



City of Lakewood
City Council

Council At Large
Sarah Kepple, President
Thomas R. Bullock III
Angelina Hamilton Steiner

Ward Council
Kyle Baker, Ward 1, Vice President
Bryan Evans, Ward 2
Cindy Strebig, Ward 3
Cindy Marx, Ward 4

Noticed 10/22/25

PUBLIC NOTICE – FINANCE COMMITTEE

Finance Committee will meet Monday October 27, 2025 at 6:00 p.m. in the Auditorium of Lakewood City Hall at 12650 Detroit Avenue. The meeting is open to the public.

The meeting will be livestreamed on the City's website at the following link:

www.lakewoodoh.gov/councilvideos

PUBLIC COMMENT PROTOCOL (Updated 4/2025)

The public is invited to comment on agenda items by submitting a written comment in advance of the meeting using the eComment platform available [HERE](#). New users must create an eComment account. Committee Chairs may also accommodate in person public comment.

The agenda is as follows:

Approval of the minutes of the July 21, 2025 Finance Committee.

Communication from President Kepple regarding Council Budget Priorities. (*referred to Finance 10/6/25*)

Communication from Councilmember Bullock responding to high housing costs in Lakewood by urging state government to provide new tools to local governments to implement targeted property tax relief programs via residential stability zones. (*referred to Finance 9/15/25*)

S. RESOLUTION 2025-47 - A RESOLUTION to respond to high housing costs in Lakewood by urging state government to provide new tools to local governments to implement targeted property tax relief programs via residential stability zones. (*referred to Finance 9/15/25*)

Communication from Finance Director Mahoney, President Kepple, and Councilmember Bullock regarding Audit Committee. (*referred to Finance 9/2/25*)

ORDINANCE 27-2025 - AN ORDINANCE to take effect immediately provided it receives the affirmative vote of at least two thirds of the members of Council, or otherwise to take effect and be in force at the earliest period allowed by law, repealing Chapter 160, Audit Committee of the Codified Ordinances of the City of Lakewood. (*1st read and referred to Finance 9/2/25; 2nd reading 9/15/25*)

Tom Bullock, Chair
Kyle Baker, Cindy Strebig; Members
FINANCE COMMITTEE

Individuals with disabilities who require accommodations for participation in meetings must request accommodations at least 3 business days ahead of the scheduled meeting. Contact Michelle Nochta at (216) 529-5906 michelle.nochta@lakewoodoh.net.



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October 6, 2025

Lakewood City Council
Lakewood, Ohio

RE: Council Budget Priorities

Dear Colleagues,

As you know, each year about this time, the finance department begins pulling together a proposed operational budget and five-year capital plan in accordance with the following sections of the Charter:

Article 5.5: On or before the second city council meeting in November in each year, the director of finance shall prepare an estimate of the expense of conducting the affairs of the city for the following year.

Article 5.7: Annually, after consultation with the mayor and the heads of affected city departments, the director of finance shall prepare and submit to the mayor and council a recommended five-year financial plan for the city's capital needs.

It has historically been council's practice to articulate council budget priorities to the administration for incorporation into the budget and capital planning. This can be difficult to do once the proposed budget has already been prepared and carefully balanced by the finance department, so council has worked over the past few years to be prepared to share these priorities earlier in the process.

Therefore, Council held two retreats earlier this year to identify legislative and budget priorities. As council leadership recognizes the limits of city resources including staff time and tax dollars, Councilmembers were given a finite number of spoons to indicate spoons of energy that they would commit to a policy priority, and finite number of money bags to indicate budget priorities. The attached chart provides a summary of those priorities.

It is my hope that providing this summary to Council and the Administration in advance will help facilitate a smooth, efficient, and effective budget process.

Sincerely,

Sarah Kepple

President of Council
Councilmember at Large



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Budget Priority	Council Members	Allocated Bags
Affordable Housing Strategy *Strategy study & price relief	Strebige, Evans (2), Steiner (2), Marx, Kepple, Bullock (2)*	8
Block/Community Clubs	Strebige, Marx, Bullock, Baker, Evans	5
Madison Park Master Plan/Farmer's Market	Strebige, Steiner, Evans, Marx, Baker	5
Connectivity (Fiber, Wifi in all parks, smart locks public restrooms, etc.)	Marx, Strebige, Kepple, Bullock	4
Racial Equity Plan	Strebige, Kepple, Steiner, Unnamed	4
Public Education, Communication, Connection	Steiner, Evans, Kepple	3
IWWIP	Strebige, Kepple, Baker	3
Short term interventions- Complete Streets & CASE	Evans, Bullock, Baker(2), Kepple	5
General Operations	Bullock, Baker	2
City Hall Space/Policewomen's Space	Bullock, Kepple	2
Active Transportation SS4A Plan	Marx, Strebige	2
ADA Transition Plan	Kepple, Steiner	2
Public Art Increase *including performance art	Evans, Marx*	2
Community Health Needs Assessment Action Plan	Steiner	1
Large Tree Preservation Policy/ Tree Advisory & Education	Baker	1
Climate Action Plan *composting	Steiner	1



