

Finance Committee Meeting
Thursday, October 17, 2024, 10:00 a.m.

Present: Chairman Berger, Council Member Galicki, Fiscal Officer Romanowski,
Police Chief Rizzo, LT Pocek, Mayor

Berger called the meeting to order. The Chief advised that the Safety Committee discussed the situation with Chagrin Valley Dispatch (CVD) with the increase in costs. He and LT Pocek have been in conversation with Geauga County Dispatch as well as the Finance Director of CVD. If the Police Department left CVD to go to Geauga County, it could save the Village \$45,000 per year. The Police Department would be dispatched by Geauga County for free. This option has been available, but in the past the county's technology was not sufficient. However, that has changed and since CVD has gone to the Motorola system, it has been an epic failure. It is a multimillion-dollar program that is not working out for the Village and many other agencies, which have gone to other records management systems. The Chief suggested moving police services only to Geauga County. This does not mean the Village needs to change anything with fire services. If the Village is happy with Chagrin Valley Fire Department (CVFD), it can continue to use it except dispatch fees would basically be cut in half. Currently, the Village is paying \$59,000 per year for both police and fire. The Village is slated to go up to almost \$90,000 for 2025. Taking the \$45,000 out, the fire only fee would go down to \$48,000. The Chief further explained he had met with the Sheriff, Chief Deputy, and the IT person and they are very much entertaining the situation. The service has always been there, and whenever the Village is ready, it can come aboard. They are welcoming the Village with open arms and will be sending the Village a letter to let Council know of their intent to provide services for the police. The Chief further advised that it should be a smooth transition. Currently, all cell phone calls already go to Geauga County when 911 is called. Then it gets transferred to CVD. With the police being part of the Geauga County dispatch, when a 911 call comes in, they can immediately dispatch police before fire even gets the callout. It will be much more efficient in getting the calls sooner. They have used their software for many years. Half of the police department has utilized this software previously and can train the new people in a reasonable amount of time. There have been a lot of software issues with CVD recently making extraction of data very difficult. He suspected that part of this was because CVD did not want the municipalities to see some of the information like the length of time to put a call out. The Chief thought they would see improved times under the county. Additionally, other services include payment of monthly subscription fees for radios to the state. The mobile data air cards would not be paid, but it is at a reduced rate and the budget would remain the same. The Village would not have to pay for software, which it is currently doing through CVD. It also raises the IT issue. The police could drop CVD since it would not be using the CVD system and could implement ADP so the Village as a whole would be on the same network. He recognized the struggle with ADP, but also acknowledged that the Village was covered by cyber security.

Berger asked if there would be any additional costs, and the Chief said no. He discussed the savings which included \$40,000 for dispatch, \$5,000 for software, and additional fees in the dispatch contract for mobile data fees. This would be transferred to the county and the Village would be billed about \$100 per month to access LEADS. It would mean great savings, better service, technology, and Geauga County already does the expungement orders, sealing of cases, etc. He also shared that the county will be going to the program the police currently use for tickets and accidents so now the tickets will be written in the cruiser and electronically

transmitted to Geauga County Court, and it will not be necessary to send an officer up to court a couple of days a week.

Galicki relayed a discussion the Safety Committee had about the breakdown of the savings. The Chief verified with the CVD Finance Director what the savings would be. Currently, to keep CVFD, the Village's current rate is \$59,393 which would drop to \$47,914 and all police services would be at no cost. Galicki added that the discussion also included that the quality of fire services in the area are not all equal. There is a wide disparity in professionalism, response times, as well as training levels. He thought that the Village is currently engaged with the most professional of available fire services. He was glad that the option provided by the Chief allows the Village to remain with CVFD. The Chief added that the police have had a great working relationship with CVFD, which will continue. Galicki added that Chief Zupan reached out to the Safety Committee Chair Canton and wants to discuss the matter with him as well.

Berger asked what the downside would be to the change. The Chief explained that the Village is under contract with CVD and there is a 6-month notification clause to pull out. It would still be necessary to pay for the IT and dispatch costs through April. Galicki offered that the question had not been asked of CVD to see if they would make an exception. The Safety Committee discussed that CVD did not give the Village six months to review the contract before instituting new charges that have a significant impact on the community. The Chief will be engaging the Solicitor to see if it is possible to negotiate the terms. Furthermore, the Chief advised that after talking with the Sheriff and the Chief Deputy yesterday, Chagrin Falls Police Department inquired about Geauga County Sheriff dispatching for Chagrin Falls, but the Sheriff declined since they are not in Geauga County. South Russell is the only county entity not currently dispatched by Geauga County. Berger concluded that from a finance perspective, there is no downside. He proposed making a recommendation at the October 28th Council meeting to move the Police. Assuming there is no objection by Council, Berger advised the Chief to prepare for the change, and the Solicitor will be engaged to address the 6-month clause. Berger asked how quickly the switch could happen and verified it would be within 30 days. The Chief concurred and clarified that even if the Village is stuck with the six months, going forward the money being saved will be significant. By the end of this decade, the Village will be looking at paying \$100,000 per year otherwise. Galicki asked the Chief to whom Nick Diccio was accountable other than the mass conglomeration. The Chief responded that he and the Fiscal Officer attended the CVD Finance meeting and there were a lot of unhappy people whose hands were tied because they had nowhere else to go. Galicki noted that the Village had the deciding vote with the CVD proposal, and the Chief agreed that this was unfortunate.

