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Ward 2 meeting

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Agency: Ward 2

Date: Oct. 29, 2025

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Summary

- Mike Gaffney, Community Support Services director of marketing and development, spoke about [CSS](#), which helps people with mental and physical health.
- Neighborhood Network Manager Jessica Goldbourn from [Habitat for Humanity of Summit County](#) offered [safety kits](#) to eligible people (62 and older and meet certain guidelines)
- [Akron Director of Public Service](#) Chris Ludle gave updates on many projects regarding streets, sewer and storm water systems, and trees.

Follow-Up Questions

- Despite the North Hill and Chapel Hill neighborhoods having diverse populations, the meeting was almost entirely white, with only one Black attendee. How can we get more of the community involved in the meeting?
- What is the minimum age for Community Support Services? Are they helping parents? Do they help the LGBTQ+ community?

- What is happening with data centers within the city of Akron or Summit County? Is Akron ensuring that Akronites are not paying for the electricity used by data centers in the region?

Notes

The meeting began with a social hour that included free pizza, snacks and dessert. After some time for socializing, [Ward 2 Council Member Phil Lombardo](#) introduced Mike Gaffney.

Director of Marketing and Development Mike Gaffney - Community Support Services (CSS):

Gaffney shared information about his organization and what it does for people:

- CSS provides a wide range of programs for “severe, persistent mental illness”
- CSS expects clients to be there for life due to their severe and persistent mental illness
- CSS was created in 1988 when the government shut down many institutions. They started on Aug. 1, 1988, and were not sure exactly what they would do but have determined their mission and services over the years based on their clients’ needs, he said
- Following the outline of [Maslow’s hierarchy of needs](#), they provide food first and then shelter. They have multiple [housing programs](#), including three group homes in Summit County in Highland Square, Ellett and Cuyahoga Falls. Their goal is always independent living.
- They have two supported living apartment buildings in North Hill and on Romig Road. These locations have nurses on staff and caseworkers available.
- Since many of their clients experience homelessness, they also have a homeless outreach center on Thornton Street. They offer showers and coffee.
- Many of their clients don’t have the identification and paperwork they need, so CSS provides services to help them get the documents they need to further access more resources
- According to Gaffney, people with severe and persistent mental illnesses have a lifespan 25% shorter [than the average](#) person, so CSS provides primary health care and an on-site pharmacy
- They have one public fundraiser per year called the [Art of Recovery](#). This is the

11th year of the event. They sell artwork that the clients have created, with 75% of the proceeds going to the client who created it and 25% to the program. The next one is March 21, 2026, at House Three Thirty.

- CSS has 330 employees and 4500 to 5000 clients
- Gaffney's main reason for attending the meeting was to encourage the renewal of Issue 1 CSS receives 45% of its funding through the [ADM board](#), he said. [Editor's note: The levy [passed](#) in the Nov. 4 election.]
- Gaffney said they take walk-in clients on Tuesday and Thursday mornings.
- Responding to a question about helping Hispanic people, Gaffney said that the stigma around mental health in immigrant communities is hard to overcome. Though they have interpreters available, and though they accept anyone from any part of the community.
- Gaffney said that the staff to client ration varied from program to program, but it was between 1:35 to 1:80.

Neighborhood Network Manager Jessica Goldbourn from Habitat for Humanity of Summit County

- She reiterated that she had applications available for anyone who might want a free [safety kit for seniors](#).
- These are available to people in Akron who are 62 years or older and meet HUD guidelines.

Akron Public Service Director Chris Ludle

Ludle provided an extensive public service update.

Leaf collection

Leaf collection is fully staffed. If you have leaves and you can't wait, he said you can bag them and call for a pickup. Each home gets three pickups. But they advise everyone to wait. This is the first year that Akron is processing the leaves entirely on its own without a third party. They hope to compost the leaves and distribute the resulting compost for free to gardens in Akron.

Roads and bridges

He gave an update on road resurfacing and that 20 out of 34 miles have been completed this year. They are currently resurfacing in Ward 8 and the work is weather dependent.