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Policy Priority	Council Members	Allocated Spoons
Public Education, Communication, Connection	Strebig, Kepple, Steiner, Evans	5
General Operations	Baker, Kepple, Evans	5
Education, Communication, Connection	Strebig, Kepple, Steiner, Evans	5
Charter	Kepple, Baker, Steiner	5
Zoning Code Refresh *sustainability focus	Baker, Kepple, Marx, Bullock*	4
Block/Community Clubs	Strebig, Baker, Marx, Evans	4
Affordable Housing Strategy	Steiner, Marx, Kepple, Evans	4
Active Transportation SS4A Plan	Kepple, Baker, Bullock, Strebig	4
Short term interventions- Complete Streets	Evans, Baker, Marx	3
Racial Equity Plan	Marx, Steiner	3
Public Art	Evans, Marx, Strebig	3
Madison Park Master Plan/Farmer's Market	Marx, Steiner	3
LCRAC	Marx, Strebig, Kepple	3
Council Direct Mail	Baker, Bullock,	3
Climate Action Plan	Steiner, Marx, Strebig	3
City Hall Space/Policewomen's Space	Kepple, Baker, Evans	3
Large Tree Preservation Policy/ Tree Advisory & Education	Baker, Evans	2
Lakewood Alive	Marx, Evans	2
CASE	Marx, Baker, Kepple	2
ADA Transition Plan	Steiner, Kepple	2
Short Term Rental Regulations	Bullock	1
Legal Aid Collaboration	Strebig	1
IWWIP	Baker	1
Homestead Tax expansion	Kepple	1
Front Yard Gardens	Bullock	1
Federal Resiliency Prep/Citizens Advisory Committee	Steiner	1
DORA	Evans	1
Connectivity (Fiber, Wifi, etc.)	Kepple	1
Community Health Needs Assessment Action Plan	Steiner	1
Chamber of Commerce	Marx	1
Council Liaison -Shoreline Improvement	Baker	1
Council Liaison - Youth Council	Strebig	1
Council Liaison - LASWAB	Marx	1
Council Liaison - DLBA, B2B, West End Business	Strebig	1
Council Liaison - CREC	Strebig	1
Council Liaison - Community Health Action Team	Marx	1
Council Liaison - Audit Committee	Bullock	1
Council Leadership Retreat 2026	Kepple	1
Council Leadership 1on1s & Meetings with Administration	Kepple	2
Council Leadership - Community Conversations	Kepple	1



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September 15, 2025

Lakewood City Council
12650 Detroit Avenue
Lakewood, Ohio 44107

Re: Responding to high housing costs in Lakewood by urging state government to provide new tools to local governments to implement targeted property tax relief programs via residential stability zones

Dear Mayor and Members of Council:

Over at least the last six years, the high price of housing has been affecting Lakewood residents, renters and property owners alike. Many have expressed concern about the pressure that high prices impose upon both our longtime neighbors—people who have lived in their homes for decades and may own them outright—and newer neighbors who are tenants in one of Lakewood’s wonderful homes or apartment buildings. Both are feeling pressure from inflation in the general economy (the cost of groceries, utility bills, gasoline, and other basics are rising faster than our incomes) and from the housing market, which is putting pressure on Lakewood’s longtime identity as a socio-economically diverse community. Housing prices have risen regionally, yet Lakewood’s have risen more steeply (more than 40 percent higher than the region). Citywide, our total property value has doubled in the last six years to approximately \$1.8 billion.

Strong property values bring with them some important benefits, but the annual carrying costs of property ownership—i.e. property taxes—present difficulties to many. These difficulties have been magnified in the last six years given the sudden and large increase in valuation without a commensurate adjustment to how property taxes are assessed for inside mills—the first 10 mills on our property tax bills—which adjust automatically up or down with property values.

Combine this with long-term State of Ohio policy to shift government revenues away from income taxes and to cut in half the share of state revenues allocated to local governments via the Local Government Fund, and the effect is that local property taxes have taken on a larger and larger role in funding essential services from cities, libraries, school districts, park districts, and more. Notably, the most recent state budget delivered to high net worth individuals very significant tax relief while delivering zero to working class homeowners.

It is a false choice for state government to in effect tell property owners to strain their family finances to the point of breaking or to harm their quality of life by closing or greatly reducing community services from police, fire, libraries, parks, and schools—the loss of which would harm properties values as well. Both are unacceptable.

