

# CHARTER OF ASHTABULA COUNTY

## PREAMBLE

When in the course of human events it becomes clear that the government no longer serves the needs of its people effectively, citizens must unite and petition for redress, as it is the right of the people to alter, abolish, or institute new government.

To that end, we the people, fully cognizant of our inalienable rights, do hereby declare our intent to incorporate the County of Ashtabula, Ohio, in order to reclaim control of those powers of government which are given only by consent of the governed, and which have only ever been meant to be wielded in furtherance of our Liberty and Prosperity.

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ARTICLE I - CORPORATE POWERS, RIGHTS AND PRIVILEGES

SECTION 1.01 NAME, BOUNDARIES AND POWERS

The County of Ashtabula, as its limits now are, or hereafter may be, shall be a body politic and corporate by the name of the County of Ashtabula with all the rights granted by this Charter, Ohio provisions for Home Rule, and by general law. The County is responsible within its boundaries for the exercise of all powers vested in and the performance of all duties imposed upon counties and county officers by law. In addition, the County may exercise all powers specifically conferred by this Charter or incidental to powers specifically conferred by this Charter and all other powers that the Constitution and laws of Ohio now or hereafter grant to counties to exercise or do not prohibit counties from exercising, including the concurrent exercise by the County of all or any powers vested in municipalities by the Ohio Constitution or by general law. All such powers shall be exercised and enforced in the manner prescribed by this Charter or when not prescribed herein in such manner as may be provided by ordinance or resolution of the Council. When not prescribed by the Charter or amendments hereto or by ordinance or resolution such powers shall be exercised in the manner prescribed by general law.

SECTION 1.02 POWERS LIMITED

This Charter does not empower the County to exercise exclusively any municipal powers nor to provide for the succession by the County to any property or obligation of any municipality or township without the consent of the legislative authority of such municipality or township. In case of conflict between the exercise of powers granted by this Charter and the exercise of powers by municipalities or townships granted by the Constitution or general law, the exercise of powers by the municipality or township shall prevail. The County shall have power to levy only those taxes that counties are by general law authorized to levy.

SECTION 1.03 CONSTRUCTION

The powers of the County under this Charter shall be construed liberally in favor of the County, and the specific mention of particular powers in this Charter shall not be construed as limiting in any way the general

powers granted under this Charter. The rules for statutory construction contained in the Ohio Revised Code shall govern the interpretation of the provisions of this Charter.

## ARTICLE II - THE COUNCIL

### SECTION 2.01 ELECTION

The Council shall be the legislative authority and taxing authority of the County. It shall consist of seven members to be elected from designated districts who shall be nominated and elected as provided in this Charter. During their terms in office, Council members shall remain electors of the County and shall not hold or accept any other elected office or be employed by the County and shall serve in a part-time capacity.

### SECTION 2.02 TERM OF OFFICE

The Council shall be elected to four year terms. At the general election in 2014, all seven members of the Council shall be elected, four members for a four year term and three members to an initial two year term. The four Council members elected to an initial four year term will be from Districts 1, 3, 5 and 7. The Three Council members elected to an initial two year term will be from Districts 2, 4 and 6 and thereafter elections for those districts shall be for full four year terms. Should the need for a runoff occur, the runoff election will occur as referenced in Article 13, section 13.01 of this charter. The term of office for all Council members shall begin on the First Day of January following their election.

### SECTION 2.03 RESIDENCY REQUIREMENT

A Council candidate shall have been an elector of the County for at least two years immediately prior to filing of a declaration of candidacy or appointment to fill a vacancy and shall also have been an elector of the district he or she wishes to serve for at least one year immediately prior to filing of candidacy or appointment to fill a vacancy. Once elected or appointed, Council members shall reside within their respective districts during the tenure of their terms.

### SECTION 2.04 COUNCIL DISTRICTS

1. Initial Districts: The seven districts from which the members of the Council shall be elected are herein created as described in detail in Appendix B, which is attached to this Charter and made a part hereof.
2. Redistricting: Immediately following the Decennial Federal Census of 2020, and every subsequent Decennial Census, the County Council shall appoint five (5) electors of the County, not more than two of whom shall be members of the same political party and none of whom shall hold public office or be an officer of a political party, who shall constitute a Council Districting Commission. The Commission shall, not later than one hundred and twenty (120) days following its appointment, prepare and certify to the Board of Elections of Ashtabula County a detailed apportionment of the Council districts in accordance with the principles provided for in this section. The County Council shall provide for such Commission such facilities and assistance as shall be required for such Commission to carry out its duties as provided for herein. That apportionment shall be completed by the same date as the apportionment for the Ohio General Assembly and shall be effective for the first regular County election thereafter. For subsequent Decennial Census, the County Council shall make such appointments to the Council Districting Commission and insure that such commission is adequately funded to serve its function.
3. Principles for Establishing District Boundaries: All districts shall be of substantially equal population, compact and composed of contiguous territory and formed by combining existing areas of governmental units. Insofar as these criteria may conflict, redistricting shall give consideration to the guidelines established in Appendix A of this document as well any additional guidelines as may be established by the Council for the Districting Commission to use for the purpose of drawing district boundaries. In this regard the overriding principle is to achieve Districts which are compact, contiguous, and do not subdivide existing governmental subdivisions without overriding cause, and to make District Demarcation clear and transparent to ensure representatives are accountable, responsive, and fairly representative, utilizing criteria which do not conflict with the Constitution of the United States of America, the Constitution of the State of Ohio, and applicable Federal and State Law.

### SECTION 2.05 COUNCIL VACANCIES

When a vacancy occurs in a Council position, the Council shall have thirty days to make the appointment. If the Council fails to make the appointment, the President of Council shall make the appointment. If the President

of Council's position is vacated and no appointment has been made by Council within 30 days the Vice-President of Council shall make the appointment.

#### SECTION 2.06 COUNCIL MEETINGS TO BE HELD IN EVENINGS

All regularly scheduled council meetings will be held in the evenings, with the only exception being special sessions that will only be held for a specific reason and with a prior vote of a majority of the members of Council. The Council President, or in the President's absence the Vice-President, may call a special session so long that it is held in the evening and that all applicable Open Government Laws are abided by.

