



# Know **OUR** AVON LAKE

## Mark Your Calendar

For meeting details, please visit  
[www.AvonLake.org/Events](http://www.AvonLake.org/Events)

### Avon Lake Play Space (ALPS) Open House

**February 28, 7:00 p.m.**  
Avon Lake Public Library

Community members are invited to view project updates and provide feedback.

### City-wide Ward Meetings

**Wards 1 & 2 - March 1, 7:00 p.m.**  
Learwood Middle School

**Wards 3 & 4 - March 15, 7:00 p.m.**  
Troy Intermediate School

We're back in person for Avon Lake's annual public ward meetings! This is your chance to have your voice heard while hearing directly from City officials.

Unable to attend the ward meetings? Questions or comments to be addressed during the meeting may be mailed to Mary Krupar, 150 Avon Belden Rd., emailed to [mkrupar@avonlake.org](mailto:mkrupar@avonlake.org), or placed in the drop box located outside of City Hall. The deadline is February 27.

### Roundtable Conversations to Discuss New Trash Contract

This is your opportunity to share your thoughts before the City pursues a new contract.

**April 26, 7:00 p.m.**  
Avon Lake High School Commons

## Public Works Study helps the City make targeted improvements

In 2022, the City conducted an analysis of the operations, organization, and management of the Public Works Department, including service and engineering. Experts from Raftelis, a national management consulting firm, evaluated every aspect of the department and provided the City with a series of recommendations.

According to Councilman Mark Spaetzel, who initiated the study, City Council is working closely with the Public Works Department and the administration to ensure resources are being used to maximize the efficiency and effectiveness of the operations. These recommendations will be implemented utilizing a best practices model.

Several of these recommendations have already been addressed and others are in progress. Funds have been allocated to hire two additional laborers, purchase or lease several new vehicles and add software solutions for work order processing and asset management. The results will be the improved maintenance of our buildings, sewers, and streets and improved service to the residents.

### Additional Public Works News

#### *Updating Our Service Fleet*

As part of the Public Works study, a new plan is underway to overhaul and replace outdated service vehicles. New equipment, which will be leased in phases over the next three years, will include new trucks for critical community services, including snow removal and salt distribution. "Retired" equipment will be put to good use in new ways – for cleaning parks and catch basins. Look for some of the new vehicles to hit the streets late 2023 into 2024!

#### *Recreation*

The City recently completed and approved a master plan for improvements to Weiss Park. The long-term projects will span several years, but residents will start to see some work later in 2023 – including improvements to restrooms and the stables.

#### *Other improvements to look for this summer:*

- New pool equipment will be installed
- Artwork will be dressing up Bicentennial Park

## Honoring Military Veterans with new pole banner program

From Memorial Day through Labor Day, a new program will feature the faces and service branches of Veterans near and dear to residents. Known as Avon Lake Veterans Never Forgotten, the program will offer residents the chance to sponsor a pole banner of a veteran they'd like to recognize. Once the banners are removed, the sponsor will receive the banner as a keepsake. The program came to life thanks to the efforts of Avon Lake resident Mark Summers who contacted Council President Marty O'Donnell with the idea.

If you're interested in sponsoring a loved one, more information will be available soon on the City's website. Veterans honored need not be from Avon Lake or have ties to the community.

## Letter from the Mayor

Let your voices be heard! It's time for the annual ward meetings where residents can learn what's happening in the community and get answers to their questions. The meetings will be 7:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. on Wed., March 1 at Learwood Middle School (Wards 1 and 2) and Wed., March 15 at Troy Intermediate School (Wards 3 and 4). We hope to see you there!

Congratulations to members of the city administration who have recently been recognized for outstanding achievement. Human Resources Director, Mary Siwierka, received the Outstanding Fellow honor from the Cleveland State University Leadership Academy. She was selected for this distinction by her fellow classmates for her exceptional work.

The Avon Lake police department received the Platinum AAA Community Traffic Safety Award for their efforts to improve local traffic safety for all modes of travel. The platinum award is given to communities that have documented new, perhaps innovative, traffic safety programs, projects, or initiatives. We are proud of the talented and dedicated members of the city administration.

Thank you to all who supported the Our Safety Our Avon Lake ballot issue. Even though the issue was voted down, we are committed to meeting the safety needs of the community. This has become more challenging due to the increasing EMS call volume and high number of housing starts. We will continue to study ways to provide the services residents and businesses have come to expect.

And finally, demolition of the former NRG power plant on Lake Rd. has begun. Please visit [www.AvonLake.org](http://www.AvonLake.org) for updates. We are excited to see what the future holds for this prime lakefront location. ■

## Two New Department Heads joining our community



*Kevin Brubaker,  
Public Works Director*

Kevin Brubaker joins Avon Lake after having worked for many years as the City of Elyria's Safety Services Director, a role where he oversaw 16 departments including sanitation and water. He's excited to bring this experience to Avon Lake.

