

**CITY OF SOUTH LEBANON
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES**

July 2, 2026

6:00 P.M.

1. Mayor Burke opened the meeting at 6:00 p.m. with a Prayer and the Pledge.

2. ATTENDANCE

Linda Allen – Present

Sharon Carmack – Present

Brenda Combs – Absent

Lisa Fedor – Present

Maryan Harrison – Present

David Smith – Present

3. GUESTS

Judge Rob Fisher and Judge Gary Loxley of the Warren County Court presented a biennial update to Council. Key highlights included: a notable increase in caseloads between 2024 and 2025, attributed in part to expanded law enforcement hiring; the successful completion and one-year occupancy of the new 21,000-square-foot Warren County Court facility; and updates on two specialized dockets. Judge Fisher's Mental Health ("Success") Docket has served 34 graduates to date with a low recidivism rate, and Judge Loxley's Veterans Court continues to rehabilitate qualifying veterans. Both judges noted that no tax dollars have been expended on these dockets, which are funded entirely through grants and user fees. Judge Loxley discussed uniform bond schedule and arraignment schedule. He also announced his resignation from the county court bench following his receipt of the Republican nomination for a seat on the Warren County Court of Common Pleas General Division, with his vacancy to be filled by the governor.

An unscheduled guest, Daniel Dieters of Energy Alliances, briefly addressed Council regarding the upcoming expiration of the city's natural gas aggregation program in October. He noted that Duke Energy has shifted to a standard service offer that if gas purchased is 50 cents per CCF, this also includes a 42 cent per CCF supplier fee, bringing that total to approximately 92 cents per CCF for end users. He noted that communities currently enrolling through Energy Alliances securing rates in the range of 55 cents per CCF, representing an estimated savings of approximately \$400 per household for the winter months of December, January, and February alone. City Administrator Hacker was identified as the official contact for the city's participation. The contract was expected to be executed within a few weeks, with the new program taking effect after October 15th.

4. **Public Hearing: Fiscal Year 2027 Tax Budget**

Director of Finance Williams presented the Fiscal Year 2027 Tax Budget. She explained that the tax budget is a planning tool used to assess the city's financial health and certify existing property tax rates with the Warren County Auditor. The city collects 1.2 mills from Hamilton Township residents and 1.3 mills from Union Township residents, generating approximately \$289,000 in property tax revenue annually. The primary revenue source remains the municipal earnings tax, projected at nearly \$2.8 million for 2026 with a modest increase anticipated for

2027. The overall fund balance across all city funds is projected at approximately \$17.4 million at year-end 2026, declining slightly to an estimated \$16.7 million by end of 2027 due to planned capital expenditures. Director Williams noted that the city's financial position does not necessitate any increase in the current property tax millage. The public hearing was opened and closed with no public comment.

5. Mayor Burke opened the floor to the public. No members of the public spoke during this time, and the floor was subsequently closed.
6. Approval of Minutes of Prior Meetings
Workshop Meeting – June 18, 2026
Regular Meeting – June 18, 2026

A motion to adopt the minutes of both the workshop meeting and regular meeting of June 18, 2026 was made by Fedor, seconded by Carmack, four yeas, Smith recused.

NEW BUSINESS

7. **RESOLUTION 2026-17, A RESOLUTION APPROVING OF AND AUTHORIZING THE DIRECTOR OF FINANCE TO SUBMIT THE [INTERIM] TAX BUDGET FOR FISCAL YEAR 2027 TO THE COUNTY AUDITOR, AND DECLARING AN EMERGENCY.**

The resolution was designated as an emergency due to the county's July 15th submission deadline, which falls before the next regularly scheduled council meeting.

A motion to waive the two-reading rule was made by Smith, seconded by Fedor, all yeas. A motion to adopt by title only, Resolution 2026-17, was made by Smith, seconded by Fedor, all yeas.

RESOLUTION 2026-18, A RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING THE CITY ADMINISTRATOR TO ENTER INTO A NATURAL GAS AGGREGATION AGREEMENT WITH A NATURAL GAS SUPPLIER RECOMMENDED BY ENERGY ALLIANCES, INC., THE COMMUNITY'S ENERGY AGGREGATION CONSULTANT, FOR THE PROVISION OF COMPETITIVE NATURAL GAS AGGREGATION SERVICE AND NATURAL GAS SUPPLY FOR ELIGIBLE CUSTOMERS WITHIN THE CORPORATION LIMITS AND DECLARING AN EMERGENCY.