#### SECTION 2.07 VACANCIES; LENGTH OF APPOINTMENT

If a vacancy occurs in the first or second year of a four-year term, the interim appointment shall be for a period until the next countywide general election, at which time the position shall be filled for the remainder of the unexpired term. If a vacancy occurs in the third or fourth year of a four-year term, the interim appointment shall extend until the next countywide general election, at which time the position shall be filled for the next four-year term.

#### SECTION 2.08 COMPENSATION

The initial salaries of each Council member shall be twelve thousand dollars per year, with the exception of the Council President who shall make fifteen thousand dollars per year. The members may buy health insurance through the county so long as it does not surpass their compensation. Those salaries may be changed by ordinance at any time before a primary election for members of the Council, but no change shall be effective until the commencement of the ensuing term.

No former member of Council shall hold any compensated appointive office or employment with the County until one year after the expiration of the term for which the member was elected.

#### SECTION 2.09 POWERS, DUTIES, AND LIMITATIONS

The legislative powers of the County, including the power to introduce, enact and amend ordinances and resolutions relating to all matters within the legislative power of the County, are vested in the Council. All powers of the Council shall be exercised by ordinance or resolution and shall include, but not be limited to the following:

1. To appoint and provide for the compensation and duties of the Clerk of Council and such other assistants for the Council as a whole as the Council determines to be necessary for the efficient performance of its duties.
2. To establish departments, and divisions and sections within departments under the supervision of the County Administrator, and such boards, agencies, commissions, and authorities, in addition to or as part of those provided for in this Charter, as the Council determines to be necessary for the efficient administration of the County.
3. To establish procedures under which the County Administrator may employ experts and consultants in connection with the administration of the affairs of the County.
4. To establish procedures governing the making of County contracts and the purchasing of County supplies and equipment pursuant to competitive bidding.
5. To adopt and amend the County's annual tax budget, operating budget, and capital improvements program and to make appropriations for the County.
6. To determine which officers and employees shall give bond and to fix the amount and form thereof.
7. To provide for the acquisition, construction, maintenance, administration, rental and leasing of property, including buildings and other public improvements.
8. To cooperate or join by contract with any municipality, county, state or political subdivision or agency thereof, for the planning, development, construction, acquisition, or operation of any public improvement or facility, or for providing a common service, and to provide the terms upon which the County shall perform any of the services and functions of any other county or any municipality or other political subdivision. In furtherance of such intergovernmental cooperation, the Council may provide for grants or loans to other

political subdivisions and public agencies.

9. To provide for the procedure for making public improvements and levying assessments for such improvements.
10. To require, as necessary, the attendance of any County employee or officer at Council meetings to provide information as may be requested. Neither President of Council, the Council, nor any of its members shall initiate or request the appointment of any person to, or the removal from office by the County Administrator or by any of the County Administrator's subordinates, nor in any manner take part in the appointment or removal of employees under the department heads except as provided in this charter. Except for the purpose of inquiry the Council and its members shall deal with the administrative service solely through the County Administrator and neither the Council nor any member thereof shall give orders to any subordinates of the County Administrator, either publicly or privately.
11. No additional County-wide taxes can be levied without the approval of the majority of the voters at a County wide General Election. There shall be no emergency measures in place to forgo this process.
12. To establish by ordinance a code of ethics, which shall be in addition to, and not inconsistent with, general law on the subject, which shall guide and inform County officers and employees in the performance of their official duties in a manner that will represent high standards of professionalism and loyalty to the residents of the County and that will avoid conflicts of interest, self-dealing and other violations of the public trust.
13. No public money of, or under the control of, the County, from whatever source derived, shall be subject to appropriation, application or distribution at the order or direction of any individual member of the Council.

#### SECTION 2.10 ORGANIZATION, RULES, AND PROCEDURES

1. Council Officers: On the first business day of each year following a regular election for members of the Council, the Council shall meet for the purpose of organization and shall elect one of its members as President and one other member as Vice-President, each to serve until the election of their successors at the next succeeding organizational meeting. The President shall preside at all meetings of the Council. The Vice President shall preside in case of the absence or disability of the President. The presiding officer shall be entitled to vote on all matters.
2. Rules and Records: The Council shall determine its own rules and order of business. The Clerk of Council shall keep and make available for public inspection at all reasonable times a record or proceedings of the Council in which the vote of each member voting on an ordinance or resolution shall be recorded.
3. Written Resolutions and Ordinances: All legislative action of a general and permanent nature shall be by resolution or ordinance introduced in written or printed form. Each resolution and ordinance shall contain no more than one subject, and that subject shall be clearly expressed in its title.
4. Required Readings: No ordinance or resolution shall be passed or adopted, concerning financial and fiscal matters, until it has been read, either in full or by title alone, at three different regular Council meetings. The requirement of three readings may be dispensed with by a vote of at least five of the seven members of the Council.
5. Adoption by Council: No action of the Council shall be valid or binding unless adopted by an affirmative vote of at least a majority of the members of the Council. Each ordinance or resolution shall be signed by the Presiding Officer, the Clerk of Council, and the County Administrator.
6. Effective Dates of Legislation: Each ordinance or resolution shall take effect in the manner and at the time provided by general law for ordinances or resolution of a municipal corporation. Unless a later time is specified therein, each measure designated to become immediately effective shall take effect upon passage. Each measure designated to become immediately effective shall contain a statement of the necessity for such action and shall require the affirmative vote of at least five of the seven members of the Council for enactment.

7. Publication of Ordinances and Resolutions: Council shall provide by rule for the procedure for giving notice of the adoption by the Council of ordinances and resolutions of a general and permanent nature. Such method or methods for giving notice shall be such as to enable any interested resident of the County to have prompt access to the text of such legislation.

#### SECTION 2.11 INITIATIVE AND REFERENDUM

The right of initiative and referendum is reserved to the people of the County on all matters that the County may now or hereafter be authorized to control by legislative action. The provisions of general law relating to such right applicable to municipalities in effect at the time of the adoption of this charter shall govern the exercise of such right hereunder, provided that all powers and duties respecting initiative and referendum petitions imposed upon city auditors or village clerks by general law shall be exercised by the Clerk of Council. Additionally, the Council may pass a resolution to place an Amendment to the Charter on the ballot in either a Primary or General Election, but not in Special Elections.

