

ALTOONA CITY COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES
MONDAY – MARCH 9, 2026 - 6:00 P.M.
CITY OF ALTOONA TRAINING FACILITY & COUNCIL CHAMBERS
1320 WASHINGTON AVENUE, ALTOONA, PA ALTOONA

The Meeting was televised live on cable Public Access Channel 14 and re-broadcast Tuesday, March 10, 2026.

CALL TO ORDER – by Mayor Pacifico at 6:00 PM in Council Chambers
SILENT MEDITATION
PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE
ROLL CALL – taken by City Clerk Linda Rickens Schellhammer
Present: Council members Beatty, Butterbaugh, Clinich, Ellis, Ickes, Kelley and Mayor Pacifico

Mayor Pacifico announced that Council held an Executive Session for real estate matters, personnel matters and potential litigation on February 9, 2026.

ALL PUBLIC COMMENT

Devin Saylor of 1515 25th Avenue stated Council is violating rights by charging a fee for police and cited Forsythe Co GA and the City of Pittsburgh (2003); also stated the City of Pittsburgh settled and created new ordinances; states he objects to permitting of events downtown and related fees

Caleb Hogan of 2012 5th Avenue stated the proposed urban camping ordinance is taxing the homeless for not being homed

Sherry Elle of PO Box 1373 Altoona stated she lived and worked in Altoona for 30 years and spent 10 years working in social services; stated she is homeless and experienced violence in her home and moved out and lives in her car and with friends and stays in the area to keep her job; stated she has been offered housing in another area by a family member but she does not want to leave this area; stated she contacted the Altoona Housing Authority to check her status on the list and was told the program was defunded

Autumn Temple of 905 N. 4th Avenue stated the halfway house ordinance that is proposed continues to have spacing restrictions which is unconstitutional and discriminatory

Bob Kutz of 1304 Walton Avenue of the Blair/Bedford Labor Council stated fees for police remind him of something the former Blair County Auxiliary Police did in the past and he asked Council to look into it; the Labor Day Parade has taken place since 1990

Rick Speilvogle of 150 Kings Highway of the Blair Co Antique Auto Club stated he

started the downtown cruise 19 years ago and he is against fees

Carol Taylor of 1057 Kettle Road of Indivisible Blair County stated she is defending freedom of speech and believes it is attached to topics people don't like; stated she has had peaceful protests and No Kings is at the end of March; Ms. Taylor threatened Council that she will challenge and that the City will lose

Bridget Jackson of 313 Grant Avenue stated \$50.00 per hour puts a price tag on free speech and it's a constitutional right; stated the proposed urban camping ordinance criminalizes poverty

Nancy Speilvogle of 150 Kings Highway stated the Cruise In downtown on Labor Day weekend has been going on for almost 20 years and it was brought in when nothing was going on downtown; donations go to charities such as DAV, Local Vets, Miracle League

Dwight Kennedy of 2332 Reservoir Road Hollidaysburg and Indivisible Blair County /Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Blair County and co-sponsor of No Kings Rally requested Council re-consider the new proposed terms and return to the previous terms

Kari Godfrey of 313 Scarlet Lane wants to find common ground with others and downtown should be a community HUB

Steve Geis of 104 Pleasant Valley Boulevard suggested Council speak to the homeless; stated those in recovery should be given the chance to come home

Mary Ann Sinisi of 3921 Maple Avenue and Families United for Change stated you can't tell people they can't come here to recover and this is not going away; asked for a way to remove the bad actors and a way to keep the good ones here in relation to the housing providers

Steve Lawson of 2800 Walnut Avenue stated there are cases that state the role of the government is to promote rather than to silence speech and the police should act as neutral facilitators

Michael Allison of 5322 4th Avenue asked Council to be even handed and he understands the fees need to be paid but there needs to be a compromise

Janeena Gorman of 1481 Washington Avenue and Put People First of PA and the Poor Peoples Campaign of PA stated certain voices are being uplifted and certain voices are being silenced

Norman Benford of 2715 Furnace Avenue stated he attended two protests and they were not violent and the police were professional

Amy Hesser of 239 Castle Farms Road asked what will the funds be when the ACLU comes forward and drops a law suit

Tim Baker of 306 S 8th Street asked if there are plans to address the deteriorating building on Norfolk Southern's property across the street from Chestnut Avenue; stated he rented a home in 2018 for \$750.00/mo. but it is now renting for \$1200.00/mo.; suggested the City should institute rent control policies

