

# Ward 2 Meeting

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Agency: Ward 2

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## Summary

- Akron police officers detailed their recruiting strategies and the new requirements for becoming an officer. Officers also outlined laws around Ring doorbell cameras and warned that “Constitutional Auditors” are currently in Akron baiting police and residents into confrontation.
- The CEO of Akron Children’s, [Christopher Gessner](#), explained his background in healthcare. He explained how the hospital is doing and what steps it is taking to improve both services and facilities.
- Phil Lombardo (Ward 2, Akron City Council) addressed residents' concerns about utilities city services. He also introduced [Christine Higham](#) (Summit County Council) and introduced speakers at upcoming meetings.

## Follow-Up Questions

- What previous training will be accepted for Akron Police recruits?
- Why has Akron Children’s opted not to sell to a larger system or venture capital fund, as Akron General and Summa Health have?

## Notes

Approximately 50 people were present at the meeting. A taco bar was offered to attendees.

- Phil Lombardo, [Ward 2](#) council member, started the meeting at 6:09 p.m.
  - Lombardo thanked his wife for preparing the taco bar and recognized a community member’s birthday.
- An Akron police officer said the [Akron Police Department](#) is currently recruiting new officers and urged the public to recruit whoever they can into the academy.
  - An officer acknowledged that the [Police Academy](#) is next door to the [Polish American Citizens Club](#) (where the meeting is being held)
  - She said there are a record [15 female cadets](#) in this year’s class

- Lombardo asked if there had been a change in the number of women in the department since she was trained 30 years ago.
  - She said there were only five women in her class and that she was the only one who had been promoted and the only one still on APD.
- She said that APD will start accepting lateral transfers, which is where new officers will not have to attend the full Akron Police Academy for training but will instead have a shorter Akron-specific training in addition to previous training from other academies.
- A community member asked why this is not already the standard
  - She said civil service rules required them to go through the entire academy
- Lombardo said that he attended the [Akron Police Citizens' Academy](#) on Thursday nights and said that he "couldn't believe what they [police officers] go through." He said that he has a new appreciation for what officers do.
  - Lombardo said he experienced a simulation where he had to decide whether to shoot an unarmed person coming through a door. Lombardo learned about the need for reaction before action.
- Another officer said [Ring doorbells](#) (which were being distributed before the meeting) can be pointed anywhere unless they are pointed to intentionally collect nude footage of an individual.
  - He said "constitutional auditors" are attempting to goad police into confrontations that violate their constitutional rights.
    - He said one person named Steven Kelly from the "[Lemmy Audit You](#)" YouTube channel has been recording people in public in Akron and confronting police and posting the encounters online
      - When community members asked what to do if they encountered him, the officer said to call him out by name or ignore him
    - He also warned that other so-called constitutional auditors are carrying weapons in public to create calls for service or roaming the police station.
- The president and CEO of [Akron Children's](#), Christopher Gessner, explained his history in hospital systems, including Pittsburgh and Colorado. He said he was brought back to Akron Children's because of his passion for helping kids.
  - He said Akron Children's has seen a lot of change since he first started in 2009.
  - He said they perform all operations except for solid organ transplants and operate 42 care offices in Northeast Ohio, including a unique [Birth Unit](#).
    - He said they operate a [behavioral health center](#) to put mental health services in children's primary care.
  - He said they are working to allow patients and families to interface with the hospital using their cellphones for scheduling appointments, paying bills, and receiving test results. He said this change is because young parents prefer not to make calls.
    - Gessner said people would still be able to call the hospital.

- He said that Akron Children's has a [master facilities plan](#) that accounts for facility upgrades systemwide
  - Upgrades include a new behavioral health center, moving the ICU unit, opening a unique pediatric ambulatory center in Cleveland, and building an [ED in the Mahoning Valley](#)
- He said that there is a challenge with doctors choosing not to go into pediatrics, which is why they are expanding pediatrics in Northeast Ohio.
- He said that staffing, finances, bond ratings, community support, and patient satisfaction are in good condition due to a dedicated workforce.
  - Akron Children's is community-driven and not owned by a larger health system.
- A community member asked if the hospital has stayed in good condition since she was born.
  - Gessner responded that even facilities that were around when she was born are still being maintained and renovated.
- Lombardo asked how many beds are available through Akron Children's
  - Gessner said that there are 300 beds in Akron, but, including other facilities in Northeast Ohio, there are approximately 450 beds available
    - He said Akron Children's employs 7,000 people, including more than 1,000 doctors.
    - He said that they serve 90,000 kids in Akron and 30,000 kids in the Mahoning Valley (the Youngstown area.)
  - He said that Akron Children's has helped save six kids by providing EpiPens and inhalers to approximately 50 schools.
  - He said that the pediatric wing in all three of Cleveland's major health centers completed approximately 21,000 surgeries and that Akron Children's alone has completed approximately the same number.
- A community member asked what the age limit for the hospital is.
  - Gessner said that people up to 26 are admitted, but some older patients are treated when doctors are comfortable with that and determine it to be necessary.
  - Gessner said 90% of patients admitted are under 18, but that they are the official sports medicine provider for the University of Akron Zips, so they do see college-aged athletes as well.
- A community member asked how much money the [Holiday Tree Festival](#) brings in.
  - It brings in approximately \$300,000 annually and is run by volunteers who choose where to put the money.
    - This year volunteers chose the Virtual Nursing Program.
- [Christine Higham \(Summit County Council District 6\)](#) introduced herself and said that she is now representing most of Ward 2 after [redistricting](#) and that she deals with constituent services for residents of Ward 2.
  - She asked for any questions about the county government
    - Nobody asked questions

- Lombardo announced speakers at upcoming meetings, including [Chris Ludle, director of public service](#), and [Mayor Shamma Malik](#) in June, a representative of the [Akron Zoo](#) in July, [Habitat for Humanity](#) in October, Police Chief [Brian Harding](#) in November, and a representative to talk about the Shower Bus in June or July.
- A community member said that the [library provides free passes](#) to Akron attractions such as Stan Hywet and the Children's Museum for anybody with a library card.
- Lombardo said that during the next meeting, he will ask Malik about city services, including issues with lots not being mowed (he said that some lots may or may not be city-owned), and vacant houses in North Hill.
  - He said the [Housing Appeals board](#) approves 50 to 60 demolitions per year but many of those homes have not been demolished, including a [burned home on Linden Avenue](#).
- A community member asked why her devil strip was dug up and left that way when no work was being done by any utility companies.
  - Lombardo responded that utility companies are doing soil testing and will be back to repair the grass.
    - Lombardo said he is pressuring Ohio Edison to fix streetlights, especially on Cuyahoga Falls Avenue and Brittain Road.
- A community member asked where the [Northside Interceptor Tunnel](#) will be dug, and if the [Gorge Dam](#) will be torn down after the tunnel is built.
  - Lombardo responded that the tunnel will be dug underground from the High Level Bridge.

The meeting ended at 7:06 p.m.

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**Notes to reader:** Unless quotation marks are used, all text is paraphrased. If you believe anything in these notes is inaccurate, please email us at [documenters@signalakron.org](mailto:documenters@signalakron.org) with "Correction Request" in the subject line.