Councilmember Allen spoke in support of the program, noting personal savings of approximately \$380 annually and positive feedback from neighboring residents who had enrolled.

A motion to waive the two-reading rule was made by Allen, seconded by Carmack, all yeas. A motion to adopt by title only, Resolution 2026-18, was made by Allen, seconded by Carmack, all yeas.

8. **RESOLUTION 2026-19, A RESOLUTION APPROVING AND AUTHORIZING MAYOR AND DIRECTOR OF FINANCE TO EXECUTE A DEVELOPMENT AGREEMENT FOR THE RESERVES AT GRANDIN POND SUBDIVISION WITH GRANDIN ROAD DEVELOPMENT, LLC, AND DECLARING AN EMERGENCY.**

There was no discussion regarding 2026-19.

A motion to waive the two-reading rule was made by Allen, seconded by Harrison, all yeas. A motion to adopt by title only, Resolution 2026-19, was made by Smith, seconded by Carmack, all yeas.

9. Motion to authorize the purchase of an access control system from Homeland Technology Group in the amount of \$38,500 for facility security upgrades of the municipal building.

City Administrator Hacker explained that the system would install RFID badge readers on all first-floor interior office and workspace doors of the municipal building, with the exception of the restrooms. The control panel to be installed is sized to accommodate future expansion to upper floor doors as needed in the future. The system will allow administration to program each employee's access by door and by time of day and will require all employees and elected officials to wear photo identification badges. Administrator Hacker noted that the city already uses Homeland Technology Group for exterior door access, making this an expansion of an existing system, which qualifies for a bidding exception under Ohio Revised Code.

Councilmember Smith asked if that would include restroom doors. Administrator Hacker answered that the restroom doors would not be included. He inquired about whether the employee break room would be included in the access control system for staff safety purposes, and Administrator Hacker indicated it could be added if not already in the original quote, noting that a contingency amount was built into the proposal. Mayor Burke asked if council members would also have a badge. Administrator Hacker replied yes that all employees and elected officials will have a badge. Councilmember Smith also raised a question about competitive bidding requirements for purchases above \$25,000. Director of Finance Williams and Administrator Hacker both confirmed that the expenditure does not meet the threshold requiring competitive bidding, and that the expansion of an existing licensed software system is independently recognized as a bidding exception under Ohio Revised Code.

A motion to approve the purchase of an access control system was made by Fedor, seconded by Smith, all yeas.

10. Motion to authorize debris removal services from Dig-It, LLC in the amount of \$27,275 for site clean up at 512 S. Main Street.

This item generated substantial discussion. Councilmember David N. Smith raised concerns about the authorization for debris removal, questioning whether Council had ever voted specifically to authorize the demolition of the structure at 512 S. Main Street prior to this request, and whether appropriating funds in the capital budget was sufficient without a separate authorizing ordinance or resolution for the project itself.

Councilmember Lisa Fedor responded that the project had been included in the 2026 capital budget at an allocation of approximately \$48,000, and that the current contract at \$27,275 represented a savings of approximately \$21,000 below the budgeted amount.

Councilmember Smith further contended that the property had four walls and three doors, and that the prior administration had contemplated rehabilitating the structure rather than demolishing it—including moving a deteriorating barn from across the street to the site to serve as a parking area for the bike trail. He noted that a previously discussed engineering assessment was never completed, and that the survey of the property he had been advised was conducted was never finalized.

Councilmember Linda Allen and Mayor Burke both stated that the decision to raze the structure predated the current administration. Mayor Burke noted that an engineering firm's assessment proposal—which covered only an initial structural assessment, not plans or a roof replacement—came in at \$20,000, at which point the prior city administrator, administration, and legal counsel determined it was not cost-effective to proceed with rehabilitation. Mayor Burke described the structure as a three-walled attractive nuisance that had been found by city cleanup crews to contain children's equipment and other unauthorized items over multiple years and stated that concern for public safety drove the decision to proceed with demolition.

Administrator Hacker confirmed that he had seen the engineering proposal and that no assessment was ultimately undertaken; the decision was made to abandon any future use of the building at that time.

Councilmember Allen stated that she was on council when the building was bought and it was never brought to council to rehab the building. In 2022-2023, it was taken to budget council with the prior administration to rehab the building, and it was previous council and administration that put it in the budget.

Mayor Burke noted the building had sat vacant for 31 years. Councilmember Smith clarified that the city only acquired the property approximately three years prior, so the prior 28 years of vacancy were under private ownership during which the city had no authority to act.

