

**RECORD OF PROCEEDINGS
REGULAR COUNCIL MEETING
MONDAY, OCTOBER 23, 2023 – 7:00 P.M.
MAYOR WILLIAM G. KOONS PRESIDING**

MEMBERS PRESENT: Bell, Berger, Cavanagh, Galicki, Porter

MEMBERS ABSENT: Canton

OFFICIALS PRESENT: Fiscal Officer Romanowski, Police Chief Rizzo, Solicitor Matheney

VISITOR: John Buda, Leaview Ln.; Family of SRPD Officer Malik Meziane

The Mayor called the Regular Council meeting to order and led the Pledge of Allegiance. The Fiscal Officer read the roll. Canton was absent. **Porter made a motion to approve the October 9, 2023, Special Council meeting minutes, seconded by Galicki. Voice vote – ayes, all. Motion carried. Porter made a motion to approve the minutes of the October 9, 2023, Regular Council meeting, seconded by Galicki. Voice vote – ayes, all. Motion carried.**

VISITORS: The Mayor stated he would be appointing a new part-time Police Officer, Malik Meziane. The Chief explained that Meziane’s experience included working for both the University Hospitals and Cleveland Clinic Police Departments. **Galicki made a motion to appoint Malik Meziane to a position of part-time Police Officer, seconded by Berger. Porter clarified that the Mayor has appointed and the motion is to confirm. Voice vote – ayes, all. Motion carried.** The Mayor administered an oath.

MAYOR’S REPORT: The Mayor reported that the Fire Prevention Officer would be seeking accreditation as a fire marshal through the Center for Public Safety Excellence.

The Mayor said at the next Council meeting, Monday, November 13th sidewalks and crosswalks would be discussed. There have been requests from Rolling Ridge and the East Washington St. business district. He noted that it could be a divisive and controversial topic, and it is a lengthy process.

The Mayor attended the Northeast Ohio Area Coordinating Agency (NOACA) annual meeting. He had lunch with people who are into small time solar with townships and little villages. They will contact the Village to discuss ideas.

The Chagrin Valley Dispatch (CVD) will cost the Village about \$60,000 per year.

The Mayor asked that anyone planning to attend the Veterans Luncheon on November 13th let him know.

Regarding 131 Fairview, the Mayor reported there had been no change in the property and wanted to make sure Council members had seen it.

The county’s property tax reappraisal will be an unvoted property tax increase and more information will be coming. This is done every six years and taxes will go up. Galicki added that it is mandated by the State.

FISCAL OFFICER: The Fiscal Officer distributed her report. The auditor should be wrapping up the State Audit soon.

She relayed that the Street Commissioner said the three trees in the Manor Brook notch have been planted. He also submitted three quotes for the roof on the Service Building to her, and they range from \$26,000 to \$38,000. She will consult with the Properties Committee about how much to put in the budget.

The budget sheets were distributed, and the Fiscal Officer is waiting for numbers from some of the committees. Once she receives the information, she can work to finish the budget.

The Mayor noted that things had slowed down with Income Tax from the record setting months of January – March. The Fiscal Officer reported that she distributed a report from the Central Collection Agency (CCA) that compares collections from 2021, 2022, and 2023 which can aid in estimating what the Village will bring in next year. She also included historical numbers dating back to 2007. Sometimes there is a cycle, but there are also times like in July 2007 when the Village only received \$165 because it owed a resident a \$125,000 refund. Things can happen which is why she warns Council to be cautious. The Mayor commented that the Village is up \$130,000 compared to last year.

Galicki, who recently attended the Ohio Municipal League (OML) conference, reported that municipalities throughout Ohio are seeing an increase in employees being called back to physical work locations. He cautioned that the Village may also see an impact from this. The Fiscal Officer concurred.

FINANCE COMMITTEE: Berger made a motion to acknowledge receipt and review and approval of the September 2023 financials, seconded by Galicki. Voice vote – ayes, all. Motion carried.

Berger made a motion to approve the October 23, 2023, Credit Card Report, seconded by Galicki. Voice vote – ayes, all. Motion carried.

Berger reported that the Finance Committee met earlier in the day, and minutes will be forthcoming. The discussion involved the 2024 Budget and missing line items. The Thrasher, Dinsmore, & Dolan contract for 2024 was also discussed, and the committee recommends that Council approve the contract.

