

COUNCIL PRESIDENT-JENNIFER WASILK  
COUNCIL AT LARGE-DAVID JANIK  
COUNCIL AT LARGE-MATT NAHORN  
COUNCIL AT LARGE- CHUCK WINIARSKI

COUNCIL WARD ONE-BRIAN DEMBINSKI  
COUNCIL WARD TWO-BECKY HARMYCH  
COUNCIL WARD THREE-JAKE WACHHOLZ  
COUNCIL WARD FOUR- JOHN OWCOMBER

## CITY OF AMHERST, OHIO

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Minutes of the Ordinance Committee Meeting held April 20, 2026, at 7:00 P.M. Present in Council Chambers were Chairman Dembinski, Mr. Nahorn, Mr. Wachholz, Mr. Janik, Mr. Mowcomber, Mr. Winiarski, Ms. Harmych, Council President Wasilk, Mayor Costilow, Auditor Phillips, Treasurer Miller, Law Director Pecora, Assistant Law Director Ward, Safety Service Director Jeffreys, Police Chief Cawthon, 12 members of the public.

A-26-20 Amending the current Amherst DORA policy to include a temporary Trial 2006 - summer seasonal operational calendar to include hours 12:00 P.M. to 10:00 P. M. Daily Sunday-Saturday from May 15 through September 27, 2026

Mr. Winiarski gave credit to Main Street Amherst and Mr. Mr. Janik for putting this proposal together. Mr. Winiarski gave a history of the DORA in Amherst. Mr. Winiarski emphasized that any changes to the DORA should be to the benefit of the Amherst businesses while still working with our safety service forces. Mr. Janik said he heard from the local businesses and 88% of the businesses in the DORA are in favor of this proposal. This is a temporary change to see how the process goes. There are many cities in Ohio that have DORAs all week and don't have any issues from a safety perspective, so he thinks it'll be a success for Amherst also. If there are any issues the police and administration have the ability to end the DORA. Mayor Costilow made clear this was not submitted by the administration. Mayor Costilow has concerns about the administrative overhead that this may introduce. Currently the DORA is only for special events and the city has a lot of control over the special events happening within the city.

Police Chief Cawthon explained the challenges for the police moving from a special event DORA to a standing daily DORA. There will be additional police staffing constraints for the DORA, and the potential for increased calls for alcohol related incidents within the downtown area which would draw them away from their existing duties. As more people use the DORA they may not respect the boundaries of the DORA which would need to be enforced more strictly. As this could put more people on the street there is the potential for more pedestrian accidents as traffic would still be available to the DORA area. There's additional litter and health sanitation issues that would need to be addressed based on the increase usage.

Mayor Costilow explained that MSA used the DORA the most last year but has not requested the DORA yet for 2026. Mayor Costilow does support the DORA in the current special event only form. Mr. Janik explained the reason MSA isn't using the DORA yet this year is because the expense for the DORA was higher than expected, especially if the event was then canceled for whatever reason then MSA was still responsible for the additional costs. Mr. Janik asked Chief Cawthon if he has asked other cities with a DORA and he said yes we are often compared to Dublin Ohio who has a dedicated set of police assigned to the DORA. Mr. Janik asked if the Chief asked the Norwalk police and he replied he did not ask Norwalk specifically. Mr. Janik asked the Chief if he had data on how many incidents are already happening downtown and the Chief said he would be able to provide those. The main concerns center around people overindulging. Mr. Janik asked if Mayor Costilow had additional ideas to increase business and Mayor Costilow replied that downtown parking is already normally full plus we're adding additional parking once the railroad bridge project is completed. Mr. Janik stated that the intention is for people to responsibly walk around with a glass of wine or a beer. Mr. Winiarski asked about police staffing for Walking on Wednesday and the chief replied there were 2 regardless if there was a DORA or not which covers some of the additional responsibilities. Mr. Mowcomber stated he sees that the responsibility that the tavern is supplying when somebody is drinking inside stops when the patron walks outside. Mr. Wachholz asked about the increase in sales when the DORA is in effect and if nobody has that information currently can we get it, and what metrics are we going to be able to track to see if the expanded DORA make it worthwhile. Mr. Janik answered there are DORA cups which we could count to get an idea. Mr. Mowcomber asked if a petition was circulated to businesses outside the DORA or the residents and Mr. Janik answered no. Judy Recknagel owns Mermaid's Tail, 201 Church St., is in full support of this and doesn't anticipate a huge influx of people causing these concerns. She was in charge of Dancing on Main Street which had 10k people and doesn't think we're going to have nearly that amount of people using the DORA. Peggy Sinibaldi owns Five Points Tavern, 134 Park Ave, and she does see an increase when people have this capability to drink casually but doesn't think that Amherst will be run over by people using the DORA. Mayor Costilow explained that as part of the DORA the city can't guarantee safety or have the funds to hire additional officers. He does think that 99.9% of the people who use it will use it as intended but we have to be ready for the 0.1% that will cause issues.

Chairman Dembinski asked about how the DORA can be shut down and Mayor Costilow explained that the mayor and safety service directory can shut it down immediately. Mr. Janik asked if we've researched how other cities have done this and Mayor Costilow answered we've talked to some cities about how they handled their DORA, and in fact some cities have even reached out to us asking how Amherst handles our DORA for special events only. One city that was asking us for that information was Olmstead Falls. Mr. Mowcomber asked for clarification about the officers needed to police this, and the chief answered 4 if they work full time.

Mr. Wachholz likes the idea of reducing alcohol restrictions when they're overly bearing but would like to hear some additional data before making a decision, including how to we define success in the DORA. Mr. Winiarski reminded us that the DORA eventually removed the open container restrictions in a dedicated area, and recapped some of the conversations from tonight. He reached out to Dublin and they heard that the citizens of Dublin liked the DORA generally but had a few concerns about when it was in effect so they modified their DORA accordingly. A main concern is the cost associated with the police officers.

Mr. Wachholz motion to table, Ms. Harmych seconded. Mr. Wachholz asked for any information to be sent to council clerk Olga Sivinski. 6-1 with Mr. Mowcomber voting no.

Mr. Wachholz motioned to adjourn. Seconded by Ms. Harmych. Vote 7-0 to adjourn. The meeting adjourned at 7:36 p.m.

Brian Dembinski, Chairman  
Finance Committee