

**NORTH RIDGEVILLE CITY COUNCIL
COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE MEETING MINUTES
CITY HALL COUNCIL CHAMBERS – 6:00 P.M.
JULY 20, 2026**

To Order:

Chairwoman Holly A. Swenk called the Committee of the Whole meeting to order on Monday, July 20, 2026, at 6:00 p.m.

Pledge of Allegiance:

Led by Chairwoman Swenk

Roll Call:

Present were Council members President/Chair Holly A. Swenk, Kathryn Rogerson, Robert Holub, Bruce F. Abens, Clifford Winkel, Paul Wolanski, and Cali Zingale.

Others Present: Mayor Kevin Corcoran, Clerk of Council Nicholas Ciofani, and Assistant Clerk of Council Fijabi Gallam.

New Business:

Bylaws Discussion

Chair Swenk introduced the first item of new business and noted that the Committee would be revisiting the audience participation portion of the Council bylaws. She advised that an amendment had been distributed to all City Council members in advance of the meeting for review. She explained that the prior language governing the lobby session had been stricken in its entirety and replaced with revised text.

Clerk of Council Ciofani read the proposed replacement language for **SECTION 26: AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION (LOBBY) –**

The public shall be permitted to speak, at designated times, on any subject related to the business of Council or the general affairs of the City of North Ridgeville. Each speaker shall be limited to three (3) minutes and may not speak more than once on the same topic unless permitted by a majority vote of Council. Upon an affirmative majority vote, additional time of up to three (3) minutes may be granted.

Audience members wishing to speak shall adhere to the following rules of decorum:

- *Each speaker shall state their name and address for the record.*

- *Comments shall be directed to the President of Council and/or the Mayor and not to individuals in the audience.*
- *Speakers shall not engage in conduct that disrupts, delays, or interferes with the orderly conduct of the meeting. This includes, but is not limited to, shouting, making threats, or engaging in conduct that interferes with others' ability to participate.*

The President of Council may issue a warning to any individual who violates these rules, identifying the specific conduct at issue. Upon continued violation following a warning, the speaker may be directed to yield the floor. If disruptive behavior persists, the President of Council may order the removal of the individual to ensure the orderly continuation of the meeting.

Enforcement of this Section shall be applied in a content-neutral and viewpoint-neutral manner and shall not be based on the substance or viewpoint of the speaker's remarks.

Councilman Winkel expressed support for the revised language. He expressed the importance of residents feeling comfortable sharing their viewpoints at open meetings, stating that public participation is foundational. He acknowledged that while some rules of decorum are necessary, the primary goal is to ensure that people are able “to speak to their mind.” He added that the revision was appropriate and much of it was a rewrite of prior language in a more accessible manner.

Councilman Holub concurred with Councilman Winkel's remarks. He referenced the discussion that had taken place earlier in Spring 2026, that there had been “clear disdain from some of the residents” at that time. He expressed that taking that community feedback seriously and finding ways to allow residents to speak freely—while maintaining professional decorum—was the right approach. He stated that he was “excited to get this passed.”

Chair Swenk asked if anyone from the Committee and the Administration had any comments, concerns, or questions.

Mayor Corcoran raised a procedural concern regarding the proposed language: the only title referenced in the removal authority provision was “President of Council.” He asked what would happen if the President of Council was not present at a meeting. The Mayor suggested that this should be explicitly stated in the language.

Chair Swenk responded that she would assume the authority would pass to the President Pro Tem.

Councilman Winkel proposed adding language such as: “in the absence of the President of Council, the Council Pro Tem would have the authority to execute all the abilities of the President of Council for this section.”

Chair Swenk further noted that if there were no President Pro Tem, there would be no meeting, and also raised the question of whether the Mayor could fulfill the role.

The committee settled on the broader phrase: “whoever is conducting the meeting.”

Chair Swenk asked if anyone from the Committee and the Administration had any comments, concerns, or questions.

Clerk of Council Ciofani read the amended version of the relevant sentence as revised: “If disruptive behavior persists, the President of Council, or in the absence of the President of Council, whoever is conducting the meeting, may order the removal of the individual to ensure the orderly continuation of the meeting.”

Chair Swenk asked if anyone from the Committee and the Administration had any comments, concerns, or questions.

Robert Baumgardner, 6327 Stoney Ridge Road, thanked President Swenk for providing the new July 20th draft of Section 26. He stated that freedom of speech is not a privilege granted by those sitting there — it is a foundational right. He addressed Ward 3 Councilman Abens directly regarding his substantive response. He argued that the council voted to make it harder for the people of North Ridgeville to speak freely. He stated that the revised draft proved his concerns about government overreach were justified, that the public’s voice cannot simply be legislated away, and that he would continue to ask hard questions about the city’s financials, withheld public records, and the conduct of elected officials.

No other members of the public spoke on this item.

Councilman Wolanski clarified that his prior vote in favor of the earlier bylaw language had been just about decorum and had nothing to do with silencing First Amendment rights. He acknowledged that some residents did not feel that way and expressed regret but reiterated that his intent had always been to maintain orderly conduct.

Moved by Winkel and seconded by Holub to amend the Council Bylaws by adding the language as read by Clerk Ciofani—Providing that in the absence of the President of Council, whoever is conducting the meeting may order the removal of an individual to ensure the orderly continuation of the meeting.

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

Yes – 7

No – 0

O 2026-64 An Ordinance amending Section 440.17 Through Truck Traffic of the Codified Ordinances of the City of North Ridgeville and establishing enhanced penalties for violations.
(Introduced by Councilman Abens; First Reading on 06-15-2026)

Councilman Abens provided an extensive explanation of his rationale for introducing the legislation. He stated that one of the primary drivers for writing the ordinance was that many roads in his ward are heavily used by trucks, and that he has received numerous complaints from residents on that basis. He noted that the issue extends beyond his ward to other roads throughout the city.