There are new amendments to the Ohio Revised Code (ORC) regarding the income taxes which require the Village to make amendments to its ordinances. **Berger made a motion to authorize the Solicitor to choose the appropriate language to update the ordinances to be in compliance with State law, seconded by Galicki.** Porter asked for clarification about the changes to the ORC. The Fiscal Officer gave an example of one change that pertains to the State limiting the allowable amount of penalties for late filing to a maximum of \$25. The State imposed a lot of restrictions, and everyone must comply. **Voice vote – ayes, all. Motion carried.**

Berger addressed the review of finances with regard to personnel. At the last Council meeting, the 7.7% increase in healthcare costs was discussed. It was less than the year before, but still significant. Other increased employee costs are also anticipated. **Berger made a motion to approve a 3% salary increase for all Village employees effective January 1, 2024, seconded by Galicki.** Porter noted that in the past this topic was often discussed in Executive Session since it dealt with employee compensation, and wanted to know if this was a departure from that practice. Berger was not aware this was a past practice. The Solicitor stated that if it is across the board, it normally is not proper for Executive Session, whereas if it is one employee being discussed, it would be. The Fiscal Officer verified that last year it was done in open session. **Voice vote – ayes, all. Motion carried.**

SOLICITOR: The Solicitor reported that the House passed the amendment to the law regarding the competitive bidding threshold. It still needs to go to the Senate. As previously discussed, Villages without an administrator were not included in the increased threshold of \$75,000, and it appears that will be corrected this year.

STREET COMMITTEE: Bell made a motion to approve Payment Application Number 1 in the amount of \$192,126.51 to Specialized Construction for the 2023 Road Program, seconded by Porter. Voice vote – ayes, all. Motion carried.

Bell made a motion to approve allowing the Chagrin Falls Schools to purchase salt from the Village, seconded by Porter. Voice vote – ayes, all. Motion carried.

The next Streets Committee meeting will be held November 3, 2023, at 7:30 a.m.

BUILDING COMMITTEE: Bell reported that the committee met two weeks ago and discussed the Inspection Solutions contract going over the contract amount of \$48,250. The Village is now \$1,000 away from that amount. The committee discussed options and concluded that with Council's approval, the annual payment should be increased up to \$60,000. Bell reported that there are available funds in the Building Department, but it would be necessary to reallocate some of the monies from the Zoning Inspector. **Bell made a motion to approve an amount not to exceed \$60,000 for the anticipated billing over the contract billing limitations amount for Inspection Solutions services to the end of the year December 31, 2023, seconded by Porter. Voice vote – ayes, all. Motion carried.** Bell advised that this would be a difference of \$11,750.

The next Building Committee meeting will be held November 2, 2023, at 8:00 a.m. in the Building Department.

POLICE CHIEF: The Chief reported that the old traffic light did not sell on GovDeals and proposed that the starting bid be reduced from \$1,000 to \$500. This includes the lights, poles, the controller cabinet, etc. The Fiscal Officer asked if it would be permissible to put the items on eBay, for example, and the Solicitor said she would look at the statute to see if "internet auctions" is defined. The Fiscal Officer noted that the Village's legislation specifies GovDeals, which would have to be changed. The Chief verified that it must be a 15-day minimum auction, and the Fiscal Officer explained this is a state requirement. There was also discussion about breaking up the auction item into several individual components to see if there would be interest.

SAFETY COMMITTEE: Galicki reported that the Safety Committee had not met since the last Council meeting. Regarding the OML conference, Galicki shared information that was of concern to some municipalities. He advised that most public servants throughout the State of Ohio are supportive of Police, Fire, and First Responders. There is a proposition to increase the contribution for the Police retirement funds. While it is great for individual police officers, there is a lot of concern among some municipalities, especially smaller ones, of the impact it will have on budgets. It is to the point where some villages and smaller cities may have to consider disestablishing their police departments and going with sheriff's services. There are unintended consequences involved in this proposal. However, it highlights how fortunate the Village is to have the financial position it has. The Chief asked what the percentage of increase was being discussed, and the Fiscal Officer said it is currently 19.5%.

HR COMMITTEE: Cavanagh reported the committee met with Jim Budzik on October 12th. The Chief was present and requested an increase in uniform allowance from \$800 to \$1,200. The part-time

officers' allowance would increase by \$100 according to hours worked. He added that the department is moving to an external vest carrier in a uniform shirt style and clarified it will not be like a tactical vest but would be for comfort.