Akron has multiple bridge projects underway. Kent Street off Case is completed. Bowery Street, from Main Street to Akron Children's Hospital, is a \$9 million project. The east half is completed, and they expect an end-of-year opening for that bridge. They are working on the connections for a 100-year water main on Cuyahoga Falls Avenue.

A community member asked about the Y bridge project. Ludle said this is an ODOT project. The bridge was originally a stimulus project under the Obama administration, but the company that installed the fence went out of business and is not available to maintain it.. There will be concrete repairs, repainting, and work on the fence. He also has concerns about the hinges on both ends of the bridge and said they may need to be replaced. He will know on Monday the extent of that project.

Answering a question from the audience, Ludle said that before the end of the year, all traffic on Route 8 should be on the new bridge. This includes three north and three south lanes. Then, the state will tear down the old bridge.

Sewer and stormwater tunnel

The sewer and stormwater tunnel project is going well. They have 85% of the tunnel complete. They are going to break through on Front Street in Cuyahoga Falls before Thanksgiving. Then, they will remove the tunnel machine. Resurfacing was delayed because moving the tunnel equipment would damage the road, so they want to make sure that's finished before resurfacing the road.

In response to a question, Ludle said that 25 of 26 major projects for the sewer and storm tunnel are done. He said that when there is heavy rain, such as more than 2 inches and 24 hours, there can still be some overflow. However, the tunnel from 2020 holds 25 million gallons of sanitation and stormwater.

Lead line remediation

Ludle said that Akron is now lead-free from the devil strip to the roadway. This year alone, the city removed 1,442 lead services. Federal money gave them the ability to remove the lead pipes from the devil strip to the street. However, they now need to remove the galvanized pipes from the devil strip to the home.

Normally, homeowners are responsible for any piping that goes from the street to the home. However, Akron has secured funds to pay for brand new lines. The galvanized line will be replaced with copper. This project will be at no cost to the homeowner, and homeowners will be notified by mail if they have a galvanized pipe that needs to be replaced by the city.

Gas aggregation program

Ludle went over the gas aggregation program. He encouraged all residents to join the aggregate with the city. Anyone is free to handle gas services on their own, but the city aggregate is designed to help citizens get the best rate. The city does not make money from the aggregate program.

Ludle encouraged everyone to be as educated on their gas bill as possible. He warned that not joining the city aggregate puts citizens at risk of higher bills and that the utilities companies can change rates and automatically enroll citizens for higher rates.

Snow and ice preparations

Akron is prepared for winter snow and ice. They have invested in more liquid pre-treatment. This pre-treatment is helpful for bridges and hills. Akron now has 20 tankers and is using brine, which they find to be a better pre-treatment than salt. Akron makes its own brine. He reminded everyone that no method is foolproof, but Akron is dedicated to doing its best.

Akron's tree canopy

Ludle outlined plans for Akron to increase its tree canopy. They will be planting trees on Main Street. They planted 250 trees this year. Akron is working on a program where they can grow their own trees, because they can save about \$400 per tree if they grow their own.

He said that Akron doesn't own enough land to increase the tree canopy as much as they want, so they may create a program to encourage homeowners to plant trees on their land by providing free trees.

A community member said that Tallmadge Avenue trees were unsightly and that they grow tall into wires, and then the city cuts them. And they break up the grates and the sidewalk and people steal the grates.

Ludle said the city is dedicated to planting appropriate trees and having better planning so that the trees can be maintained and continue to look pleasing.

He said concerned homeowners can call 311 for an assessment.

Gorge dam removal

Ludle gave an update on the [Gorge Dam](#) removal. Sediment removal has started and will take a year. \$70 million of federal money is helping pay for this. Once the sediment has

been removed, the dam will be taken down and the river will be revegetated. Summit Metro Parks is working on designs.

Ludle was the final speaker. When he was done, Lombardo switched over to games and prizes for the rest of the evening.