayor Corcoran explained that the BP gas station at Center Ridge Road and State Route 83 shut down voluntarily, and the soil is still contaminated. The City is exploring options to purchase that property.

Chair Abens explained that gas stations typically have a lifespan of about 30 years, after which they must be rebuilt or closed. Given economic shifts and changes in motor transportation, closures could happen sooner, potentially leaving the City with multiple vacant gas stations. The difficulty and expense of reclaiming contaminated land show the need for foresight from the City in limiting gas station development. The intent was not to limit other types of businesses, which should be evaluated on their own merits, but to address the development challenges posed by gas stations. He noted that gas stations were often the easiest development option for vacant lots along major corridors, such as Center Ridge Road, Lorain Road, and State Route 83.

Councilman Winkel agreed with the suggestion to involve the Planning Commission in reviewing the legislation.

There was consensus from the Committee that the direction was to send the Ordinance back to Council only after the Planning Commission had the opportunity to review and provide recommendations to City Council.

Mayor Corcoran mentioned that the Planning Commission might suggest various amendments, which could complicate the legislative process.

Director Lieber noted that the City's amendment ordinance process requires proposed changes to first be presented to the Planning Commission, followed by a public hearing, before the Council can vote. These steps provided opportunities for both the Planning Commission and the public to offer input and recommendations. This would allow the Planning Commission to review the Ordinance and suggest edits before the Council takes any action.

Councilwoman Swenk wanted to know the timeline for the zoning code update.

Director Lieber stated that the goal was to complete the drafting of the zoning code by the end of the year, with adoption efforts to begin in the first quarter of the following year. Preliminary drafts of district definitions and use standards had already been developed, and dimensional standards were in progress. She agreed to share early drafts with the Planning Commission to ensure alignment with the proposed Ordinance. She noted that conditional use designations were being considered for auto-oriented businesses due to their potential impact on surrounding properties. Director Lieber stressed the importance of understanding how the Ordinance might affect existing businesses, not just future development, and recommended gathering more data that impacts before taking action.

Chair Abens proposed a motion to send the Ordinance back to City Council for further consideration, following a review by the Planning Commission and a public hearing.

Mayor Corcoran clarified that the Ordinance was already under review by the Planning Commission, and depending on their feedback, amendments might be necessary.

{Clerk's note: Chair Abens's motion to send the Ordinance back to City Council for further consideration, following a review by the Planning Commission and a public hearing, was not a formal motion because there was no second; however, he withdrew the motion unilaterally.}

Moved by Winkel and seconded by Swenk to send Ordinance Number 2025-110 back to City Council for consideration as submitted.

A voice vote was taken, and the motion carried.

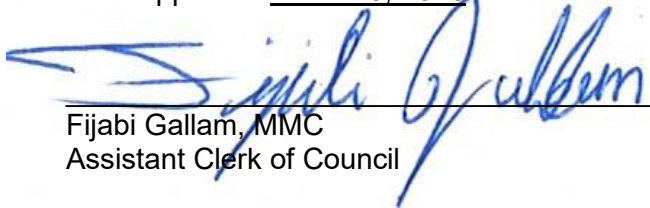
Yes – 3

No – 0

Adjournment:

The meeting was adjourned at 6:28 p.m.

Date Approved: March 5, 2026



Fijabi Gallam, MMC
Assistant Clerk of Council