Cavanagh reported that the committee discussed the potential for a School Safety Officer (SSO) for Gurney Elementary School and that the Chief had written a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). The Chief advised that the MOU and financials were sent to the district, and he is waiting for a response. Once this occurs, he will ask for approval of the position from Council.

Regarding the revision of the Employee Handbook, Cavanagh reported that the committee has continued to review it for changes.

The HR Committee will meet November 2, 2023, at 1:00 p.m.

Cavanagh made a motion to approve the healthcare renewal at 7.7% with Medical Mutual, seconded by Berger. Voice vote – ayes, all. Motion carried.

Cavanagh made a motion to hold a special meeting on Friday, December 15, 2023, at noon, for the purpose of holding a Holiday Luncheon, seconded by Berger. Voice vote – ayes, all. Motion carried.

PROPERTIES COMMITTEE: Cavanagh reported that at the last Properties Committee meeting, Rob Arnold, Evergreen Cemetery, met with the committee and vaults were discussed. The committee came to a decision that they were not wanted for cremains.

Regarding the flagpole and bench donation from the Masons, the project is pending receipt of the 25-foot flagpole.

The next Properties Committee meeting will be on November 2, 2023, at 10:00 a.m.

Cavanagh reported that Eagle Scout Charlie Robinson donated the remainder of the project money to the Village for continuing care of the Rarick Cemetery. The Fiscal Officer clarified that there is only one Cemetery Fund, so it would stay with the cemeteries. **Cavanagh made a motion to accept the donation from Charlie Robinson in the amount of \$743.30 to the Cemetery Fund, seconded by Berger.** Porter suggested that there were some headstones that needed to be repaired in Rarick Cemetery. The Solicitor clarified that there were no restrictions on the donation and that Robinson would only like that it be applied to Rarick Cemetery. **Voice vote – ayes, all. Motion carried.**

The Fiscal Officer stated that Council recently passed legislation requiring cremation vaults in the revised Cemetery Rules and Regulations. Cavanagh explained that the difference was that the committee did not want the Village to be the purveyors of the vaults. The Fiscal Officer reminded Council that at the meeting where the revised rules were adopted, it was requested that the cost of vaults be obtained and discussed with the Properties Committee.

PARK COMMITTEE: Cavanagh was still waiting to hear about the grant for the park restroom. The Mayor said he had called and was told a decision would be made by the end of the month.

PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMITTEE: The committee met on October 13th and October 23rd. The minutes of the October 13th meeting were distributed. The discussion at the October 23rd meeting involved the easements for the pond assessments, and how to define the property the Village would

need for access to evaluate the ponds. They also discussed easements concerning 500 Manor Brook. The next meeting will be Friday, November 3, 2023, at 9:00 a.m.

Porter said the solar company from which the committee was waiting to hear had been in contact and should have the proposal for the November 3rd meeting. The purveyor of the solar panels is a South Russell resident.

ORDINANCES AND RESOLUTIONS:

Cavanagh provided a second reading of an ordinance authorizing the Mayor and Fiscal Officer to enter into an agreement with Thrasher, Dinsmore & Dolan to act as the Village's Solicitor for the time period January 1, 2024, through December 31, 2025, and declaring an emergency. Cavanagh made a motion to waive readings, seconded by Porter. Roll call – ayes, all. Motion carried. Cavanagh made a motion to adopt, seconded by Berger. Roll call – ayes, all. Motion carried. **ORD 2023-62**

Galicki introduced an ordinance awarding the bid of Sarchione Ford Lincoln of Alliance for the retail purchase of a 2024 Ford E450 Cutaway dual rear wheel drive with 14 foot workport service body vehicle, approving the retail purchase agreement between the Village of South Russell and Sarchione Ford Lincoln of Alliance, approving the retail purchase of the Ford vehicle in the amount of \$82,641.25, authorizing the Mayor and Fiscal Officer to execute the retail purchase agreement, and declaring an emergency. Galicki made a motion to waive readings, seconded by Berger. Roll call – ayes, all. Motion carried. Galicki made a motion to adopt, seconded by Berger. Roll call – ayes, all. Motion carried. **ORD 2023-63**

The Chief explained that the vehicle is being purchased with a donation from a family member of one of the officers. It will be used for the drone team, which the Chief oversees through the Valley Enforcement Group (VEG).