RESOLUTIONS

- a) approving the minutes of the Altoona City Council Meeting held Monday, February 9, 2026. (0031-26)
- b) amending and re-stating the Fee Resolution 0004-26, adopted January 12, 2026, to include: the removal of Altoona Parking Authority rates – monthly lot fees; addition of Public Events Fees, Law Enforcement/Traffic Fees, Clean-Up and Damage Repair Fees, Altoona Parking Authority Lot Fees for Use of Downtown Lots/Parking Spaces for Public Gathering/Events; and removal of the Heritage Plaza Rental Fee and Non-Profit Waiver. (TABLED)
- c) awarding the 8th Street Sidewalk & ADA Ramps Project-CDBG Funded Base Bid Items to Big Rock Paving, LLC., 44 North 5th Street, PO Box 846, Mount Wolf, PA 17347, in the amount of \$638,265.00, payable from CDBG Funds, and further authorizing the City Manager to execute all documents and the City Clerk to attest to same. (0032-26)
- d) awarding the 8th Street Sidewalk & ADA Ramps Project- Additional Work Items to Big Rock Paving, LLC., 44 North 5th Street, PO Box 846, Mount Wolf, PA 17347, in the amount of \$106,479.00, payable from Capital Funds, and further authorizing the City Manager to execute all documents and the City Clerk to attest to same. (0033-26)
- e) approving the Disposition Application by the Altoona Housing Authority to the Special Applications Center (SAC) through the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) for the Disposal/Sale of one (1) scattered site public housing property owned by the Altoona Housing Authority and addressed as 1477 Washington Avenue, Altoona, PA 16601. (0034-26)
- f) approving Election Polling Place Agreements between the County of Blair, on behalf of the Board of Elections, and the City of Altoona, for polling places located at the City of Altoona Training Facility & Council Chambers and Fire Stations No. 1, No. 2 and No. 3, and further authorizing the City Manager to execute all documents and the City Clerk to attest to same. (0035-26)
- g) approving a Repository Bid submitted by J's Modern Remodeling LLC, of 140 Long Hill Road, Waterbury, CT 06704, in the amount of \$4,160.00, for property

located at 308 2nd Avenue, Altoona, PA 16602 and a Repository Bid in the amount of \$2,250.00 for property located at 709 4th Avenue, Altoona, PA 16602, and further authorizing the City Manager to execute the Taxing District Form. (0036-26) (VOTE DID NOT PASS)

City Clerk Linda Rickens Schellhammer read the resolutions into the record; there was a motion to table item b by Councilman Butterbaugh seconded by Mayor Pacifico; the City Clerk called for the vote which passed 7 to 0 with all present; at the request of Councilman Butterbaugh item g was pulled for a separate vote; the City Clerk called for the vote and the vote did not pass 0 to 7 with all present; the consent vote was taken on all items excluding item b and item g and passed 7 to 0 with all present

ORDINANCES

Introduction

- 1) AN ORDINANCE OF THE CITY OF ALTOONA, BLAIR COUNTY, PENNSYLVANIA, AMENDING THE CODE OF THE CITY OF ALTOONA BY ADDING A NEW CHAPTER 509, TO BE ENTITLED "URBAN CAMPING"; PROVIDING DEFINITIONS, REGULATIONS, ENFORCEMENT, PENALTIES FOR VIOLATIONS; REPEALING OF ALL OTHER ORDINANCES OR PARTS OF LAWS IN CONFLICT THEREWITH; SEVERABILITY OF PROVISIONS AND PROVIDING AN EFFECTIVE DATE.

This ordinance was read into the record by City Clerk Linda Rickens Schellhammer and introduced by Vice-Mayor Ellis.

Introduction

- 2) AN ORDINANCE OF THE CITY OF ALTOONA AMENDING THE CODE OF THE CITY OF ALTOONA TO AMEND CHAPTER 105 ENTITLED "POLICE CIVIL SERVICE COMMISSION", ARTICLE I ENTITLED "RULES AND REGULATIONS"; SECTION 105-22. B. PHYSICAL AGILITY TESTING UPDATING THE PHYSICAL AGILITY TESTING; REPEAL OF ALL OTHER ORDINANCES OR PARTS OF LAWS IN CONFLICT THEREWITH; SEVERABILITY OF PROVISIONS AND PROVIDING AN EFFECTIVE DATE.

This ordinance was read into the record by City Clerk Linda Rickens Schellhammer and introduced by Councilwoman Clinich.