#### SECTION 2.12 INVESTIGATIONS BY COUNCIL

The Council or any committee of Council may investigate the financial transactions of any office, department or agency of County government and the official acts and conduct of any County official relating to any matter upon which Council is authorized to act. In conducting such investigations, the Council or any such committee may administer oaths and may, by resolution adopted by vote of at least five of the seven members of the Council or of the committee of Council, compel the attendance of witnesses and the production of books, papers, and other evidence through the issuance of subpoenas. Subpoenas shall be signed by either the President of Council or the chair of the Council committee seeking a witness's testimony or the production of evidence and shall be served and executed by an officer authorized by law to serve subpoenas and other legal process. In the matter of compelling the attendance of witnesses and the production of evidence the majority vote of Council, if any, shall take precedence over the vote of a Council committee. If any duly-subpoenaed witness refuses to testify to any facts within the witness's knowledge, or to produce any paper, books, or other evidence in the witness's possession or in the witness's control relating to the matter under inquiry before the Council or any such committee, the Council may refer the matter to the Prosecuting Attorney to cause the witness to be punished as for contempt.

### ARTICLE III - COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR SECTION

#### 3.01 COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR

The County Administrator shall be the chief administrative officer of the County. The County Administrator shall be hired by the County Council and shall serve at the pleasure of the County Council. The County Administrator shall have a Master's Degree in Business Administration or post graduate degree in Public Administration, or a substantially equivalent degree, and shall have at least five years of experience in government or private sector administration.

Within six months of appointment, the County Administrator shall become an elector of Ashtabula County. The County Administrator shall not, except as authorized by the Council, hold or accept other employment or public office.

By a vote with at least five (5) of the seven members of Council concurring, Council may waive the requirement of a Master's Degree in Business Administration or Masters in Public Administration provided that such person has at least fifteen (15) years of administrative experience with an appropriate background, such as the negotiation of labor contracts, control of multi-million dollar operating budgets, or managing multiple unrelated departments.

#### SECTION 3.02 COMPENSATION

The salary and compensation of the County Administrator shall be established by ordinance by the County Council, and shall be modified at its discretion.

#### SECTION 3.03 POWERS AND DUTIES

The County Administrator shall have all the powers and duties of an administrative nature under this Charter and such powers and duties of an administrative nature, except as otherwise provided herein, as are vested in or imposed upon boards of county commissioners by general law. Such powers and duties include, but are not limited to, the following:

1. To appoint, suspend, discipline and remove all County personnel including those appointive officers provided for in Article V hereof and except those who, as provided by general law, are under the jurisdiction

of officers, boards, agencies, commissions, and authorities of the County other than the board of county commissioners, and except those who are appointed by the Council pursuant to Section 3.09(1) of this Charter or by the Prosecuting Attorney.

2. To appoint, subject to the confirmation by the Council, and remove County directors and officers and members of boards, agencies, commissions and authorities as are or may hereafter be created by or pursuant to this Charter, and such officers and members of boards, agencies, commissions and authorities as are provided by general law to be appointed by boards of county commissioners. If the Council shall fail to act on the question of such an appointment by the County Administrator within thirty days of the date that the County Administrator submits such appointment to the Council for its consideration, that appointment shall be deemed confirmed without further action by the Council. The County Administrator and the Council shall use good faith efforts to reflect the diversity of the people of the County in appointing such officers and members.
3. To advocate for the interests of the County with other levels of government and to advocate for and promote cooperation and collaboration with other political subdivisions.
4. To execute contracts, conveyances and evidences of indebtedness on behalf of the County subject to Council approval.
5. To attend meetings of the Council and take part in the discussion of all matters before the Council.
6. To request ordinances and resolutions for consideration by the Council and otherwise to make recommendations for actions to be taken by the County Council.
7. To submit to the Council, prior to the beginning of each fiscal year, a proposed operating budget for the upcoming fiscal year which shall contain at least the following:
  - i. A statement of estimated revenues from all sources, including fund balances from the preceding year.
  - ii. A statement of proposed expenditures, shown by department, office, agency, authority, board and commission, and by activity, character and object.
  - iii. A schedule of estimated revenues and proposed expenditures for each County department, office, agency, authority, board and commission, on a monthly basis.
  - iv. A summary of the contents of the proposed operating budget.
8. To submit to the Council, prior to the beginning of each fiscal year, a capital improvements program, which shall contain at least the following:
  - i. The capital improvements scheduled for, or proposed to be undertaken within that fiscal year, along with the estimated cost of each improvement and the proposed or established method of financing.
  - ii. A summary of the detailed contents of the program for the current fiscal year.
  - iii. The capital improvements projected for the five years next succeeding the current fiscal year.
9. To submit a written message to the Council accompanying the proposed operating budget and capital improvements program explaining the budget both in fiscal terms and in terms of work to be done, outlining the proposed financial policies of the County for the current fiscal year and describing the important features of the budget. The message shall include any proposals for major changes in financial policies and in expenditures, appropriations and revenues as compared with the preceding fiscal year and the reasons for such proposals, and an itemization and explanation of each proposed capital improvement.
10. To conduct collective bargaining regarding wages and compensatory benefits with any recognized employee bargaining unit and administer uniform personnel procedures for all County employees.
11. To submit to the Council annually a five-year financial forecast for the general operating funds of the County.
12. To employ and supervise such number of deputies, assistants and employees as shall be reasonably

necessary to assist the County Administrator in carrying out the duties of the office, such deputy and assistant positions to be created by Council.

#### SECTION 3.04 VACANCY

In the event the office of the County Administrator becomes vacant by reason of death, resignation, removal from office, failure to remain an elector of the County or for any other reason, the Council President shall serve as a temporary County Administrator until Council can appoint an interim County Administrator to serve until a new County Administrator is chosen. Such interim County Administrator shall remain an elector of the county and shall serve no longer than six (6) months. The County Administrator shall designate one or more qualified officers of the County to perform the County Administrator's duties during temporary absence or disability, and any person or persons so designated are hereby authorized to perform the duties of the County Administrator during the absence or disability of the County Administrator.

#### SECTION 3.05 INVESTIGATIONS BY COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR

The County Administrator may, at any time and without notice, cause the administrative affairs or the official acts and conduct of any official or employee of any County office, department or agency over which the Administrator has authority to be examined. The County Administrator, or any person appointed by the Administrator to conduct such an examination, shall have the same power to take testimony, administer oaths, and compel the attendance of witnesses and the production of papers, books and evidence and refer witnesses to the Prosecuting Attorney to be punished for contempt as is conferred upon Council by this Charter. Subpoenas may not be issued pursuant to this section except by resolution adopted by a vote of five (5) of the seven Council members.

