



JANUARY 2019

City Council

Implementation of a Citizen App, which will be an effective communication tool for residents to communicate and track safety issues with the City. "No-Knock" legislation to eliminate door-to-door sales. Various infrastructure projects including street and sidewalk repairs, bike path program and Overlook Park restoration.

Digital Media

Roll out of a new and improved City website, following the Bicentennial.

Economic Development

Completion of the Comprehensive Land Use Plan, which will be eye opening for what the future holds for Avon Lake.

Recreation

Successful, quality program offerings that reach every demographic.

Regional Water

Completion of sewer separations, thanks to the patience and support of our residents.

Service

Construction of the Bicentennial Gazebo at Veteran's Park, complete with time capsule. New and improved restrooms at Weiss Park.

Beginning January 7, 2019, bulk pick-up will be the first Monday of the month.

DEPARTMENT
NEW YEAR'S RESOLUTIONS

Avon Lake Bicentennial: Looking Back and Looking Forward

Looking back at our history and looking forward toward building a strong community spirit has been the unofficial theme of the Bicentennial Committee. Of course, a Bicentennial is all about 200 years of history and an occasion to inform our residents about the history of their city, but it is also an opportunity to ignite a sense of community spirit with people who are new to the city and those who have lived here their whole life. Whether it is an Avon Lake 200 magnet on a car or spending an afternoon with family and friends at an event, we want to engage all of Avon Lake in our celebration.

Now, let's look back at 2018...our first new Bicentennial event, the Beer Festival, was a smashing success by all accounts. The breweries raved about how organized the event was and the attendees gave glowing reviews on social media and in person. It is our hope that the festival continues into the future.



Mayor Greg Zilka and Mrs. Patti Zilka helping Sibling Revelry Brewery to serve up their popular selections.

Looking forward to 2019, we have four new events. To celebrate the vital role that churches and choirs have played in the history of Avon Lake, Avon Lake Presbyterian, Avon Lake United Church of Christ, Christ Evangelical Lutheran, Holy Spirit and St. Joseph churches along with TrueNorth Cultural Arts will be performing selections spanning 200 years of rich liturgical music. Also performing will be Ceci McKay on the harp, bell choirs from three of the churches and a praise band. The event will be held at the Avon Lake High School Performing Arts Center on Sunday, January 20, at 3:00 pm and is free to the public. Refreshments will be served after the entertainment, which will allow people to mingle and enjoy a display of Avon Lake's history.

Still in the rough stages of planning are a Scavenger Hunt: Destination Party, the History Trail Bike Hike and our final event, the Fourth of July Jubilee, in which we hope to fill the whole day with family fun. Scavenger Hunt: Destination Party will be a city-wide hunt for clues that will ultimately lead the 200 adult participants to an Avon Lake venue for drinks and appetizers. The clues are all based on living memory history and, for those who are newer to Avon Lake, there will be easier clues. The History Trail Bike Hike will look back at life 200 years ago with pioneer skill demonstrations such as building a log cabin, soap making, washing clothes, candle making, churning butter and managing farm animals. This step back in time will help us imagine life in Avon Lake when it was settled.

To keep up on all our fun and activities check-in at AvonLake200.org. ■

Avon Lake and the Railway – An Uneasy Alliance

by Sherry Spenser



The Aslaksen home on Cove Avenue in Avon Lake

As we celebrate our city's history, the Lake Shore Electric Railway commands center stage as the city's greatest stimulus for early growth. It enabled efficient movement of goods and produce, provided transportation to work and to school, and fostered an amusement park along Erie's shore that attracted throngs of vacationers and picnickers in the summer.

Though a boon to economic development, the railway was also perceived as a threat to life and limb by many Avon Lake citizens. Selden Payne, a Civil War veteran

who returned from the war to resume farming in Avon Lake, was killed by a railway car in 1898. The elderly man, who had lost much of his hearing, unwittingly stepped into the path of an oncoming railway car near Moore Road and was "knocked into eternity", according to one local newspaper. The press reported that he was the electric railway's first casualty. In 1919, a LSER car inflicted several broken bones and a permanent spinal injury on Mathias Mawby, Sr., a local fruit farmer who had immigrated from England. Another of the railway's victims was John Aslaksen, the fourth of Captain

Olav Aslaksen's thirteen children, and the family's first son.

John met his demise in August 1921 when he drove his Ford automobile into the path of an oncoming LSER car, and was instantly killed. The collision occurred on a stormy day near Stop 40, just in front of his family's home on Cove Avenue in Avon Lake. Although only 20 years old at the time of his death, John had distinguished himself just two years earlier as a hero on the high seas. While serving as mate aboard an ocean freighter captained by his father, he urged Captain Aslaksen to respond to a distress call from a tank steamer off the Newfoundland banks. A fierce storm waged, and other officers onboard opposed the rescue effort as too risky. The captain was swayed by the son's insistence on responding to the call for aid, and as a result, an entire crew of twenty lives was saved. Aslaksen's ship remained by the tanker's side for several days and nights as the treacherous weather continued. The rescue effort was hailed as a daring feat in maritime history.

While the LSER brought much to the expansion of Avon Lake, it also exacted a high price from its citizenry, claiming both life and limb of unwary pedestrians and motorists. Not all mourned the demise of the railway in 1938. It was loved by some, but not by all. ■



Lake Shore Electric Railway car.