Galicki introduced a resolution authorizing the sale of personal property not needed by the Village and declaring an emergency. There was discussion about breaking up the auction items. The Chief said he would keep the limit of \$1,000. The Solicitor thought the limit had been changed to \$500. Galicki thought the opening bid would be \$250 per device. Porter suggested trying to sell the whole assembly at the reduced price first, and if it did not sell, to break it apart with a base bid of \$250 each. Galicki made a motion to waive readings, seconded by Porter. Roll call – ayes, all. Motion carried. Galicki made a motion to adopt, seconded by Berger. Roll call – ayes, all. Motion carried. **RES 2023-64**

Berger introduced a resolution declaring it necessary and determining to proceed with acquiring, constructing, installing, equipping, improving, maintaining, and repairing improvements necessary for making improvements to abate erosion along properties within the Village of South Russell included within the Geauga County Erosion Control Special Improvement District, Inc., together with all necessary appurtenances thereto and declaring an emergency. Berger made a motion to waive readings, seconded by Porter. Roll call – ayes, all. Motion carried. Berger made a motion to adopt, seconded by Cavanagh. Roll call – ayes, all. Motion carried. **RES 2023-65**

The Mayor explained that 29 Manor Brook Gardens homeowners are paying \$7,000 each to improve their property through an Erosion Special Improvement District (ESID). The auditor puts the expense on the taxes, and it is paid over 15 years. The ESID allows homeowners to make improvements without a huge financial up-front cost. It can be done individually or as a group and the expense stays with the property.

Berger introduced an ordinance levying special assessments for acquiring, constructing, installing, equipping, improving, maintaining, and repairing improvements necessary for making improvements

to abate erosion along properties within the Village of South Russell included within the Geauga County Erosion Control Special Improvement District, together with all necessary appurtenances thereto and declaring an emergency. Berger made a motion to waive readings, seconded by Cavanagh. Roll call – ayes, all. Motion carried. Berger made a motion to adopt, seconded by Bell. Roll call – ayes, all. Motion carried. **ORD 2023-66**

Galicki introduced an ordinance approving the updated Memorandum of Understanding as to term regarding the deployment of a School Resource Officer, authorizing the Mayor to execute the updated Memorandum of Understanding on behalf of the Village of South Russell, authorizing the Police Chief to execute the updated Memorandum of Understanding on behalf of the Village of South Russell Police Department, and declaring an emergency. Galicki made a motion to waive readings, seconded by Cavanagh. Roll call – ayes, all. Motion carried. Galicki made a motion to adopt, seconded by Cavanagh. Roll call – ayes, all. Motion carried. **ORD 2023-67**

Bell introduced an ordinance amending the 2023 Annual Appropriations for the Building Fund decreasing Salaries and Benefits \$6,500 and increasing Other \$6,500 and declaring an emergency. Bell made a motion to waive readings, seconded by Porter. Roll call – ayes, all. Motion carried. Bell made a motion to adopt, seconded by Porter. Roll call – ayes, all. Motion carried. **ORD 2023-68**

Berger introduced an ordinance approving the competitive retail electric service contract between NEXTERA Energy Services Ohio LLC, authorizing the Mayor to execute the contract on behalf of the Village of South Russell and declaring an emergency. Berger made a motion to waive readings, seconded by Porter. Roll call – ayes, all. Motion carried. Berger made a motion to adopt, seconded by Porter. Roll call – ayes, all. Motion carried. **ORD 2023-69**

BILLS LIST: Galicki made a motion to ratify the bills list of October 15, 2023, in the amount of \$108,110.80, seconded by Bell. Roll call – ayes, Bell, Cavanagh, Galicki, Porter. Berger abstained. Motion carried.

NEW/OTHER: Bell, Berger, Galicki, and Porter had no new business.

Cavanagh acknowledged the Chief relative to the memorial service for former Police Chief Kurt Laderer.

ADJOURNMENT: Being that there was no further business before Council, Porter made a motion to adjourn at 8:02 p.m. seconded by Berger. Voice vote – ayes, all. Motion carried.



William G. Koons, Mayor



Danielle Romanowski, Fiscal Officer

Prepared by Leslie Galicki