

CITY OF SOUTH LEBANON
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
September 3, 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 – Present

Lisa Fedor – Present
Maryan Harrison – Absent
David Smith – Present

3. Chaplain Bill Hounshell of the Warren County Sheriff's Office delivered the prayer. He briefly introduced himself as a South Lebanon resident and noted that he is the only staff chaplain position in a sheriff's office in the State of Ohio. The Pledge of Allegiance followed.

4. GUESTS

No guests were present at this meeting.

5. Floor open to the public

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

Councilmember Smith initiated a discussion regarding the format and completeness of the minutes. He expressed concern that certain details had been omitted, citing as an example an incident in which a member of the public, Brian Corcoran, was interrupted by the Law Director and another exchange regarding the mispronunciation of his name. He asked how the paraphrasing process worked and why significant portions of conversations appeared to be missing.

Director of Finance Williams responded, explaining that the city had adopted a new AI program called ClerkMinutes, which produces a summarized rather than verbatim record of proceedings. She acknowledged that the system tends to condense back-and-forth dialogue into a professionally presented summary rather than capturing it word for word. Director Williams pointed out that the Workshop minutes were nearly three pages in length and the Regular Meeting minutes had grown to approximately eight pages, which she characterized as quite lengthy and comprehensive compared to other municipalities. She further stated that audio recordings of the meetings are retained and available to the public upon request, and that those recordings capture every word spoken.

Councilmember Smith pressed the point, arguing that when substantial mid-conversation exchanges are removed, it can alter the meaning and narrative of what occurred—particularly for community members reading the record. He gave the specific example of the exchange in which

his name was mispronounced and stated it had happened at least five times, and that Councilmember Fedor's response had been omitted entirely.

Director Williams reiterated that nothing had been intentionally removed, and that the system's design is to summarize the substance rather than reproduce the back-and-forth. She confirmed that the audio is retained for a minimum of two years while minutes are being prepared, per the Rules of Council.

Mayor Burke interjected to clarify that minutes are, by their nature, a summary document and are not intended to be verbatim transcriptions. She noted that the audio record is the appropriate vehicle for anyone seeking a word-for-word account and directed the discussion to close so the meeting could proceed.

No corrections or additions to the text of the minutes were formally proposed.

Workshop Meeting – August 20, 2026
Regular Meeting – August 20, 2026

A motion to adopt the minutes of August 20, 2026 was made by Allen, seconded by Carmack. A roll call was taken with the following result: Ayes: Allen, Carmack, Combs, Fedor Nays: Smith.

NEW BUSINESS

7. **RESOLUTION 2026-29, FIRST READING, A RESOLUTION EXPRESSING THE COUNCIL'S INTENT TO SELL UNNEEDED, OBSOLETE OR UNFIT PERSONAL PROPERTY BY INTERNET AUCTION AND REQUIRING PUBLICATION OF THE SAME; AND AUTHORIZING THE MAYOR AND DIRECTOR OF FINANCE TO EXECUTE ON BEHALF OF THE CITY A CONTRACT WITH LIQUIDITY SERVICES OPERATIONS LLC DBA GOVDEALS.**

Resolution 2026-29, approving Council's intent to sell unneeded, obsolete, or unfit property by internet auction and entering into a contract with GovDeals was introduced for its first reading and entered into record.

8. **RESOLUTION 2026-30, FIRST READING, A RESOLUTION DECLARING CERTAIN ITEMS OF CITY PROPERTY NOT NEEDED FOR PUBLIC USE, OR OBSOLETE OR UNFIT FOR THE USE FOR WHICH THE ITEMS WERE ACQUIRED, AND FURTHER AUTHORIZING THE CITY ADMINISTRATOR TO SELL SUCH ITEMS USING GOVDEALS.**

Resolution 2026-30, declaring city property no longer needed for public use or obsolete and authorizing the sale of a 2015 Chevrolet Tahoe through GovDeals was introduced for its first reading and entered into record.

9. **RESOLUTION 2026-31, A RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING THE MAYOR AND DIRECTOR OF FINANCE TO ENTER INTO AN AGREEMENT WITH DIXON ENGINEERING, INC. FOR INSPECTION SERVICES REQUIRED FOR THE WATER TOWER RESTORATION PROJECT, AND DECLARING AN EMERGENCY.**

Councilmember Smith remarked that the agreement appeared to be a favorable arrangement and indicated his support for waiving the reading.

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 2026-31, was made by Combs, seconded by Smith, all yeas.