The Chief advised that the committee discuss making a recommendation at the next Council meeting. Berger requested that he get the Solicitor involved with negotiating the terms. The Chief asked the Fiscal Officer to forward a copy of the agreement. Galicki wondered what would happen with the additional costs that were to have been paid by the Village, and the Chief said the \$40,000 will be broken up in between the remaining 31 agencies.

The Fiscal Officer suggested that if the Chief could have all the information for the Budget Work Session, it can be discussed there with action to follow at the Regular Council meeting. The Chief advised that he included both options for Council to compare.

There was further discussion about the benefits of going with Geauga County.

Berger reviewed that the Cintas agreement issue is being handled by the Streets Committee and Solicitor. He also understood that the Street Commissioner would be making a budget request at the Budget Work Session that eliminates Cintas and goes to the purchase of uniforms. Galicki said his understanding is that the uniform purchase would only be for the three workers and the Street Commissioner does not intend to wear the uniform. The Fiscal Officer concurred. Galicki added that this would mean the Street Commissioner would not get the allowance. She concurred and added that another issue with the Cintas agreement that was signed is that it was for four uniforms.

Regarding Meeder Investments, the Fiscal Officer advised that interest rates would be going down over the next year and the suggestion is to lock in. Eileen Stanic will be coming to the Treasury Investment Board meeting on November 7th. Berger concluded that the curve had flipped and returned to normal, so longer term interest rates are higher than short term. Globally, interest rates are going down. He anticipated that it would be Meeder's recommendation to consider longer term investments. The Fiscal Officer advised she is in the process of compiling a cash balance history report for Stanic so that she can make a recommendation.

The payment for the Reserve Study is due per the agreement, although the company will be making the revisions provided by the Village. Berger and Galicki thought it was a good first cut. Berger wanted Department Heads to verify the information provided in the report. The cost of the road programs, paving of Bell Rd. east, and reserve funds were discussed. Berger wondered if the Village roads were included as an asset in the Reserve Study. Galicki did not think they needed to be since the Engineer already conducts evaluations of the roads. Berger expressed the need to identify this separation for future Reserve Studies and felt that keeping everything else under one study made sense. He noted that a reserve fund of \$274,000 was recommended, and Berger concluded that the Village could have multiple reserve funds, but they should equal the recommended amount. The committee discussed the best way to identify and create these reserve funds.

The Fiscal Officer relayed that she needed new financial software. Russell Township uses the state software, and she plans to meet with the Fiscal Officer to see how it works. Additionally, Russell Twp. has had the reserve study done and has set up reserve funds, which the Fiscal Officer will inquire about.

Berger thought that once the Finance Committee creates the structure of how to deal with the reserve study, then it could be turned over to the Properties Committee for implementation and prioritization. Berger stated that a memo should be generated stating that revisions to the reserve study are due by December 1st.

Regarding the finance software, the Fiscal Officer explained that it was installed a couple of years before she started with the Village and has not been upgraded. Tyler Technologies will provide the new software, but it would be necessary to learn a new software system. Most of the people in Ohio have UAN, which is the state's software program. It would make her reporting easier at the end of the year. The problem would be in taking every line item and getting it into the new system. It would be time consuming initially but will ultimately be easier. As previously mentioned, the Fiscal Officer will observe the software use at Russell Twp. and plans to meet with the Gates Mills Fiscal Officer, who had gone through the transition. The Fiscal Officer will also do a demonstration with Tyler Technology to get the prices on their new software. Berger asked if the County Auditor had a recommendation, and the Fiscal Officer explained that almost everybody uses UAN, which would mean that she would have help if needed. The cost of the software would be about \$4,500/year, which includes the computer and printer, and must be acceptable to ADP since everyone has it. The software is specifically installed on the computer provided, but the Fiscal Officer could use the computer for everything else as well.

The current costs for Tyler Technologies are in the \$4,000 range, so there would not be much difference with the state software. Regarding the timing of the transition, the Fiscal Officer explained that a decision should be made before the end of the year, because the state is currently booked into February or March before the Village could get online. Berger asked for a recommendation from the Fiscal Officer by the November Finance Committee meeting.