State government needs to reform its approach to taxes and public revenue to rebalance cost sharing and to remove the distortionary effects on our communities of high reliance on property taxes. (An example is Ohio’s public school funding system, which relies greatly on local property taxes; the Ohio Supreme Court found this system of financing public education to be unconstitutional in the 1997 landmark case *DeRolph v. State*.) The Governor and General Assembly have many proposals before them.

Local government powers do not traditionally provide the tools needed to address these matters: outside of levies, local governments have no tools to control local property taxes. More targeted and effective solutions are available at the state government level.

Tonight, I invite us to express support for one such proposal, Senate Bill 42, a bipartisan proposal by Senators Michelle Reynolds and Hershel Craig to authorize residential stability zones in which homeowners may qualify for partial property tax exemption. This would create new tools for a local government to, optionally, implement targeted reduction of property taxes by criteria that it would define. The legislation would:

- authorize limited home rule townships, counties, and municipalities to establish temporary zones where certain homeowners may apply for a partial property tax exemption equal to a percentage of the increase in assessed valuation of their homes;
- require receipt of an exemption to be limited based on household income, asset ownership, and length of ownership and occupancy;
- limit the authorization of such zones to periods of no more than ten years, subject to renewal;
- authorize exemptions to be for an indefinite period for homeowners aged 60 and over or for six years for all other homeowners; and
- authorize a recoupment charge for any exemptions claimed while the homestead or owner did not qualify for the exemption.

The merits of this proposal are that it equips local government to be a part of the solution by choosing what percentage is going to be abated, for how long, and to select other eligibility criteria. This would allow municipalities to make policy choices such as (for example) targeted relief to low- and intermediate- income property owners.

Most importantly, without such new tools, it is difficult for the City of Lakewood or any other local government to provide effective targeted assistance or relief. Additional steps likely are called for. I propose that City of Lakewood leaders understand the problem and identify solutions around which we may engage with state government leaders to begin providing a response to our Lakewood neighbors who are experiencing financial difficulties more and more.

Please join me in prioritizing this important issue by passing this resolution tonight or by referring it to a committee of Council's choosing.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Tom Bullock". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Tom Bullock
Councilmember At-Large

S. RESOLUTION NO. 2025-47

BY: BULLOCK

A RESOLUTION to respond to high housing costs in Lakewood by urging state government to fully and fairly fund Ohio's public schools, expand and modernize the Homestead Exemption, and to provide new tools to local governments to implement targeted property tax relief programs via residential stability zones, among other necessary steps.

WHEREAS, Lakewood has long prided itself on being a socioeconomically diverse community that welcomes all; and

WHEREAS, many Lakewood residents are experiencing significant affordability problems due to inflation in the general economy and due to steep property valuation increases in the last six years, which affects housing prices for both tenants and property owners; and

WHEREAS, state government has primary control over public revenues and tax collection in Ohio for income, sales, property, and other taxes, and, by contrast, the ability of local governments to allocate tax collections to achieve a more equitable cost share and to reduce problems is more limited; and

WHEREAS, state government has in recent years greatly reduced Local Government Fund allocations and has not fully and fairly funded Ohio's public schools, putting more financial burden on local governments and on property taxes; and

WHEREAS, local governments currently lack tools for targeted property tax adjustments that could be more effective in addressing difficulties; and

WHEREAS, given that it is a false choice for state government to leave property owners in the dilemma of continued strain to their family finances or of closing or greatly reducing community services from police, fire, libraries, parks, and schools—the loss of which would harm properties values and quality of life; and

WHEREAS, Council desires to be equipped with more tools to be a part of the solution; and

WHEREAS, Council desires to convey to state government that it must act to provide meaningful, targeted, state-funded property tax relief through such measures as articulated in this resolution; and

WHEREAS, taken together, such reforms would protect seniors and families from losing their homes due to the high cost of property taxes while keeping schools, safety forces, and other essential services financially whole and viable; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY OF LAKEWOOD, OHIO:

Section 1. That this Council does hereby urge the Ohio General Assembly and the Governor of Ohio to act to provide meaningful, targeted, state-funded property tax relief through measures such as expanding and modernizing the Homestead Exemption, adopting a circuit breaker program that ties property tax obligations to household income, and fully and fairly funding Ohio's public schools.

Section 2. That this Council does hereby express support for Senate Bill 42 in the 136th General Assembly and urges the Ohio General Assembly to adopt, and the Governor of Ohio to sign, the same.

Section 3. That the Clerk of Council is hereby authorized and directed to present a copy of this resolution to the Governor of Ohio, the Speaker of the Ohio House, and the President of the Ohio Senate as an expression of the City of Lakewood's support.