### ARTICLE IV - ELECTED OFFICIALS

#### SECTION 4.01 PROSECUTING ATTORNEY: ELECTION, DUTIES AND QUALIFICATIONS

The Prosecuting Attorney shall be responsible for all criminal matters, fines, and forfeitures. The Prosecuting Attorney shall continue to provide the services established for the Law Director until such time as the County Council appoints another to serve in that position. The County Council shall have the discretion to appoint the Prosecuting Attorney to serve as Law Director. Unless so appointed, the Prosecuting Attorney shall have such duties and powers as provided in R.C. 309.08 and any amendments thereto, excluding the duties set forth under Section 5.03 under this charter for the Law Director. No person shall be eligible for the office of Prosecuting Attorney, or elected or appointed to such office, who is not an attorney licensed for a period of not less than ten (10) years in the State of Ohio. No person elected to this office shall hold other elective office. The compensation for the Prosecuting Attorney shall be established by the Ohio Revised Code.

#### SECTION 4.02 ALL OTHER ELECTED OFFICE HOLDERS

The Auditor, Sheriff, Coroner and Engineer of the County shall be elected as provided in this Charter and their duties shall continue to be determined in the manner provided by general law, except where County Council changes those duties by ordinance or resolution. The compensation for these office holders shall be established by the Ohio Revised Code.

### ARTICLE V - DESIGNATED OFFICERS

#### SECTION 5.01 DESIGNATED OFFICERS: CONFIRMATION BY COUNCIL

Each of the officers provided for in this Article V shall be appointed by the County Council and shall serve at the pleasure of the County Council at a salary and compensation established by Council.

#### SECTION 5.02 FINANCE DIRECTOR: POWERS, DUTIES AND QUALIFICATIONS

1. Powers and Duties: The Finance Director shall exercise all powers and perform all duties now or hereafter vested in or imposed by general law upon county treasurers and county recorders and the powers and duties of clerks of the court of common pleas other than those powers and duties related to serving the operation of the courts, and such other powers and duties not inconsistent therewith as provided herein or by ordinance. The Finance Director shall prepare and maintain the tax maps for the County.
2. Boards, Commissions and Committees: The Finance Director, or his or her designee, shall serve in the place of the county recorder on every board, commission, committee, or any other body upon which a county recorder is required or authorized to serve by general law.

3. Qualifications: The Finance Director shall be a certified public accountant or have a Bachelor's Degree in Administration, or substantially equivalent degree, or shall have had at least five (5) years of experience in financial management of large private sector entity or political subdivision.

#### SECTION 5.03 LAW DIRECTOR

The Law Director shall be the legal advisor to and representative of the County Government and shall be responsible for all civil legal matters. The Law Director shall be an attorney at law in good standing in the State of Ohio and shall have had at least ten years' experience in advising or representing political subdivisions in Ohio.

#### SECTION 5.04 CLERK OF COURTS: POWERS AND DUTIES

All powers and duties now or hereafter vested in or imposed by general law upon the office of clerk of the court of Common Pleas relating to serving the operation of the courts shall be exercised and carried out by the appointed Clerk of Courts, who shall be appointed by, and serve at the pleasure of the County Council. The Council shall request and receive recommendations from the Judges of the General Division of the Ashtabula County Court of Common Pleas with regards to the appointment of the Clerk of Courts.

### ARTICLE VI - BOARDS AND COMMISSIONS

#### SECTION 6.01 BUDGET COMMISSION

The Budget Commission shall consist of the County Finance Director, the Auditor and the Law Director. Members of the Budget Commission may appoint deputies to serve on their behalf. The Budget Commission shall exercise all powers and perform all duties of a county budget commission as prescribed by general law.

#### SECTION 6.02 BOARD OF REVISION

There shall be one or more Boards of Revision, each consisting of three electors of the County. To ensure the board is politically neutral through diversity, one member will be appointed from the political party of the Ohio Senate Majority Leader, one from the party of the Ohio Senate Minority Leader, and one from another party or independent. The three members of each board shall be appointed by the Council, each for a term of three years. Each Board of Revision shall exercise all duties of a county board of revision as prescribed by general law. The Council shall provide for compensation for members of a Board of Revision.

#### SECTION 6.03 OTHER BOARDS AND COMMISSIONS

Any board or commission of the County and any joint board or commission in which the County is a participant that is in existence when this Charter becomes effective, but not provided for in this Charter, shall continue to exist until reorganized or discontinued by action of Council, unless its continuance is required by general law.

#### SECTION 6.04 SPECIAL BOARDS AND COMMISSIONS

When general law or any agreement with another public agency or court order provides for appointment of members of a special board or commission or other agency by the board of county commissioners, such appointment shall be made by the County Council.

### ARTICLE VII - ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

#### SECTION 7.01 COUNTY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

The County shall have as a primary responsibility the promotion and enhancement of the economic well-being and prosperity of the County and all of its residents. In furtherance of that purpose the County shall, as authorized by the Constitution of Ohio, general law, this Charter, and enactments pursuant thereto, develop and implement policies, programs, and activities for the expansion and enhancement of economic activity in the County so as to create and preserve jobs and employment opportunities for, and available to, residents of the County. In furtherance of this purpose, the County shall appropriate money and enter into agreements and otherwise cooperate with officers, agencies, and instrumentalities of the United States of America, the State of Ohio, with other political subdivision, and with public and private persons, firms, and corporations, foundations, and individuals and institutions, and may accept and make gifts, grants, and loans and other economic incentives.

#### SECTION 7.02 ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION

There shall be an Economic Development Commission, the members of which shall be selected and qualified as follows: One member shall be selected by each of the following: the County Administrator; the Council; the City Manager or mayor of the city of Ashtabula; the City Manager or mayor of the City of Conneaut and the

City Manager or mayor of the City of Geneva, the Ashtabula County Port Authority and the Ashtabula County Growth Partnership or its successor. Council shall further appoint to the Commission one elected official from the Villages and four elected officials from the townships for terms not to exceed four years or their term in office, whichever is lesser. Council shall also appoint such other members, not to exceed three, representing small business and manufacturing for terms not to exceed four years.

