



# City of Chardon

Chardon Municipal Center • 111 Water Street • Chardon, Ohio 44024-1201

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For Immediate Release

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## City of Chardon continues fight for Chardon Square

*Summary judgment sought in lawsuit against Geauga County for plans to move offices out of Chardon, Geauga County's "Seat of Justice"*

CHARDON – Today, the City of Chardon filed a motion for summary judgment in Geauga County Court of Common Pleas, asking the court to declare that the “usual office” of the Geauga County Board of County Commissioners must be maintained in the Geauga County seat, the city of Chardon, and not moved out of the City. This motion, if granted, would also result in affirmation that the “usual office” includes the offices of the three County Commissioners; the County’s departments; the County Administrator and staff; the Planning Commission; and the offices of several county boards and commissions. (For the full list, please see the Motion for Summary Judgment).

While this motion and lawsuit are about maintaining the Commissioners’ offices, including their departments, in Chardon and not directly about the iconic Courthouse, the long-term implications for Chardon Square and the City of Chardon are clear.

“With the new administration building outside of the City and with the ongoing disinvestment in necessary upgrades to the County Courthouse, the Commissioners’ actions raise concerns,” said Daniel Meleski, Mayor of Chardon. “It appears that they may seek to move the county seat out of Chardon, abandon the Courthouse and move the remaining county offices off Chardon Square and out of the City as well.”

As the Geauga County seat since 1808, Chardon has been home to county services and offices for 213 years. The City has sought many avenues to work together with the Commissioners to try and accommodate their needs for expanded space. In addition to frequent meetings with the Commissioners, the City paid for a study that determined it was feasible for the County to continue to use and expand the Courthouse and construct a new administrative building on the Square, offering financial assistance to acquire the property. As in the past, the Commissioners rejected these and all other options to keep county offices in Chardon.

“Chardon Square represents our single, most significant community asset, serving as the focal point of activity in Chardon and Geauga County for more than two centuries,” said Mayor Meleski. “We are determined to see that continue.”

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The Geauga County Courthouse, built in 1869, was placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1975. Today, the courthouse retains the historic charm and character that exemplifies the architectural style and its prominence in Geauga County as an iconic structure.

The City's efforts to maintain its status as the county seat and keep the Courthouse as a vital part of the Chardon community serving its intended purpose are part of a larger, multi-year strategy to preserve, reinforce, and grow Chardon Square's rich physical, cultural, and retail heritage including:

- Investing more than \$1.5 million on maintaining, improving, and enhancing Chardon Square since 2016 to help promote the Square as a destination for civic institutions, businesses, residents, and tourists.
- Partnering with several entities, including the Chardon Square Association, Chardon Area Chamber of Commerce, Chardon Tomorrow, and many other nonprofit and civic organizations, to support businesses, promote events and create vitality in the community.

"The City stands to lose more than \$120,000 in annual taxes from the offices that are already scheduled to move to the new administration building," said Randy Sharpe, City Manager. "If the Commissioners ultimately succeed in moving the county seat out of Chardon, and with it all remaining county offices including the courts, businesses that support those county employees will also likely move out, further hurting the City financially and potentially putting a chilling effect on economic development on Chardon Square."

Part of what makes Chardon Square such an important part of the community is the presence of the County, its services, and its employees. The activity it generates is good for businesses on Chardon Square and provides an important revenue stream for the City. Sustaining that presence is the best option to support the continued vitality of Chardon Square, the City, and Geauga County.

"Chardon and Geauga County have been closely linked since 1808," said Sharpe. "Chardon will keep fighting to preserve our standing as the county seat – and the jobs and tax dollars that go with that – as a major component of our ongoing efforts to continue preserving and growing Chardon Square as the economic engine for Chardon, and all of Geauga County."

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