Introduction

- 3) AN ORDINANCE OF THE CITY OF ALTOONA, BLAIR COUNTY, PENNSYLVANIA, AMENDING THE CODE OF THE CITY OF ALTOONA SPECIFICALLY CHAPTER 571, ENTITLED "HALFWAY/RECOVERY, ROOMING AND BOARDING, AND INSTITUTIONALIZED FACILITY LICENSING PROGRAM"; FORM OF APPLICATION,

ITEM A; CHANGING LANGUAGE BY STRIKING THE WORD OR AND ADDING THE WORD AND IN ITEM A; RULES AND REGULATIONS NUMBER 2, CHANGING THE DISTANCE REQUIREMENT FROM 1500 FEET TO 300 FEET; REPEALING OF ALL OTHER ORDINANCES OR PARTS OF LAWS IN CONFLICT THEREWITH; SEVERABILITY OF PROVISIONS AND PROVIDING AN EFFECTIVE DATE.

This ordinance was read into the record by City Clerk Linda Rickens Schellhammer and introduced by Councilman Butterbaugh.

Introduction

- 4) AN ORDINANCE OF THE CITY OF ALTOONA AMENDING THE CODE OF THE CITY OF ALTOONA, CHAPTER 553, ENTITLED "PUBLIC GATHERINGS" TO: CHANGE THE TITLE: ADD NOISE AND ALCOHOL PERMIT WORDING; EXTEND THE SUBMISSION DEADLINE; REMOVE THE DEPOSIT REFERENCES; UPDATE THE INSURANCE REQUIREMENTS; REMOVE THE WAIVER OF FEES; INCLUDE CITY-SPONSORED INFORMATION; PROVIDE PENALTIES FOR VIOLATION; PROVIDE SEVERABILITY OF PROVISIONS, REPEALER; AND PROVIDE AN EFFECTIVE DATE.

This ordinance was read into the record by City Clerk Linda Rickens Schellhammer and introduced by Councilwoman Clinich.

Introduction

- 5) AN ORDINANCE OF THE CITY OF ALTOONA AMENDING THE CODE OF THE CITY OF ALTOONA TO AMEND CHAPTER 405 ENTITLED "LEASE AND/OR CONVEYANCE OF CITY OWNED LANDS", TO: AUTHORIZE CONVEYANCE OF CITY OWNED LAND LOCATED AT 320 E. CHESTNUT AVENUE, ALTOONA, PENNSYLVANIA, TO THE REDEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY OF ALTOONA, FOR \$1.00; REAFFIRM THE REMAINDER OF CHAPTER 405; REPEAL ALL OTHER ORDINANCES OR PARTS THEREOF IN CONFLICT THEREWITH; PROVIDE SEVERABILITY OF PROVISIONS AND PROVIDE AN EFFECTIVE DATE.

This ordinance was read into the record by City Clerk Linda Rickens Schellhammer and introduced by Councilman Beatty.

CITY MANAGER UPDATES – None at this time

MAYOR AND COUNCIL DISCUSSION ITEMS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

Councilman Kelley thanked everyone for coming to the meeting and expressing their opinion as it is not always an easy thing to do; also stated he believes certain events may require additional police protection and costs and the City needs to look at that

Councilman Kelley acknowledged the fatal shooting of Cpl. Timothy O'Connor in Chester County, a 15-year veteran of the PSP, who was shot performing what should have been a routine traffic stop; it is a reminder of the hazards that all of our first responders face and the very difficult jobs that they have

Councilman Kelley asked for thoughts and prayers for former Mayor Bill Schirf and family regarding the loss of his wife

Councilman Kelley stated Bob Kutz is going to be recognized at the AFL-CIO Convention in April with their lifetime achievement award which is well deserved; the work that Bob has done and continues to do in the City is respected

Councilman Butterbaugh thanked everyone for coming to voice their opinion whether agree or disagree; NS is federal land and almost untouchable although the City is trying to get them to clean up their properties and the tracks

Councilman Butterbaugh stated the issue is about housing and making sure it is safe here; there are various categories in the City to include market-rate housing, market-rate rental facilities, subsidized housing, section 8 housing and there are rules that have to be met and followed; many of the issues come when the rules aren't being applied; people are sometimes bringing addicts here to mistreat them; it isn't benevolent; when a women's shelter is opened by someone and when they don't have money for rent they must perform sex in lieu of rent; this is rape and not benevolence and it is going on here in the City of Altoona

In regards to the proposed urban camping ordinance, the City cannot have people defecating on City streets; people are bringing people in need to Altoona and initially they have housing for them and take responsibility; when the subsidy runs out they are kicked onto the street and the benevolence goes away because the money is gone; the City has provided over one million dollars to the homeless issues in the last few years; the City put over \$800,000 into a shelter on Beale Avenue; various agencies with various funding really know what they are doing and there is a lot of work going on

Councilman Butterbaugh stated they are working to protect the most vulnerable and sometimes the most vulnerable and the most in need are the most exploited and the most abused and the most mistreated