Membership on the Economic Development Commission shall not constitute the holding of office or employment with the County. The members shall serve without compensation, but may be reimbursed for reasonable and necessary expenses incurred in the performance of their duties. Any vacancy in the membership of the Economic Development Commission shall be filled in the same manner as that of the person whose position has been vacated.

The Economic Development Commission shall adopt its own rules and bylaws for its organization and procedures. It shall meet at least quarterly and shall be provided with such facilities and staff assistance as shall be necessary for the Economic Development Council to carry out its duties. The County Administrator and the Director of Development shall keep the Economic Development Commission informed of current and anticipated economic development activities and opportunities, except as necessary to preserve confidentiality of such matters as business plans and trade secrets of private parties. The Development Plan shall be reviewed and revised annually in accordance with the foregoing procedures.

#### SECTION 7.03 ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PLAN

The County Administrator in consultation with the Economic Development Commission, shall prepare and present to the Council by the first day of June of each year a proposed five-year economic development plan for the County, for actions to be carried out by the County itself, and in cooperation with other public and private agencies and organizations, for the purpose of enhancing the prosperity and well-being of the County and its residents and communities. The Council must adopt the proposed plan, with such changes as the Council shall deem advisable, within sixty days of its presentation to the Council, for the plan to be adopted. The economic development plan shall be reviewed and revised annually in accordance with the foregoing procedures.

#### ARTICLE VIII - COUNTY EMPLOYMENT PRACTICES

The County Administrator and the officers, offices, agencies, departments, boards, commissions, and other public bodies, who under this Charter or under general law are authorized to employ persons in the service of the County, shall be appointing authorities. Persons interested in employment with the County shall make application to the appointing authority. No appointing authority shall appoint a person to fill a vacancy in the classified service who does not meet the qualifications for that position. Ashtabula County is an equal opportunity employer.

#### ARTICLE IX - PURCHASING

The County Administrator, shall be responsible, except as otherwise provided by this Charter or by ordinance, and to the extent permitted by the Ohio Constitution, for the purchase of goods and services required by all offices, officers, agencies, departments, boards, commissions, or other public bodies, other than separate political subdivisions, that are supported in whole or in part from taxes levied, or other financial assistance provided by the County.

#### ARTICLE X - AUDITS

##### SECTION 10.01 INTERNAL AUDITS

The Charter recognizes the importance of independent and professional internal audits for the purpose of insuring the proper handling of all funds coming into County government.

##### SECTION 10.02 AUDIT COMMITTEE

An Audit Committee shall be created consisting of the County Administrator, the County Auditor, and the President of Council and two residents of the County appointed by Council not belonging to the same political party, such residents to serve for a four year term.

##### SECTION 10.03 INTERNAL AUDIT PROCEDURE

The procedure to conduct an internal audit shall be as follows:

1. The Audit Committee shall advertise and seek bids from qualified, independent and certified internal audit companies for the purpose of conducting periodic internal audits of all departments in the county handling public funds.

2. The Audit Committee shall recommend to County Council the best three reputable firms to conduct such an independent internal audit.
3. Council shall authorize a contract with one of such firms, appropriate the necessary funds, and direct the County Administrator to execute such contract.
4. The Audit Committee shall assist the internal audit.
5. The Audit Committee shall work with every department to develop policies to implement any recommendations provided by the internal audit, and shall monitor such departments to insure they are implementing and following such procedures.

#### SECTION 10.04 INTERNAL AUDIT FINDINGS

The findings of such internal audit shall be shared with Council and shall be public records. The County Administrator shall insure that the recommendations of such internal audit are implemented to insure the integrity of county funds.

### ARTICLE XI - GENERAL PROVISIONS

#### SECTION 11.01 EFFECTIVE DATE OF CHARTER

The effective date of this Charter shall be January 1, 2015, except as otherwise provided herein with respect to particular officers, offices or functions.

#### SECTION 11.02 FORFEITURE OF OFFICE

A County elected official shall forfeit that office if the officer:

1. Lacks at any time during the term of office any qualification for the office prescribed by this Charter or by general law to the extent applicable under this Charter;
2. Knowingly violates any express prohibition of this Charter, including Section 12.04 hereof;
3. Is convicted of any felony or of any crime involving moral turpitude; or
4. In the case of a member of Council, fails to attend three consecutive regular meetings of the Council without being excused by the Council.

#### SECTION 11.03 REPORTING OF OFFERS TO INFLUENCE OFFICIAL ACTION

Any elected or appointed County officer who receives or who has specific and personal knowledge of any offer by any person of anything of value to be given to a County officer or employee for the purpose of influencing such officer or employee in the performance of such officer's or employee's official duties shall promptly report the matter to a law enforcement officer or agency believed by the reporting officer or employee to have jurisdiction or responsibility concerning the matter. Such officer or employee shall fully cooperate in any investigation of and any resulting prosecution or action relating to the matter.

#### SECTION 11.04 MEETINGS OF GOVERNMENTAL BODIES TO BE PUBLIC

All meetings of the Council and any committee, board, commission, agency or authority of the County, as well as any similar body created by this Charter or by the Council, shall be open to the public as provided by general law.

#### SECTION 11.05 RECORDS OF GOVERNMENTAL BODIES TO BE PUBLIC

Records of the County shall be open to the public as provided by general law.

#### SECTION 11.06 EQUAL OPPORTUNITY

It shall be the policy of the County that:

1. All officers and members of boards, agencies, commissions and authorities appointed by the County Administrator, the Council or other County elected officials;

2. All members of each Charter Review Commission; and
3. All County employees;

Shall be appointed, employed, promoted, and compensated without regard to their race, color, religion, sex, national origin, sexual orientation, disability, age, or ancestry.

#### SECTION 11.07 EMPLOYEE RIGHTS

Employees of the County and its offices, agencies and departments shall have the right to organize and to engage in collective bargaining as provided by general law.

#### SECTION 11.08 CHARTER REVIEW COMMISSION

Commencing in September 2015, in September 2019, and at intervals of ten years thereafter, the County Council, shall appoint a Charter Review Commission consisting of nine electors of the County, no more than four of whom may be of the same political party, and no more than two of whom may be an officer of the County. Appointment to the Charter Review Commission shall be for a term of one year. Members of the Charter Review Commission shall serve without pay and shall serve on no more than three consecutive Charter Review Commissions, unless such service is within a ten-year period. The Council shall establish rules and procedures for the operation of the Charter Review Commission and the County Administrator shall provide the Commission necessary staff services.