"We are so lucky to have the lakefront here, including the surrounding parks and boat dock. The waterfront is an incredible resource and, from a public works perspective, I'm excited to play a role in continuing to make it a vibrant part of our community."

Being outdoors is a big part of Kevin's life. When the pandemic hit, he took up running. He currently competes in triathlons and plans to run his first full marathon in 2023. He's the proud father of Cameron and has been married to his wife Lisa for 29 years. Although his son is 22 years old now, Kevin spent many years coaching his basketball and baseball games – including a few at Weiss Park!



*Ed Widman,  
Finance Director*

After working for more than 40 years in government finance – including several years serving in Erie County – Ed Widman thought he might be ready to retire. However, life had different plans for him. In 2022, Mayor Zilka asked Ed to bring his decades of experience to the city. Now, Ed is celebrating his 45th year in government finance, a role that he continues to enjoy.

"I'm excited to have the opportunity to serve the Avon Lake community. Avon Lake currently has a number of impressive projects underway. It is an exciting time to be part of the process and share my skills and experience as the plans unfold."

Ed is the proud father of four adult children and has always valued family time. He enjoys cooking, traveling, and a variety of outdoor activities, including recreational opportunities and gardening. He's especially excited about enjoying Avon Lake's beautiful waterfront!

## Avon Lake Leaders receive special recognition from Cleveland State University



Each year, Cleveland State University hosts a nationally recognized Leadership Academy, where public sector employees are invited to take part in dynamic educational opportunities designed to strengthen their skills. Over the years, many Avon Lake officials have gone through this prestigious program, with some – including Mayor Greg Zilka – serving as ongoing contributors during the 90+ hours of hands-on training, seminars, and outreach efforts.

For 2022, Human Resources Director, Mary Siwierka, was not only selected as a fellow to the program but was also named the "Leadership Academy 31 Outstanding Fellow" at the program's conclusion. Siwierka's award recognizes an outstanding Academy fellow who has gone above and beyond in their role. Specifically, she served as one of three team leads on a community outreach project that helped raise money and awareness for the Cleveland Christian Home, an organization that works with children and families who are struggling with mental illness, abuse, and neglect.

The program also honors leaders in other ways. This year, the University selected Mayor Zilka for the newly renamed "2022 William M. Denihan Legends of Leadership Award." Mr. Rob Zioli, Director of the Center for Public & Non-Profit Management at Cleveland State University, noted that the Mayor continually gives his time and knowledge to the program. "The Legends of Leadership is a lifetime achievement award bestowed on folks that have dedicated their career to public service and the Leadership Academy program," he said. "Mayor Zilka is a stalwart of the Leadership Academy."

## Police Department receives AAA Safety Award

In fall of last year, automobile club AAA recognized Avon Lake with their AAA 2022 Community Traffic Safety Platinum Award. The award is given annually to communities based on their efforts to improve local traffic safety for all modes of travel. Platinum Awards are the highest recognition given and are only presented to communities, "that have documented new, perhaps innovative, traffic safety programs, projects or initiatives for the previous year." Communities must also demonstrate outstanding success across key areas including: pedestrian, bicycle, and school bus safety; teen driving; senior safety; seat belt use; distracted and impaired driving; and roadway safety projects. Lt. Francis Tibbitts was instrumental in putting together the application to get the City recognized.

Chief Vincent E. Molnar views this award as one the community earned as a whole – and one that goes well beyond the work his department does to oversee traffic safety. "We view this as truly being a 'community' traffic safety award. It takes the residents being committed to driving safely, Public Works clearing the snow and ice in a timely manner, Engineering's efforts to design safe roadways, and the Police Department educating the public on the laws and encouraging them to avoid dangerous driving behaviors. We hope to continue to build on this success and to continue to encourage Avon Lake residents to protect themselves, their families, and their neighbors by driving safely while paying full time attention to the road." ■

## New License Plate Recognition (LPR) Cameras Enhance Safety

In response to an increase in car thefts and other related issues in the City, Avon Lake City Council authorized the police department to initiate a program to reduce these types of crimes. The LPR program will capture a photo of the front and back license plates of all vehicles entering the City.

This technology is being used by many other cities throughout the region. As a result, a city can enter a suspect or stolen vehicle's information into the system; if another city's camera gets a hit, the local police department will be alerted.

Aside from helping to solve auto thefts, the technology can be used to prevent burglaries, locate persons wanted by warrants, Amber Alerts, and other missing persons or related matters.