10. **RESOLUTION 2026-32, FIRST READING, A RESOLUTION DECLARING, PURSUANT TO OHIO REVISED CODE SECTION 721, THAT CERTAIN REAL PROPERTY OWNED BY THE CITY OF SOUTH LEBANON IS NOT NEEDED FOR MUNICIPAL PURPOSES AND FURTHER AUTHORIZING THE CITY ADMINISTRATOR TO SELL SUCH REAL PROPERTY.**

Resolution 2026-32, declaring city property located at 0 Main Street, Parcel #12-01-206-035 not needed for public use, and authorizing its sale was introduced for its first reading and entered into record.

11. ACCEPTANCE OF INVOICES

A motion to accept the invoice list of payments totaling (\$114,300.17) was made by Combs, seconded by Carmack. The motion carried 4–0–1, with Councilmember Allen recusing (Carmack – Yea, Combs – Yea, Fedor – Yea, Smith – Yea).

After the vote, Law Director Kirby offered a brief explanatory note for the record, disclosing that Councilmember Allen is currently employed by Lowe's. He stated that, out of an abundance of caution, he had advised Councilmember Allen to abstain from any vote approving payment to that vendor. He thanked Councilmember Allen for her cooperation in the matter.

12. Motion to make a donation of \$500 to the Little Miami High School Select Choir for their performance at the City's 9/11 Memorial.

Mayor Burke noted that the Little Miami High School Select Choir is a 41-member ensemble that is world-renowned and will be traveling to Washington D.C. and Europe later in the year.

A motion to make the donation of \$500 was made by Smith, seconded by Combs, all yeas.

OLD BUSINESS

13. **ORDINANCE 2026-15, SECOND READING, AN ORDINANCE AMENDING ORDINANCE 2025-23 AND APPROVING REVISIONS TO THE MINIMUM AND MAXIMUM PAY RATES OF THE CITY'S PAY SCALE AS PART OF THE CITY'S PERSONNEL POLICY AND PROCEDURE MANUAL.**

Councilmember Smith proposed an amendment that would eliminate changes to the top four pay-scale positions and bring that authorization back as part of the capital budget process. He stated, "if no other discussion from council on it, then I make the motion with the amendment removing the top four from the pay scale increase."

Mayor Burke indicated that if an amendment was to be made, it would need to be properly evaluated, implying the matter should be tabled to allow that process to occur.

A motion to table Ordinance 2026-15 was made was Allen, seconded by Combs, all yeas.

14. ORDINANCE 2026-16, SECOND READING, AN ORDINANCE AMENDING ORDINANCES 2020-24, 2021-34, 2022-13, 2022-15, AND 2022-28 REGARDING THE CITY'S HOLIDAYS (6.01), VACATION (6.02), SICK LEAVE (6.03), FUNERAL LEAVE (6.05), LEAVE OF ABSENCE WITHOUT PAY (6.08), AND PERSONAL DAY (6.13) POLICIES IN THE CITY OF SOUTH LEBANON'S PERSONNEL POLICY AND PROCEDURE MANUAL.

A motion to adopt by title only, Ordinance 2026-16, was made by Combs, seconded by Carmack, all yeas.

Following the vote, Councilmember Smith indicated he had questions he had wished to raise prior to the vote. A brief discussion ensued among council members and the Law Director regarding whether the item could be reconsidered. Mayor Burke clarified that because the ordinance had passed, it could be placed on the next meeting's agenda if a member who voted in the affirmative wished to bring it back. Law Director Kirby confirmed this interpretation, stating that per the Rules of Council, a passed motion may be revisited by placing it on a future agenda.

15. RESOLUTION 2026-27, SECOND READING, A RESOLUTION APPROVING AND AUTHORIZING THE MAYOR AND DIRECTOR OF FINANCE TO EXECUTE AN AGREEMENT WITH THE WARREN COUNTY SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT FOR CALENDAR YEAR 2027.

A motion to adopt by title only, Resolution 2026-27, was made by Smith, seconded by Allen, all yeas.

COMMUNICATION ITEMS

16. COMMUNICATIONS & REPORTS

Mayor Burke

- a. Mayor Burke provided several announcements and communications. She urged all Council members who were able to attend the City's upcoming 9/11 Memorial Ceremony, emphasizing that this year's event carries particular significance as the 25th anniversary of the September 11 attacks. She outlined the program, which includes a performance by the Little Miami High School Select Choir under the direction of choir director Sarah Baker, the presentation of colors by the Little Miami JROTC, an invocation by Chaplain Hounshell, remarks by three speakers, and a ceremony conducted by Chief Napier and Sergeant Adams. Mayor Burke extended thanks to Kevin Peyton for logistical assistance, Public Works staff, Administrator Hacker, and the City's events committee.