The Charter Review Commission may propose to the Council such amendments to this Charter as it shall deem appropriate. The final report of each Charter Review Commission, which shall include all proposed charter amendments and a summary of the Commission's activities, shall be transmitted to the Council for consideration by the first day of July following the formation of the Charter Review Commission. The Council shall vote within sixty days after the proposals are received on whether or not to submit the proposals to the electors at the next general election held more than sixty days after its vote on the proposed amendments.

#### SECTION 11.09 CHARTER AMENDMENTS

Proposed amendments to this Charter shall be submitted to the electors of the County in the manner provided for by the Ohio Constitution.

#### SECTION 11.10 REARRANGEMENT, REPRINTING OF, AND CORRECTION OF TYPOGRAPHICAL ERRORS IN THE CHARTER

Following any election in which any amendment to this Charter is adopted, the Clerk of Council, with the approval of the Council and the Director of Law, may prior to any reprinting of this Charter, make such changes therein, including the numbers, titles and arrangement of articles and sections hereof, as may be necessary or desirable to maintain or assure the logical and consistent ordering thereof, but no such change shall in any way affect the substance or meaning of this Charter or any part thereof or amendment thereto.

The Clerk of Council may, at any time, with the approval of the Council, correct typographical errors appearing in this Charter, but no such change shall in any way affect the substance or meaning of this Charter or any part thereof or amendment thereto.

#### SECTION 11.11 SEVERABILITY.

The various provisions of this Charter are intended to be severable, and the invalidity of one or more of such provisions shall not affect the validity of the remaining provisions.

#### SECTION 11.12 REMOVING AN ELECTED OFFICIAL BY RECALL

Any member of the County Council, or any County elected office holder under Article IV, Section 4.01 or 4.02, of this Charter may be removed from office by recall. The procedure to effect such removal shall be as follows:

1. A petition signed by qualified electors demanding the election of a successor to the person sought to be removed, shall contain a general statement, in not more than two hundred words, of the grounds upon which removal is sought. In seeking removal of a County elected office holder such petition must be signed by qualified electors of the County equal in number to at least ten (10) percent of those who voted for Governor in the last preceding gubernatorial election. In seeking removal of a member of County Council

representing a particular district, such petition must be signed by qualified electors of that district equal in number to at least twenty (20) percent of those who voted for Governor in the last preceding Gubernatorial election in that district.

2. Petition papers shall be procured only from the Clerk of Council, who shall keep a sufficient number on file for the use as provided by this section. Prior to the issuance of such petition papers an affidavit shall be made by one or more qualified electors of the County and filed with the Clerk, stating the name and office of the official sought to be removed. The Clerk, upon issuing any such petition paper, shall enter, in a record to be kept in his office, the name of the elector to whom issued, the date of such issuance, and the number of papers issued, and shall certify upon each paper the name of the elector to whom issued and the date of issuance. No petition paper so issued shall be accepted as part of a petition unless it bears the certificate of the Clerk and unless it is filed as provided in this section.
3. The petition shall be addressed to the County Council. With each signature shall be stated the place of residence of the signer, giving the street and number. The signatures need not all be on one paper. A person shall be designated in such petition to receive it in case of return by the Clerk for insufficiency, as provided in this section. One of the signers of every such paper shall sign an affidavit stating that each signature on the paper is the genuine signature of the person whose name it purports to be. All such papers for the removal of any one official shall be fastened together and be filed as one instrument within thirty (30) days after the filing with the Clerk of the affidavit stating the name and office of the official sought to be removed. The Clerk, within ten (10) days after the filing of such petitions, shall determine the sufficiency of such petition and attach a certificate showing the result of his examination. If the Clerk shall certify that the petition is insufficient, he shall set forth in the certificate the particulars in which the petition is defective, and shall return a copy of the certificate to the person designated in such petition to receive it.
4. Such recall petition may be amended at any time within twenty (20) days after the making of certificate of insufficiency by the Clerk, by filing a supplementary petition upon additional petition papers, issued, signed and filed as provided in this section for the original petition. The Clerk shall, within ten (10) days after such amended petition is filed, make an examination of the amended petition, and if his certificate shall show the same to be still insufficient, he shall return it to the person designated in such petition to receive it, without prejudice, however, to the filing of a new petition.
5. If the Clerk shall determine that the petition or amended petition is sufficient, he shall at once submit the same with his certificate to the Council and forthwith notify the official sought to be recalled of such action. If the official whose removal is sought shall not resign within five (5) days after such notice, the County Council shall thereupon by order fix a day for holding a recall election. Such election shall be held not less than forty (40) nor more than sixty (60) days after the petition has been submitted to the County Council. If possible, the recall election shall take place at the time any general or special election is held within such period, but if no such election is held, within the time previously stated.
6. The Clerk shall transmit a duly certified copy of such order to the Director of the Ashtabula County Board of Elections or the successor to this position. The election authorities shall publish notice and make all arrangements necessary for holding an election, and the same shall be conducted and the result returned and declared in all respects, as are the results of general county elections.
7. Each ballot at such election shall have printed upon it the following question: "Shall (name of person) be removed from the office of (name of office) by recall?" Immediately following such question, there shall be printed on the ballot the following two propositions in the following order:

"For the recall of (name of person)."

"Against the recall of (name of person)."

Immediately to the left on each of said propositions shall be a space in which the elector may vote for either of such propositions.

8. If a majority of the votes cast on the question of recalling any elected official shall be against the recall, the elected official shall continue in office for the remainder of his unexpired term, but subject to recall as before. If a majority of such votes be for the recall, then the elected official shall be deemed removed from office upon the announcement of the official result of such an election.
9. When a person is removed from office by recall, the vacancy will be filled in accordance with the provisions of this Charter and general law.

## ARTICLE XII - TRANSITION TO CHARTER GOVERNMENT

### SECTION 12.01 OFFICES ABOLISHED

As of the date when any officer elected or appointed pursuant to this Charter assumes an office that succeeds to the powers and duties of a predecessor office, the corresponding predecessor office is abolished, and the duties of those officers shall be assumed by the respective officers as provided herein.