A Change in Leadership at Avon Lake Fire Department

Chris Huerner and Jeremy Betsa at Chief Huerner's Retirement Celebration.

After 27 years, Chief Chris Huerner is retiring from the Avon Lake Fire Department and looking forward to hanging up his firefighter hat and wearing different ones. Those hats being that of a business partner with his son, hobbyist and, most importantly, Grandpa.

Although Chief Huerner's uncle was an Avon Lake firefighter, he had not set out for a career in the fire service. After graduating high school, he entered the Air Force where he eventually found his calling. Following firefighter training in Illinois, Chris was stationed in Germany where he served for four years, during which he was able to see the Berlin Wall before it came down. With family roots in Avon Lake, Chris felt very lucky to join the Avon Lake Fire Department in 1991, especially having the opportunity to work along side his uncle, Tom Huerner, before his retirement.

Promoted to Fire Chief in 2012, Chris believes that his biggest accomplishment was the redesign of the Fire Department structure. With the Department's growing responsibilities, Chris recognized that the current positions of fire fighter, lieutenant and chief would need to be broadened. The process was a gradual one, and Chris feels very grateful for the collaboration with Mayor Zilka and Avon Lake Council to implement the new structure. The

Avon Lake Fire Department now has two assistant chiefs, one devoted to operations and one to fire prevention and public education, as well as the position of captains. Averaging 10-12 calls per day, the Department is more streamlined and efficient.

Most appreciative of the streamlined structure in place is Jeremy Betsa, who will become the new Avon Lake Fire Department Chief following Chris' retirement. Along with the new structure, Jeremy credits Chris' mentoring and the support of the officers for the ability to hit the ground running and continue the good work of Chief Huerner.

Growing up in Medina with parents that were both public corrections officers, Jeremy knew he wanted to pursue public safety as a profession. After taking a public safety course at the Medina County Career Center while in high school, he graduated as a Level 1 firefighter. After volunteering with the Erhart/York Township Fire Department, he then worked part-time with the Medina Fire Department. After completing paramedic training, Jeremy sought full-time employment as a firefighter.

Hired in 2010, Jeremy recalls making his decision to join the Avon Lake Fire Department mostly because of Avon Lake's

close-knit community. This decision is one that he is very thankful. In addition to the ongoing support of residents, the camaraderie and respect that exists between the Avon Lake Fire Department and Avon Lake Police Department is second to none.

As Chief, Jeremy looks to increase community outreach. Plans are in the works for a Citizen Fire Academy, tentatively set for 2019. In addition, the Department will be purchasing a new fire truck, replacing Engine #4 which was purchased in 1996. This process, which began in April with the support of Mayor Zilka and Avon Lake Council, will be documented and photographed to allow Avon Lake residents to see the progression from the very beginning.

As Chris Huerner retires and Jeremy Betsa assumes the role of Fire Chief, one thing that they both echo is their appreciation for the tremendous community support that they and the Department, as a whole, feel every day. ■

Comprehensive Land Use Update

The City of Avon Lake has contracted with OHM Advisors to develop a comprehensive land use plan to guide the future development of the City of Avon Lake. Leading the project is Aaron Domini (Ohio State University, Masters in City and Regional Planning) and Arthur Schmidt (Kent State University, Masters in Urban Design).

A steering committee of Avon Lake residents has been selected to periodically meet with members of the consulting group and provide input on the plan as it begins to take shape. Those members are: Bill Heine, Ray Frank, Mike Sherban, Greg Palmer, Gary Izo, Kevin Nelson, Jim Sayler and Rob Munro. Also serving on the steering committee are city officials Mayor Greg Zilka, Councilperson Jennifer Fenderbosch, Public Works Director Joe Reitz, Zoning Administrator Ruth Booher and Law Director Abe Lieberman.

According to an OHM official, "a comprehensive plan really is sort of a large look at what a city can be. It's essentially a blueprint for the future." He added, "This isn't a specific guide that will tell exactly what you need to do in every case. This sets up the parameters for future development and future ideas and future policy changes to occur."



The OHM team and several city officials including Mayor Zilka and Public Works Director Reitz have recently met with several local developers and builders to get sense of their collective visions for the city in the coming years. Economic Development Director Ted Esborn has been working for a number of months to prepare for the start of the study to insure a smooth beginning.

We encourage you to learn more about the Avon Lake Comprehensive Plan by visiting www.avonlakecomprehensiveplan.com and taking the community survey. Help us shape the future of our remarkable city! ■

CONTACT US

Avon Lake City Hall
440-933-6141

Building
440-930-4102

Council Office
440-930-4121

Digital Media
440-933-7677

Economic Development
440-930-4167

Finance
440-933-6141

Fire
440-933-8305

Human Resources
440-930-4127

Law
440-930-4122

Mayor
440-930-4100

Municipal Court
440-930-4103

Police
440-933-4567

**Public Works:
Planning/Engineering**
440-930-4101
Service
440-930-4126

Recreation
440-930-4130

Regional Water
440-933-6226

Zoning
440-930-4143

2019 WARD MEETINGS

The public is invited to share their ideas for the future of Avon Lake at the 2019 Ward Meetings. OHM will make a presentation at 6:30pm, followed by the Ward meeting at 7:00pm.

WARDS 1 & 2

Tuesday, February 12

Learwood Middle School

WARDS 3 & 4

Wednesday, February 27

Troy Intermediate School