Section 4. It is found and determined that all formal actions of this Council concerning and relating to the passage of this resolution were adopted in an open meeting of this Council, and that all such deliberations of this Council and of any of its committees that resulted in such formal action were in meetings open to the public in compliance with all legal requirements.

Adopted: _____

Sarah Kepple, President of Council

Maureen M. Bach, Clerk of Council

Approved: _____

Meghan F. George, Mayor



Renee Mahoney, CPA
Director of Finance

12650 DETROIT AVENUE 44107 216/529-6092

September 2, 2025

Dear Mayor and Members of Council,

I am writing to propose a change in how the city handles its annual audit. In 2007, the city of Lakewood created a separate audit committee in response to a recommendation from the Ohio Auditor of State. The purpose of this committee, established by Chapter 160, Audit Committee of the Lakewood Codified Ordinances, was to review the city's audits and any comments from them.

I suggest that the Finance Committee take on this role instead. This seems like a more efficient way to review the city's once-a-year audit. Since the terms for the six current members of the separate audit committee are expiring at the end of this year, now would be an ideal time to make this change.

Therefore, I propose repealing Chapter 160, Audit Committee, of the Lakewood Codified Ordinances and assigning the responsibility of reviewing audits to the Finance Committee.

Thank you for your consideration. Please let me know if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Renee Mahoney, CPA
Director of Finance

Sarah Kepple
President of Council

Tom Bullock
Chair, Finance Committee



AN ORDINANCE to take effect immediately provided it receives the affirmative vote of at least two thirds of the members of Council, or otherwise to take effect and be in force at the earliest period allowed by law, repealing Chapter 160, Audit Committee of the Codified Ordinances of the City of Lakewood.

WHEREAS, the purpose of the Audit Committee is to review the City's financial audits and any comments from the independent auditor; and

WHEREAS, this function can easily be absorbed by Council's Finance Committee which is more efficient than having a volunteer board for review of an annual audit; and

WHEREAS, as set forth in Section 2.12 of the Third Amended Charter of the City of Lakewood, this Council by a vote of at least two thirds of its members determines that this ordinance is an emergency measure and that it shall take effect immediately, and that it is necessary for the immediate preservation of the public property, health, and safety and to provide for the usual daily operation of municipal departments to provide for the usual daily operation of the City in that the Audit Committee should be dissolved prior to year end when the volunteer terms expire. Now therefore,

BE IT ORDAINED BY THE CITY OF LAKEWOOD, OHIO

Section 1. That Chapter 160, Audit Committee, of the Lakewood Codified Ordinances, currently reading as follows:

Chapter 160 Audit Committee

160.01 ESTABLISHMENT; PURPOSE.

The City of Lakewood Audit Committee is hereby established to provide independent review and oversight of the City's financial reporting processes, internal controls, and the independent auditor comments. The Committee shall review financial statements, independent auditor reports and follow up on corrective actions; review the City of Lakewood's comprehensive framework of internal controls; assess the performance of the independent auditor; and to provide an independent forum to report findings of management fraud, abuse or control override to the independent auditor.

160.02 MEMBERSHIP.

The Audit Committee shall be composed of the Lakewood City Council Finance Committee members, two Lakewood residents appointed by City Council and four Lakewood residents appointed by the Mayor. The appointed Lakewood residents must currently or formerly have been employed in the finance industry, or serve in a finance capacity, preferable within government finance, and/or must be a recognized expert of the finance industry. Committee members shall receive no compensation for their service and shall have a point of contact in the Department of Finance.

160.03 TERMS.

Initially, one Council appointment and two Mayoral appointments shall be for a period of one year. Thereafter, each appointment and the remainder of all other initial appointments shall be for a period of two years.

160.04 BYLAWS AND GENERAL RULES OF OPERATION.

The Committee shall meet at least on a quarterly basis. The committee shall devise its own officers, governance, and place and time of assembly.

is hereby repealed.

Section 3. It is found and determined that all formal actions of this Council concerning and relating to the passage of this ordinance were adopted in an open meeting of this Council, and that all such deliberations of this Council and of any of its committees that resulted in such formal action were in meetings open to the public in compliance with all legal requirements.

Section 4. This ordinance is hereby declared to be an emergency measure necessary for the immediate preservation of the public peace, property, health, safety and welfare in the City and for the usual daily operation of the City for the reasons set forth and defined in the preamble to this ordinance, and provided it receives the affirmative vote of at least two thirds of the members of Council, this ordinance shall take effect and be in force immediately upon its adoption by the Council and approval by the Mayor, or otherwise it shall take effect and be in force after the earliest period allowed by law.

Adopted: _____

Sarah Kepple, President of Council

Maureen M. Bach, Clerk of Council

Approved: _____

Meghan F. George, Mayor