

Executive Summary: Council Work Session – February 8, 2026

Purpose and Scope

The February 8, 2026 Council Work Session was convened as a quarterly working meeting to advance discussion on two primary topics:

1. **Pursuing a Village Charter (Home Rule)**
2. **Review and clarification of job descriptions and operational roles**, particularly within maintenance, administration, and public safety.

The session focused on identifying structural limitations under the current statutory village framework, evaluating lessons learned from a failed 2018 charter effort, and outlining next steps to improve governance efficiency, accountability, and long-term sustainability.

Key Topic 1: Village Charter / Home Rule

Rationale for Reconsidering a Charter

Council members expressed broad agreement that the current statutory framework under the Ohio Revised Code (ORC) restricts local autonomy in several critical areas. The primary motivations for revisiting a charter include:

- **Increased local control** over elections, ballot initiatives, hiring and firing practices, and procurement rules.
- **Reduced administrative friction**, particularly for small-scale projects that are disproportionately burdened by state-mandated bidding requirements.
- **Improved accountability**, including the potential for clearer mechanisms to discipline or remove officials or administrators who are not meeting expectations.
- **Legal flexibility**, especially in light of past instances where citizen-led initiatives were blocked due to the village's non-charter status.

Council emphasized that the intent is not power consolidation, but rather ensuring the village can operate effectively in a changing political and regulatory environment.

Lessons from the 2018 Charter Effort

The previous charter initiative (2018) was widely viewed as unsuccessful due to:

- Overly broad and complex proposed changes.
- High legal costs with limited tangible results.
- Community mistrust stemming from unrelated but concurrent issues (e.g., major property acquisition and leadership concerns).
- A perception that the effort sought to “change everything at once.”

The current approach is deliberately positioned as **fundamentally different**:

- A **“bare-bones” charter** focused primarily on securing home rule status.
- Limited initial changes, potentially including authorization for a **village administrator**, with future changes phased in over time.
- Stronger transparency and public communication, including FAQs and clear articulation of costs and benefits.

Charter Commission and Public Engagement

Council acknowledged that the substance of the charter will ultimately be determined by an independently elected Charter Commission. There was consensus on:

- Encouraging participation from individuals involved in the prior charter effort to preserve institutional knowledge.
- Creating clearer public education tools to address confusion and skepticism.
- Being candid about costs while emphasizing long-term operational efficiencies and avoided legal expenses.

Key Topic 2: Governance, Staffing, and Accountability

Village Administrator Concept

A recurring theme was the potential value of a professionally trained **village administrator** to:

- Reduce operational burden on elected officials.
- Improve consistency, oversight, and long-term planning.
- Clarify reporting lines and accountability, which are currently perceived as fragmented or overly centralized.

Council noted that any such role would require careful checks and balances, potentially written directly into the charter.

Job Descriptions and Operational Roles

Council reviewed several operational areas with an emphasis on clarity, accountability, and proactive management:

- **Maintenance Operations**
 - Growing concern that the village has expanded infrastructure (sidewalks, facilities, maintenance building) without proportional planning for maintenance staffing, equipment, and long-term costs.
 - Recognition that maintenance functions are largely reactive rather than preventive.
 - Discussion leaned toward the need for a **full-time maintenance role**, potentially salaried, to balance seasonal workload fluctuations.
- **Facilities and Equipment**
 - The new maintenance building introduces ongoing upkeep and equipment needs that must be explicitly planned and budgeted.
 - Emphasis on purchasing appropriate, serviceable equipment rather than ad hoc solutions.
- **Police Department Roles**
 - Council reviewed police job descriptions to better understand internal command structure, supervision, and accountability.
 - Acknowledgment that while council has limited influence over policing procedures, clearer understanding of roles (e.g., lieutenant responsibilities) supports better oversight and communication.
- **Pool and Seasonal Operations**

- Discussion highlighted inefficiencies and overlapping responsibilities in pool staffing and concessions management.
- Opportunities identified to reduce costs while maintaining compliance, particularly through role consolidation and clearer task definition.

Cross-Cutting Themes

Several consistent themes emerged across discussions:

- **Accountability:** Desire for systems that ensure performance oversight is not concentrated in a single office.
- **Proactive Planning:** Repeated acknowledgment that maintenance, staffing, and lifecycle costs must be considered earlier in project planning.
- **Scale Sensitivity:** Recognition that the village is small and should not be forced to operate like a large municipality.
- **Transparency and Trust:** Clear communication with residents is essential, particularly given historical skepticism.

Next Steps

- Compile and distribute the meeting summarized notes to council and administration.
- Publish charter-related information, including FAQs, on the village website.
- Continue quarterly work sessions, with a tentative follow-up meeting planned for mid-May 2026 (post-election).
- Monitor the outcome of the charter ballot initiative and prepare for coordination with an elected Charter Commission if approved.

Jeffrey Wilcheck, Fiscal Officer

Tiffany Southard, Mayor