### SECTION 12.02 INITIAL ELECTION OF COUNTY OFFICERS

No primary or general election shall be held in 2014 for any elected office that is abolished pursuant to this Charter. A runoff election, if necessary, for the nomination of County officials to be elected at the November 2014 general election shall be held on the first Tuesday after the first Monday in May 2014 or at such time as primary elections are scheduled by the State of Ohio. The runoff election shall be conducted in the manner provided by this charter for the nomination of county elected officials, provided that filing deadlines and other matters of time coincide with a primary election. Upon the election of the first Council, Council shall appoint an interim County Administrator with management experience in county government until such time as a County Administrator meeting the requirements of this charter can be hired.

### SECTION 12.03 OFFICERS AND EMPLOYEES

1. Rights and Privileges Preserved: Nothing in this Charter except as otherwise specifically provided shall affect or impair the rights or privileges of persons who are County officers or employees at the time of its adoption.
2. Continuance of Office or Employment: Except as specifically provided by this Charter, if at the time this Charter takes effect a County administrative officer or employee holds any office or position that is or can be abolished by or under this Charter, he or she shall continue in such position until the taking effect of some specific provision under this Charter directing that he or she vacate the office or position.
3. Human Resource System: An employee holding a County position at the time this Charter takes effect who was serving in that same or a comparable position at the time of its adoption shall not be subject to competitive examination as a condition of continuing in the same position, but in all other respects shall be subject to the provision of this Charter and ordinances and regulations enacted pursuant to this Charter relating to the human resource system.

### SECTION 12.04 DEPARTMENTS, OFFICES, AND AGENCIES

1. Transfer of Powers: If a County department, office or agency is abolished by this Charter, or if a portion of the powers and duties of a department, office or agency is transferred hereby to another department, office or agency, such powers and duties shall be transferred to the County department, office or agency designated in this Charter, or, if this Charter makes no provision therefore, as designated by ordinance.
2. Property and Records: All property, records, and equipment of any County department, office or agency in existence when this Charter becomes effective shall be transferred to any department, office or agency that assumes its powers and duties as provided herein, but, in the event that the powers or duties are to be discontinued or divided between such entities or in the event that any conflict arises regarding any such transfer, such property, records, or equipment shall be transferred to the department, office or agency designated by the Council in accordance with this Charter.

### SECTION 12.05 PENDING MATTERS

All rights, claims, orders, contracts and legal administrative proceedings shall continue except as modified pursuant to this Charter, and in each case shall be maintained, carried out or dealt with by the County department, office or agency as shall be appropriate under this Charter.

## SECTION 12.06 LAWS IN FORCE

All County resolutions, orders and regulations that are in force when this Charter becomes fully effective are repealed to the extent that they are inconsistent or interfere with the effective operation of this Charter or of ordinances or resolutions enacted pursuant hereto. To the extent that general law permits, all laws relating to or affecting the County or its officers, agencies, departments or employees that are in force when this Charter becomes fully effective are superseded to the extent that they are inconsistent or interfere with the effective operation of this Charter or of ordinances or resolutions enacted pursuant hereto.

## SECTION 12.07 TRANSITION ADVISORY GROUP

The Board of County Commissioners, not later than March 2014, shall designate three senior administrative officials of the County to act as a Transition Advisory Group, which shall develop recommendations for the orderly and efficient transition to the operation of the County government under the provisions of this Charter and shall work with the newly elected County officials. The Board of County Commissioners shall provide necessary facilities and support for the Transition Advisory Group and shall make provision in the budget of the County for the salaries of the elected officers who are to take office in January 2015 and for such other matters as shall be necessary and practicable to provide for the transition. All County officials and employees shall cooperate with the Transition Advisory Group by providing such information and documents as the Transition Advisory Group shall request in connection with the performance of its duties under this section and shall use their best efforts to assist the newly elected County officials and their designees and representatives in implementing the transition.

## ARTICLE XIII – NON PARTISAN ELECTIONS

### SECTION 13.01 ELECTIONS

All elected offices in this charter will be non-partisan. The filing deadlines for candidates will be ninety days before the first Tuesday after the first Monday in May, or at such time as primary elections are scheduled by the State of Ohio. At any time more than two candidates file to run for an office a runoff election shall occur to coincide with the May primary elections. The two candidates with the most votes in the runoff election shall then run in the November election. Write in candidates may run in accordance with general law. Elections for Auditor and odd-numbered County District Council Members shall occur in Gubernatorial election years. Elections for Prosecutor, Coroner, Engineer, Sheriff, and even-numbered County District Council Members shall occur in Presidential election years.

### SECTION 13.02 FILLING UNEXPIRED TERMS

When a vacancy occurs in an elected office, the Council shall have 30 days to make the appointment. If Council fails to make the appointment in 30 days, the Council President shall make the appointment. If a vacancy occurs in the first or second year of a four-year term, the interim appointment shall be for a period until the next countywide general election, at which time the position shall be filled for the remainder of the unexpired term. If a vacancy occurs in the third or fourth year of a four-year term, the interim appointment shall extend until the next countywide general election, at which time the position shall be filled for the next four-year term.

### SECTION 13.03 TERM LIMITS

All elected officials in this charter shall have a maximum of three full four year terms in an office. Any elected official completing three consecutive terms in the same office cannot hold any other elected office in the county for a period of one year. Term limits shall not take effect until January 1, 2015. Any current elected official at the time this charter takes effect shall not have any past terms count against their term limit.

### Appendix A: Guideline for Redistricting

In order to ensure that Decennial Redistricting is fair, equitable, and transparent to the citizens, the following guidelines should be followed by the Districting Commission whenever reasonably possible.

1. Ensure districts are of equal population: Districts should not deviate by more than five percent from the most recent Census total divided by the number of Districts; This value, the Target District Population, shall henceforth be referred to in this section as the TDP.
2. Open Meetings: Efforts should be made to hold meetings at a time and place which is accessible to the public, and to be available to receive input from the citizens.