After consulting with the police department — specifically the two officers responsible for traffic enforcement — Councilman Abens reported that officers frequently issue warnings but often resort to citations only after those warnings have been repeatedly ignored. He stated that verbal warnings have proven largely ineffective, and that in some cases, drivers who had already been cited and fined as little as \$75 to \$100 were still found using restricted roadways.

He acknowledged that officers may be too compassionate, as they are conscious of whether truckers can afford the fine. He stated that he operates under the principle that “if you can't do the time, don't do the crime.” Following consultation with both the prosecutor and the police department, he settled on a mandatory minimum fine of \$150 plus court costs for a first offense — which he noted brings the effective total to approximately \$250 — with a mandatory minimum of \$500 plus court costs for a second offense within a two-year period. He explained that the mandatory minimum structure means a judge no longer has the ability to plead the fine down.

Councilman Abens further noted that he had previously secured the cooperation of the Sheriff's Department to work a specific road and issue citations for through-truck violations. However, he received feedback that the Sheriff's Department did not wish to continue enforcement on those roads because the fine — approximately \$100 — was not considered worth their time, given how busy their officers are. His sincere hope is that the \$150 first-offense fine will be more effective, and that officers will inform cited drivers of the \$500 second-offense fine, so that the word spreads throughout the trucking industry.

He acknowledged that expecting officers to stop every truck is unrealistic, but expressed hope that cited drivers will warn others. He noted that the fine structure was also strategically calibrated. He explained that if the first-offense fine were set higher — such as \$500 — drivers would be more likely to transfer the case from Mayor's Court to the Elyria court system, where any

finer collected would go to Elyria rather than the City of North Ridgeville. He expressed the belief that officers will be more comfortable issuing citations at \$150, but will have no hesitation allowing a second offense to proceed to Elyria at \$500.

Councilman Abens stated that his concern is fundamentally one of public safety rather than infrastructure maintenance. He noted examples of large commercial vehicles — including 18-wheel gas tanker trucks — that have traveled through residential roads in his district. He pointed to a recent gas explosion in Twinsburg as a sobering reminder of what can happen when hazardous materials are involved in a residential incident. He also raised the suspicion that trucks may be cutting through the city's back roads to avoid an ODOT safety inspection checkpoint between Routes 83 and 57, noting that whenever the checkpoint is active, back-road traffic noticeably increases. His goal is to make the penalty for using North Ridgeville's back roads more expensive than simply proceeding through the safety check. The ordinance does not prohibit trucks that have an actual delivery or pickup on the restricted road; it is directed solely at through traffic.

Councilman Wolanski thanked Councilman Abens for bringing the ordinance forward and expressed support for raising the fines. He raised concern about the overall culture of enforcement in the city. He referenced a conversation he had earlier that day with a resident who wanted Council to pass an ordinance to change fireworks laws. He noted that the city already has laws on the books but does not consistently enforce them. He drew comparisons to parking violations on certain small streets where residents cannot get in and out of their driveways, and to prior discussions about snow shoveling. He understood ticketing the entire city is unrealistic; targeted enforcement in situations like through-truck traffic or illegal parking can be effective — and once the word gets out, behavior changes.

No other members of the committee offered additional comments, and no comments were received from the administration. Chair Swenk opened the floor to public comment.

Bernard Garcia, 7324 Root Road, stated that he did not disagree with anything that had been said, but offered two technical suggestions regarding the ordinance's language. First, he recommended changing the weight reference to "gross combined weight," which he explained includes the truck, trailer, cargo, operational fluids, and passengers — a more comprehensive and legally precise measure that eliminates potential gray areas where a driver might argue they are not hauling a load. Second, he noted that the commercial vehicle weight rating is 26,000 pounds, which is more than six tons, and suggested the committee consider whether to update that threshold or add a provision imposing a higher penalty for vehicles that exceed the commercial weight rating. He identified himself as a CDL holder

with hazmat training and acknowledged that professional drivers know not to use restricted roads, but that some do so anyway and must be held accountable.

Chair Swenk thanked Mr. Garcia and closed the public comment period, returning the floor to Councilman Abens for a response.

Councilman Abens addressed the question of gross combined weight; he explained that the North Ridgeville Police Department does not carry weight scales, making that type of measurement impractical for field enforcement. He stated that the current ordinance — and the one proposed — uses a threshold of six tons, or 12,000 pounds, which he noted corresponds roughly to an F-450 pickup truck. He clarified that this threshold was deliberately set approximately six to eight years ago, following concerns that the prior standard was so broad that any truck driver could be cited. He also explained that the \$150 fine was selected specifically to keep the case in Mayor's Court, where revenue is retained by the City. He reiterated that for repeat offenders, a \$500 fine was appropriate and that the revenue question becomes less critical in those cases.

Moved by Abens and seconded by Holub to send Ordinance Number 2026-64 back to City Council for further discussion.

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

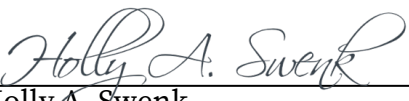
Yes – 7

No – 0

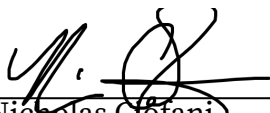
Adjournment:

Chairwoman Swenk adjourned the meeting at 6:23 p.m.

Approved on August 3, 2026.



Holly A. Swenk
PRESIDENT OF COUNCIL



Nicholas Clorani
CLERK OF COUNCIL