A motion to approve the debris removal services was made by Fedor, seconded by Allen. A roll call was taken with the following result: Ayes: Allen, Carmack, Fedor, & Harrison Nays: Smith. The motion carried.

11. ACCEPTANCE OF INVOICES

A motion to accept the invoice list of payments totaling (\$147,932.30) was made by Allen, seconded by Fedor, all yeas.

12. OLD BUSINESS

ORDINANCE 2026-09, SECOND READING, AN ORDINANCE AMENDING ORDINANCE 2025-22 AND SECTIONS 111.1 AND 111.2 OF THE CITY-ADOPTED INTERNATIONAL PROPERTY MAINTENANCE CODE TO ESTABLISH A THREE (3) CALENDAR DAY APPEAL PERIOD FOR HIGH GRASS, WEED, AND VEGETATION VIOLATIONS, TO DESIGNATE THE CITY ADMINISTRATOR AS

THE HEARING OFFICER FOR SUCH APPEALS, TO PROVIDE FOR JUDICIAL REVIEW IN THE WARREN COUNTY COURT OF COMMON PLEAS.

Administrator Hacker clarified that the sole change in this ordinance is the reduction of the appeal period from 20 days to 3 calendar days. All other language of the existing ordinance remains in full force and effect. He explained the operational rationale: under the prior 20-day appeal window, with the Board of Zoning Appeals serving as hearing officer—potentially adding another month to the process—the city could face grass violations of extreme height before being able to act.

Councilmember Smith raised constitutional questions regarding the city’s authority to enter private property to abate a nuisance without a court-issued warrant. He also expressed concern about the adequacy of a door hanger as the method of notice, noting that residents who primarily use a garage entrance may not see a door hanger for an extended period. He suggested certified mail or law enforcement delivery as more reliable alternatives.

Law Director Kirby responded that the Fourth Amendment prohibition on unreasonable search and seizure applies to searches of the interior of a home and does not require a warrant for code enforcement officers to enter a yard to abate a nuisance such as cutting grass, provided due process is afforded. He confirmed that the ordinance, and similar ordinances throughout Ohio, is constitutionally valid.

A motion to adopt by title only, Ordinance 2026-09, was made by Fedor, seconded by Allen. A roll call was taken with the following result: Ayes: Allen, Carmack, Fedor, & Harrison Nays: Smith.

13. ORDINANCE 2026-10, SECOND READING, AN ORDINANCE AMENDING THE ADOPTED 2012 INTERNATIONAL PROPERTY MAINTENANCE CODE BY ORDINANCE 2013-08, TO ESTABLISH PROCEDURES FOR THE ABATEMENT OF HIGH GRASS, WEEDS, AND NUISANCE VEGETATION, ESTABLISH ABATEMENT FEES, AND TO AUTHORIZE THE CERTIFICATION OF UNPAID CHARGES TO THE WARREN COUNTY AUDITOR.

Councilmember Allen inquired about the timeline for invoicing following abatement. City Administrator Hacker indicated invoices would be mailed within approximately two weeks abatement, and that charges remaining unpaid beyond 90 days could be certified to the Warren County Auditor for placement on the property tax bill.

A motion to adopt by title only, Ordinance 2026-10, was made by Fedor, seconded by Allen. A roll call was taken with the following result: Ayes: Allen, Carmack, Fedor, & Harrison Nays: Smith.

14. ORDINANCE 2026-11, SECOND READING, AN ORDINANCE ESTABLISHING REGULATIONS FOR TRAFFIC AND THE OPERATION OF ELECTRIC SCOOTERS.

Councilmember Smith expressed support for the ordinance and suggested developing educational materials, including a QR-coded video, for distribution to youth and parents regarding the new scooter regulations. Law Director Kirby noted a minor typographical

correction to the ordinance: the final alphabetical subsection in the parents' responsibility section should be lettered "h" rather than "j".

A motion to adopt by title only, Ordinance 2026-11, as amended was made by Smith, seconded by Allen, all yeas.

Sergeant Adams addressed Council to report that he had already been in contact with the Cincinnati Children's Hospital trauma center learning and development specialist regarding the city's upcoming National Night Out event on August 7th. The specialist confirmed they would bring educational materials on bike and wheeled safety, including e-bikes and scooters, pedestrian and traffic safety, home safety tips, children's activities, and general child passenger safety resources, designed for both children and parents.