Councilman Butterbaugh stated regardless of feelings or thoughts on charging for events downtown, either the taxpayers are paying the bill or they are not; someone is paying and it is just a matter of who is taking the full burden and who is not

Councilman Butterbaugh stated that as far as fees, the discussions and updates typically take place at the beginning and/or at the end of each year

Mayor Pacifico stated the intent of removing parking fees is to bring it online with the Parking Authority and not through the City

Vice-Mayor Ellis stated he has been the one in the forefront dealing with the homeless issue and anything he brings back to Council and City staff has received support; everyone works multiple days a week with multiple social service agencies; VM Ellis stated the issue is complex and he has traveled to other communities at the county and local government level to find ideas and solutions; one of the suggestions was to work closely with social service agencies and police; this does not include criminalizing this issue; there needs to be resources from the agencies to work closely with the City departments to get those that are homeless through the process to a better place; that effort is going on every day in the City between Council, staff and social service agencies and the county agencies; thank you to Chief Adam Free and his command staff for the countless hours they have put into this in the last three years

In regards to the proposed rooming and boarding ordinance the first meeting on homelessness that was attended with Councilman Ickes included three examples by the people in the room where multiple people were living in properties in deplorable condition; within three weeks working with everyone the hospital donated over \$15,000 to start moving people out of condemned structures in the City; thirty people have been relocated; within three weeks of that first meeting eight people were removed from a rat, mice, roach, bed bug infested property into better situations and the rental license was revoked for 5 years; the second was a flop house on 3rd Avenue that AFD had to eventually respond to and rescue people; the third was a house on 5th Avenue that was run by a gentleman who had his rental license suspended for 5 years; the rooming and boarding houses were not covered under the rental inspection and they need to be regulated due to landlords with bad behavior putting citizens in a bad place; about one year ago there was a boarding house that caught on fire on E 4th Avenue; AFD had to rescue a lady holding a child out of a window on the third floor and a lady died on the second floor; this was an unlicensed, unregistered and uninspected property; four City firefighters were injured that night as well; there is a lot of passion on Council to keep people safe and the thought that they are not keeping people safe is outrageous; these examples are what has built up to this point and there are actually many others as well; the rooming house where eight were removed was taking the social security checks of the tenants and they had no money to pay for food so they were going to the various food banks and sources to eat; this is going to be eradicated; this Council has gone well above and beyond eradicating this behavior

Regarding the proposed Urban Camping Ordinance, Vice-Mayor Ellis and City Manager McGuire met with the Pittsburgh City Police because of the success they are having dealing with the homeless in the downtown section of Pittsburgh; one of their recommendations was to adopt an urban camping ordinance; there have

been multiple meetings with the Magisterial District Judges and social service agencies and the goal is to get people into a better position so they are not sleeping under a tent or on a park bench; the City is currently in discussion with the agencies and one has stepped up and offered to try a position called a Homeless Coordinator; when City departments interact with people who are in need of shelter, this coordinator will get people from point A to point B, etc.; Chief Swope worked with some of the agencies this past summer and there were issues with being able to respond quickly; the coordinator would be looking at this more closely; the key is consistent, quick collaboration and keeping people safe; it is not the intent to bring criminal charges or jail time or fines, but if this becomes an issue, there is an option being explored regarding public service in the community; Council is open to suggestions to make all of this work and to make this a better place and they are not closed to ideas

Councilman Ickes thanked Councilman Ellis for articulating the facts very well stating as a point of clarification that it was not until recently that the City had the ability to revoke rental licenses for the bad actors; a lot of the reforms and legislation has to go through Harrisburg but once the City has tools in place to take action the City is doing their best to act on them

Councilman Beatty stated this Council worked hard creating housing and gave examples of the tiny houses, Cricket Knoll and the rehab of 3 houses; the homeless shelter on Beale Avenue was funded by the City and would not be there if that funding was not provided; Councilman Beatty stated resources have been put in place to work on the various problems identified and they work every day to make sure housing is safe and that social service groups are involved and churches are involved and Operation Our Town and local businesses to name a few

Councilwoman Clinich stated she appreciates everyone attending and voicing their opinions and stated that behind the scenes there are a lot of good things going on that people don't see; the City is working to help the homeless and the homeless are not going unseen and are not being pushed out

Members of Council commented on Vice-Mayor Ellis and the amount of work he put into the issues discussed

Mayor Pacifico stated he is not in favor of charging for events downtown

QUESTIONS FROM THE MEDIA – Present: Bill Kibler of the *Altoona Mirror*; Sydney Roach, WPSU/NPR; Videographer, WTAJ TV-10

ADJOURNMENT – by Mayor Pacifico at 7:40 p.m.