- b. Mayor Burke also announced the Warren County Municipal League meeting, scheduled for Wednesday, September 23, 2026, at the American Legion, 620 North Broadway. Networking is set to begin at 5:30 P.M. The featured speaker will be Sean Waldman, who will address the top misconceptions about data centers. The cost is \$40 per person, and Mayor Burke asked those interested to notify herself or Councilmember Harrison. She closed her remarks by wishing everyone a happy and safe Labor Day weekend.

Director of Finance Tina Williams

- a. Nothing to Report

Administrator Chris Hacker

- a. Regarding the Water Tower Restoration Project, Administrator Hacker reported that a preconstruction meeting had been held that morning with Tank and Tower Restoration, the contractor selected for the project. He noted that the contractor had wrapped up a prior project ahead of schedule and planned to mobilize by the end of the following week, with actual work beginning a couple of weeks after that pending the erection of scaffolding and safety staging on the exterior of the tower. The contract completion date is November 30, 2026, and Administrator Hacker stated that neither Tank and Tower Restoration, Dixon Engineering, nor Choice 1 anticipated any difficulty in meeting that schedule.
- b. Regarding paving, Administrator Hacker reported that all paving contracts had been signed following legislation passed at the previous meeting, and that a preconstruction meeting was being scheduled to get the paving work underway in the fall.
- c. Regarding Duke Energy activity in the city, Administrator Hacker noted that Duke and its subcontractors remained active in town. In addition to previously announced tree trimming, subcontractors had recently pulled permits to renew gas services. He clarified that the work involves no main replacements and very minimal street work, with only two locations expected to require temporary plating. Neither location would require a full road closure; single-lane traffic would be maintained throughout. Administrator Hacker added that as part of this work, the contractor would be conducting inspections to locate sanitary sewer infrastructure prior to directionally drilling new service connections, and he expressed appreciation for that precautionary approach. He advised residents and Council members that Duke-affiliated subcontractor trucks would be visible around town for the duration of these projects.

Law Director Chase Kirby

- a. Nothing to Report

Sgt. Corey Adams

- a. Sergeant Adams provided an update on the National Night Out event, confirming the date as September 22, 2026 from 6:00 p.m. to 8:30 p.m., and noting that preparations were proceeding smoothly. He expressed appreciation for the Council members who had committed to assisting with the event.

Councilmember Smith inquired whether Chaplain Hounshell was also available to provide support to law enforcement officers who may be experiencing difficulties. Sergeant Adams confirmed that this is indeed a dual purpose of the chaplaincy program, explaining that Chaplain Hounshell is a part-time member of the Warren County Sheriff's Office staff, conducts ride-alongs with deputies, and is available to respond to traumatic incidents to provide support to officers and families alike.

Councilmember Smith also followed up on a prior inquiry regarding educational videos about e-bikes in partnership with Deerfield Township. Sergeant Adams reported that Deerfield Township did not have any existing videos on the topic, and that he had submitted the request through his chain of command. He indicated that at this time, moving forward with the project was not a departmental priority, citing the equipment required to produce a high-quality product and current staffing capacity. He noted, however, that he was actively pursuing other initiatives, including a bicycle helmet program, and that the grant application process for that program opens in February with award decisions made in March. He committed to revisiting the e-bike video concept at a later time.

Councilmember Smith suggested exploring a potential collaboration with Warren County Career Center and a digital design entity to produce the video at lower cost. Sergeant Adams acknowledged the suggestion and agreed to look into it as circumstances allowed.

Councilmember David Smith

- a. Councilmember Smith commented on the Halloween initiative, recalling that the old school building used to host similar events for children, crediting the effort largely to a custodian named Mr. Combs, who he noted still lives in the community.
- b. Councilmember Smith distributed to Council members documentation he had compiled concerning expenditures while the historical society occupied the city building located at 99 N. High Street. He noted that the Mayor had previously quoted approximately \$30,000 for work at the building, but that after reviewing the actual receipts obtained with the assistance of Director of Finance Williams, the true total spent on the building was \$23,350. He noted that the historical society occupied half of the building, reducing the City's proportionate share to approximately \$11,000 over five years. Councilmember Smith observed that utility bills for the years 2023 and 2024 appeared to double unexpectedly, suggesting that the heat may have been left on during the winter months.
- c. Councilmember Smith then directed a question to City Administrator Hacker regarding the traffic islands at River's Crossing, specifically referring to an email the Council had received from someone outside the community about the appearance of the traffic islands and the status of lighting in that area. He noted that work on the lights had appeared to begin and then stop, and asked for a status update on the inquiry he had first raised in February or March.