COMMUNICATION ITEMS

15. COMMUNICATIONS & REPORTS

Mayor Burke

- a. Mayor Burke reported on her attendance at the Ohio Mayors' Conference on June 24th and 25th, describing it as a valuable networking and learning opportunity. Topics discussed at the conference included Ohio's housing challenge, a housing panel, ethics in the public sector, productive disagreement facilitation, and understanding Ohio's property tax repeal effort. She noted interactions with mayors representing communities ranging from Burbank (population 300) to Mingo Junction (population approximately 14,000).
- b. She acknowledged the passing of Charity Bishop on June 25th. She attended the memorial service on July 1st and noted that the city sent flowers, which she personally funded. She expressed her intention to return to Council in the coming weeks with a proclamation honoring Ms. Bishop's contributions to the community.
- c. Mayor Burke reminded all residents of the city's existing fireworks ordinance (Ordinance 2022-17), which opted out of House Bill 172 and reaffirmed the ban on possessing, discharging, or igniting fireworks as set forth in Chapter 91 of the Ohio Basic Code. She encouraged residents to use common sense given dry conditions, while acknowledging the significance of the nation's 250th birthday celebration.
- d. She announced that the joint Fourth of July parade with Union Township would begin at 2:00 p.m. on July 4th, with lineup at 1:00 p.m.
- e. Mayor Burke also announced that on July 8th at 6:00 p.m., the city would participate in a statewide reading of the U.S. Constitution, held on the steps of the municipal administration building. She invited all council members and volunteers to participate and noted that light refreshments would be provided.
- f. She announced that council and all city staff photos, including Public Works, would be taken on July 16th beginning at 4:30 p.m., followed by an events committee meeting.

Director of Finance Tina Williams

- a. Nothing to report

Administrator Chris Hacker

- a. City Administrator Chris Hacker announced that the Ad Hoc Small Animal Committee would meet the following Tuesday at 5:00 PM.
- b. He reported that an award recommendation had been received from Choice One Engineering for the water tower painting and rehabilitation project, with formal legislation expected at the next meeting.
- c. He also reported that a contractor had been recommended for a full roof replacement at the community center, featuring a 30-year warranty Garland product. The contractor's representative will appear at the next meeting with a cross-section display of the roofing system. Work is expected to begin in August.
- d. Administrator Hacker congratulated Malina Werner on her promotion from Tax Clerk to Administrative Specialist, effective the following Monday. He also noted that offers were pending for other current vacancies.

Law Director Chase Kirby

- a. Law Director Chase Kirby offered a brief clarifying statement in response to Councilmember Smith's comments during the Ordinance 2026-09 vote, reaffirming that the grass abatement ordinance is constitutionally valid and consistent with due process requirements, and that such ordinances are common throughout Ohio. He encouraged Council members to contact him directly with legal questions.

Mayor Burke stated that there is always the opportunity to speak to anyone on staff before coming to a meeting. Do not hesitate to reach out prior to meetings.

Sgt. Corey Adams

- a. Nothing to Report

Councilmember David Smith

- a. Councilmember Smith recognized the Kings High School girls fast-pitch softball team for winning the state championship. He requested that a proclamation be prepared to recognize the team's accomplishment.

Mayor Burke asked Councilmember Smith to provide details to Administrator Hacker or the Mayor for preparation of the proclamation.

Councilmember Lisa Fedor

- a. Councilmember Fedor reminded residents of the Fourth of July festival beginning at 6:00 p.m. on Saturday, July 4th, with bands, food trucks, games, and other activities. She also noted that the next movie night in the park would be August 1 and National Night Out would be August 7.

Councilmember Sharon Carmack

- a. Nothing to report.

Councilmember Maryan Harrison

- a. Councilmember Harrison encouraged residents to attend the Fourth of July celebration and thanked law enforcement for their service.

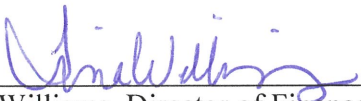
Councilmember Linda Allen

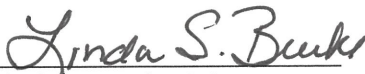
- a. Councilmember Allen mentioned proactive communication, encouraging fellow council members to photograph and report concerns such as infrastructure issues to staff immediately rather than waiting for council meetings. She encouraged continued open communication between council members, the administration, and legal counsel.

Councilmember Brenda Combs

- a. Absent

16. Mayor Burke asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting at 7:30 p.m. A motion was made by Fedor, seconded by Allen, all yeas.


Tina Williams, Director of Finance/Clerk


Linda S. Burke, Mayor

For an audio copy of the July 2, 2026 City of South Lebanon Council Regular Meeting, please contact the Director of Finance at twilliams@southlebanonohio.org.