The City has created a strict policy on how the information can be used and shared and there is a limited retention placed on it. Additionally, the cameras do not have the ability to capture speed readings and cannot be used to ticket drivers for such infractions.

The LPRs are just one of the many new ways Avon Lake is working to increase the safety and security for its citizens. ■

## Environmentally Speaking Community Education

Avon Lake's Environmental Affairs Advisory Board has partnered with the Avon Lake Public Library to present environmental programs. Upcoming programs include Composting Basics - March 14, Organic Lawn Care - April 11. Register at [www.ALPL.org](http://www.ALPL.org)

## Economic Development Department changes name & streamlines responsibilities

Now one phone call gets more done. Meet the newest department in Avon Lake City government: Community Development. Formerly known as Economic Development, this "new" department is more than just a name change. It restructures three core City functions – planning, zoning, and economic development – into one area. By bringing these three areas together under one umbrella, more collaboration and communication can take place during the community development process.

The Community Development team includes:

- Director – Ted Esborn
- Senior Planning & Zoning Manager – Austin Page
- Zoning Assistant – Diane Reynolds
- Planning & Zoning Manager – Coming Soon!

## Shop Local Raffles benefit our community

Great merchandise, close-to-home convenience, and friendly service. The benefits of shopping local just keep getting better. And, they were better than ever during the City's fourth annual Shop Local raffle program, which took place during late November and December. More than 40 businesses participated.

For the raffles, the City purchased a \$50 gift card from participating businesses, with the respective business donating an additional \$50 gift card. Each establishment conducted its own drawing, where a winner received one of the \$50 gift cards. The other gift card was included in the grand prize drawing, which was \$2,000 in Avon Lake shopping and dining at 40 different businesses. Congratulations to the 2022 grand prize winner, Renee Robertson! ■

### New Businesses in Avon Lake

Fall was busy in the City, with many new businesses hosting ribbon cuttings ceremonies:

*\*New\* Lakeside Nutrition (under new management) – June*

*Dyesha's Royal Princess – August*

*Plum Asian Fare & Sushi – August*

*Susan's Sugar & Spice – November*

*Lake T Apparel – December*

## Avon Lake's Tree Commission brings out the beauty

Travel anywhere within Avon Lake, and tree-lined streets or tree-filled parks likely remind you of what makes our City special: its abundant natural resources. Assuring these trees remain healthy and prosper is in-part the work of a dedicated group known as the Avon Lake Tree Commission. This mostly volunteer group advocates for the health and safety of public trees in our City while also assisting with the development of urban forest inventories, management plans, and ordinances.

"The commission is also involved with the deployment of street trees in new developments, and we are ramping up our public outreach efforts beyond our annual Arbor Day event. We want to foster a community that is committed to the sustainable management of our urban forest, which is made up of all the trees in the City," explains Terry Robison, who leads the Tree Commission. The Tree Commission has five voting members: three volunteer Avon Lake residents who serve three-year terms, a representative from City Council, and the Urban Forester, a City position that is currently vacant.

This year, the Tree Commission will be ramping up its educational outreach. For the second year, they will be distributing 320 tree seedlings on Arbor Day (April 28) to 5th graders at Troy Intermediate School and St. Joseph Parish School. "In addition, we are collaborating with Avon Lake's Environmental Affairs Advisory Board on a series of expert presentations at the Avon Lake Public Library," Robison says.

"We are also beginning a public tree inventory to provide critical data to prepare short- and long-term management plans for our public trees."

Robison's involvement with the Commission is invaluable for the City. He is an expert naturalist, having worked for more than 11 years for the Cleveland Metroparks, spending many of those years as the park system's Director of Natural Resources.

"We all love trees for their beauty (well maybe not the leaves in the fall), but a healthy and diverse urban forest provides multiple benefits to the community beyond just aesthetics. Trees provide habitat and nourishment for pollinators, birds, and other wildlife while providing shade and evaporative cooling for us. They produce oxygen while absorbing and tying up carbon dioxide thus helping mitigate climate change. Trees also remove pollution that can aggravate respiratory problems, and they help control stormwater runoff. Moreover, studies have shown that trees are associated with making people feel calmer, lower crime, and even quicker healing for hospital patients. And, our forested parks provide opportunities for shinrin-yoku (forest bathing), which simply means that spending time in nature is physically and emotionally really good for us!"

Residents who are interested in learning more about the Tree Commission are invited to attend meetings, which are held at 7 p.m. on the second Wednesday of each month at the Old Firehouse Community Center. ■

## Stay in Touch



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Human Resources  
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Law  
440-930-4122

Mayor  
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Municipal Court  
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Police  
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Public Works:  
Planning/Engineering  
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