City Administrator Hacker explained that phase 1 of the remediation involved restoring electric service to the area, which was completed by the original electrical contractor. He clarified that while service was restored, the contractor appeared to consider his work complete at that point, even though the light fixtures still required new lamps. Administrator Hacker then addressed the condition of the traffic islands, both on Corwin-Nixon and within the parking lot.

Administrator Hacker explained that the process to address the maintenance deficiencies had been delayed following the resignation of the former code enforcement officer, which caused the notice period to lapse. The enforcement process was restarted, and upon reaching the final compliance deadline the prior day, the property holder dispatched crews to clear the islands, remove debris, and address weed growth along the retaining wall near the Interstate 71 ramp. Administrator Hacker further noted that the City is addressing the condition of two of the three signage structures associated with the corridor, including rock facing that has separated from the side facing the exit ramp due to weathered adhesive failure, and improperly seated advertising panels on the smaller sign near Pike Street.

Administrator Hacker confirmed the work was completed by a contractor engaged by the property owner rather than city crews, which he noted was appreciated given the city's own workload.

- d. Councilmember Smithe then directed a question to Law Director Kirby regarding the status of his prior request for a written explanation of how an ordinance may be introduced by someone outside of Council or the Mayor, and whether such an action would constitute a proper process.

Law Director Kirby responded by referencing Section 4.02 of the City Charter, which provides that any Council member or the Mayor may introduce an ordinance or resolution. He offered his legal interpretation that this language does not function as a prohibition on other city officials—such as himself or Director Williams—drafting legislation, so long as a Council member or the Mayor formally motions to adopt it, a second is provided, and it receives the required votes for passage. He offered the example of Sergeant Adams identifying a gap in the City's ordinances, prompting the Law Director to draft legislation that is then formally introduced by Council.

Councilmember Smith countered that the charter's language, read in the context of the ORC, suggests that only a Council member or the Mayor may sponsor and introduce legislation, and that the charter itself provides that matters not addressed within it fall back to the Ohio Revised Code. He had previously forwarded a relevant ORC provision to Law Director Kirby some two months prior. Law Director Kirby acknowledged the argument and offered that the distinction lies between the words "introduce" and "draft," maintaining his opinion that the charter does not expressly prohibit other officials from preparing legislation for Council's consideration.

Mayor Burke affirmed that she approves all agenda items and that all ordinances and resolutions are reviewed by the Law Director prior to presentation to Council. She agreed to revisit the charter language on the question of whether it expressly limits introduction rights, but noted that the City's charter form of government provides broader latitude than the ORC in certain respects.

Councilmember Smith raised a final question, asking for an explanation of how a committee meeting attended by three Council members and the Mayor—in which votes were taken—would not constitute a potential Ohio Sunshine Law violation. He pointed to a recent committee meeting involving three Council members and the Mayor, noting that the Mayor had cast a tie-breaking vote, and questioned whether a quorum capable of voting on city business could lawfully convene outside of a publicly noticed regular meeting.

Law Director Kirby stated that he did not have the Ohio Sunshine Law committed to memory but offered his initial reaction that a majority of Council was not present at the committee meeting in question. He committed to researching the matter and providing a supplemental response. Mayor Burke clarified for the record that she does not vote at committee meetings, and that committee proceedings represent recommendations to Council rather than binding decisions.

Councilmember Lisa Fedor

- a. Councilmember Fedor reiterated the importance of the upcoming 9/11 Ceremony and extended particular thanks to Sergeant Adams for the extensive work he has invested in organizing National Night Out, noting that he has largely coordinated the event single-handedly. She also announced that the City's events committee is planning a Halloween event at the administration building on actual trick-or-treat night, from 6:00 to 8:00 p.m., during which candy will be distributed from the steps. She noted that this could become an annual tradition for the building and invited Council members to participate.

Councilmember Sharon Carmack

- a. Nothing to Report

Councilmember Maryan Harrison

- a. Absent

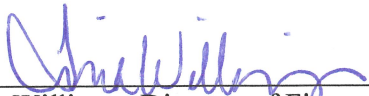
Councilmember Linda Allen

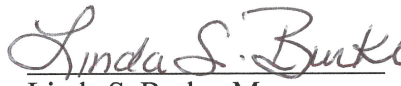
- a. Nothing to Report.

Councilmember Brenda Combs

- a. Nothing to Report.

17. Mayor Burke asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting at 6:45 p.m. A motion was made by Allen, seconded by Smith, all yeas.


Tina Williams, Director of Finance/Clerk


Linda S. Burke, Mayor

For an audio copy of the September 3, 2026, City of South Lebanon Council Regular Meeting, please contact the Director of Finance at twilliams@southlebanonohio.org.