3. Contiguity and Compactness: Districts must be contiguous but should also seek to have a minimal perimeter to area ratio, districts should not snake nor connect two or more larger areas via thin strips.
4. Keep Existing Entities Intact: In order of preference, where existing entities must be divided, this should be in order of Townships before Municipalities and both before City Wards unless the location in question would already exceed district size, clarified below:
  - i. Maintain the Integrity of Voting Precincts: The Commission should place high priority upon not subdividing any existing precinct and should inquire if the County Board of Elections is planning imminent alterations, mergers, or divisions of Voter Precincts and act accordingly.
  - ii. Maintain the Integrity of Smaller Municipal Corporations and Townships: Where possible entities significantly smaller than the TDP should not be subdivided.
  - iii. Maintaining the Integrity of Subdivisions of Larger Municipal Corporations: When a city is more populous than the TDP, or of an approximately parallel size, preference is to be given to maintaining the integrity of City Wards rather than the City itself.
5. Minimize Alteration to Prior Districts: It is deemed better to attempt to preserve the prior districts as much as reasonably possible.
6. Non-Arbitrary Demarcation: Where a division in contradiction to the above is deemed necessary effort should be made to use boundaries such as a river or a major road.

Appendix B: District Summary Descriptions

The 7 districts have been generated principally with existing civic boundaries, voter precincts, and even population spread as priorities. Districts are numerically but an unofficial designator is included. They are as follows:

District 1 – North West: The entirety of Geneva City, Township, Village, and Harpersfield Township, as well as Northwestern Saybrook Township (Saybrook Precinct 7).

District 2 – South West: The entirety of the Townships of Colebrook, Hartsgrove, Morgan, New Lyme, Orwell, Rome, Trumbull, and Windsor as well as the Villages of Orwell, Roaming Shores, and Rock Creek.

District 3 – Lakeshore West: The Northeastern section Saybrook Township (Precincts 2, 3, 5, and 6) as well as the entirety of Ashtabula City Wards 1, 2 and 3.

District 4 – Central: The entirety of the Townships of Austinburg, Jefferson, Lenox, and Plymouth as well as Southern Saybrook Township (Precincts 1, 4 and 8) and Ashtabula Township Southwest (Precinct 2).

District 5 – Lakeshore East: Ashtabula City Wards 4 and 5 as well as the entirety of unincorporated Ashtabula Township excluding Precinct 2, and the entirety of North Kingsville Village.

District 6 – South East: The entirety of the Townships of Andover, Cherry Valley, Denmark, Dorset, Monroe, Pierpont, Richmond, Sheffield, Wayne, and Williamsfield as well as Andover Village.

District 7 – North East: The entirety of the City of Conneaut and the Township of Kingsville not including the village of North Kingsville.

Appendix C: Voter Precinct by County District List

The following table lists the voting precincts by their standard abridged nomenclature and the District they are to be located in.

Precinct Name	District	Precinct Name	District	Precinct Name	District
ANDOVER TWP. 1	6	CONNEAUT 1-C	7	KINGSVILLE TWP. 2	7
ANDOVER TWP. 2	6	CONNEAUT 2-A	7	LENOX TWP. 1	4
ANDOVER VILLAGE	6	CONNEAUT 2-B	7	LENOX TWP. 2	4
ASHTABULA 1-A	3	CONNEAUT 2-C	7	MONROE TWP. 1	6
ASHTABULA 1-B	3	CONNEAUT 3-A	7	MONROE TWP. 2	6

ASHTABULA 1-C	3	CONNEAUT 3-B	7	MORGAN TWP.	2
ASHTABULA 1-D	3	CONNEAUT 3-C	7	N KINGS VILL 1	5
ASHTABULA 2-A	3	CONNEAUT 3-D	7	N KINGS VILL 2	5
ASHTABULA 2-B	3	CONNEAUT 4-A	7	N KINGS VILL 3	5
ASHTABULA 2-C	3	CONNEAUT 4-B	7	NEW LYME TWP.	2
ASHTABULA 2-D	3	CONNEAUT 4-C	7	ORWELLTWP.	2
ASHTABULA 3-A	3	DENMARK TWP.	6	ORWELL VILLAGE	2
ASHTABULA 3-B	3	DORSET TWP.	6	PIERPONT TWP.	6
ASHTABULA 3-C	3	GEN ON LAKE VILL	1	PLYMOUTH TWP. 1	4
ASHTABULA 3-D	3	GENEVA 1	1	PLYMOUTH TWP. 2	4
ASHTABULA 4-A	5	GENEVA 2	1	RICHMOND TWP.	6
ASHTABULA 4-B	5	GENEVA 3	1	ROAMING SHORES VILLAGE	2
ASHTABULA 4-C	5	GENEVA 4	1	ROCK CREEK VILLAGE	2
ASHTABULA 4-D	5	GENEVA 5	1	ROME TWP.	2
ASHTABULA 5-A	5	GENEVA 6	1	SAYBROOK TWP. 1	4
ASHTABULA 5-B	5	GENEVA 7	1	SAYBROOK TWP. 2	3
ASHTABULA 5-C	5	GENEVA TWP. 1	1	SAYBROOK TWP. 3	3
ASHTABULA 5-D	5	GENEVA TWP. 2	1	SAYBROOK TWP. 4	4
ASHTABULA TWP. 1	5	GENEVA TWP. 3	1	SAYBROOK TWP. 5	3
ASHTABULA TWP. 2	4	HARPERSFLD TWP 1	1	SAYBROOK TWP. 6	3
ASHTABULA TWP. 3	5	HARPERSFLD TWP 2	1	SAYBROOK TWP. 7	1
ASHTABULA TWP. 4	5	HARPERSFLD TWP 3	1	SAYBROOK TWP. 8	4
ASHTABULA TWP. 5	5	HARTSGROVE TWP	2	SHEFFIELD TWP. 1	6
ASHTABULA TWP. 6	5	JEFF VILL 1	4	SHEFFIELD TWP. 2	6
AUSTINBURG TWP. 1	4	JEFF VILL 2	4	TRUMBULL TWP.	2
AUSTINBURG TWP. 2	4	JEFF VILL 3	4	WAYNE TWP.	6
CHERRY VALLEY	6	JEFFERSON TWP. 1	4	WINDSOR TWP.	2
COLEBROOK TWP.	2	JEFFERSON TWP. 2	4	WMSFLD TWP 1	6
CONNEAUT 1-A	7	JEFFERSON TWP. 3	4	WMSFLD TWP 2	6
CONNEAUT 1-B	7	KINGSVILLE TWP. 1	7		