The Fiscal Officer proposed that ultimately, the new part-time Administrative Assistant could use her computer once she is provided with the UAN computer. In the meantime, she proposed that the part-time Administrative Assistant use one of the old computers slated for sale on GovDeals. Berger thought this made sense. The Fiscal Officer further discussed the breaking down of the charges involved with sharing the part-time Administrative Assistant between the different departments. It would be easiest to put it through the General Fund rather than tracking the time she spent with each department. Berger agreed, but for tracking purposes, it should be reflected on her timesheet.

The Fiscal Officer described the CIMS Cloud Cemetery software add-on that would enable the public to search specific South Russell Village Cemetery records. It would cost \$500 per year. Berger asked if it would be for both cemeteries, and the Fiscal Officer explained it would only be for the new one because the Village does not have records for Rarick Cemetery other than names. This list is available on the Village website. There is a lot of money in the Cemetery Fund, but this money can only be used on the South Russell Village Cemetery. Therefore, this expense can come out of this fund. The cemetery fund balances will be used at some point in the future for expansion.

Since the Village will no longer be doing a physical newsletter, the Fiscal Officer reached out to two companies, one of which does text messaging to the public and the other does an app. The text messaging initially sounded promising as they are able to get about 50% of the phone numbers of the residents. It is possible through this system to have back and forth communication. However, after reviewing the information about the app, it has many great features, but it must be downloaded onto the residents' phones. It allows the Village to distribute information five or six ways according to the chosen settings. The app costs \$4,300 per year and the text option is \$6,500 per year with a three-year agreement and the requirement to post the company's logo on the Village's website. The Fiscal Officer spoke to Council Member Bell, who is more tech savvy, who will help with reviewing the options. Ultimately, regardless of which option the Village chooses, it would be using the money formerly earmarked for the newsletter. Berger thought getting Village residents to download an app would be challenging. The Fiscal Officer has further questions for the vendors and anticipates Bell will help provide clarity.

Berger addressed Health Insurance. The Fiscal Officer explained that the Village has been with Medical Mutual for a long time. The initial quoted rate, which is based on the health of the employees, was 7.48%. Through inquiries by the Village's broker, Medical Mutual said they would possibly reconsider this rate if the Village agreed not to shop other vendors. Knowing that Medical Mutual has historically been lower than anyone else, the Fiscal Officer instructed the broker to see what Medical Mutual would offer. They came back with a renewal rate of 4.48%. If the Village chooses to shop, Medical Mutual can go back to the rate 7.48%. She further explained that the deductibles have gone up over time and in 2024, they were \$3,180 for a single person, and \$6,380 for a family. Of the \$3,180, the Village gives the employee \$2,000, so out of pocket, they would have \$1,180. For the \$6,380, the Village provides \$4,000. Federal law changes this year, and the new deductible amounts will be \$3,500 and \$7,000. The employees will be responsible for an additional and \$320

and \$620 respectively. The renewal is due December 1st. Berger said HR will make a recommendation at the next Council meeting.

The Fiscal Officer provided the State Employment Relations Board (SERB) report to the Committee as well as the Finance Committee. She also provided an analysis of historic insurance increases and salary increases for the last few years.

Berger reviewed an agenda list provided by the Mayor. The Mayor conveyed there is a problem with the committees and departments not doing the work that needs to be done in preparation for the Budget Work session. The Mayor scheduled a Special Streets Committee meeting for this purpose. The Fiscal Officer offered to attend committee meetings next year to help with this issue.

The Mayor noted that on the minutes of the County Budget Commission Meeting, Mike Carroll was listed as having attended, and he asked the Fiscal Officer to notify them of their error.

Municipal Income Tax collection by the State was listed as an agenda item by the Mayor. He said he would look into it next Thursday at the Ohio Municipal League (OML) Conference. The Fiscal Officer relayed her experience in dealing with the state about a tax refund where very little information was provided to her as the Tax Administrator for the Village, where CCA is forthcoming with pertinent information.

The Mayor stated that Galicki's comment about the burn training should have been made at the Finance Committee meeting and not at a public meeting. Galicki explained that he was segueing off a discussion about having a burn in the park. He was aware that the Village planned to send some people to the training, and he did not think it inappropriate to ask if anything was gleaned from it. Furthermore, from the Finance Committee perspective, if the Village is paying for people to go to training, they either have an obligation to go and/or offer that training to another employee, Council member, etc. Someone seemed to have dropped the ball on this, but how was he to know that nobody went to the training? He thought the Mayor's comment that it should have been addressed at the Finance Committee was out of order. The Mayor disagreed. Galicki pointed out that the Mayor had prior knowledge that no one went, and perhaps he thought it was an embarrassment to whomever was supposed to go. All he was saying was that the Village paid for the training, and it is a waste of money if no one goes. The Village has a responsibility to the taxpayer to ensure that if the Village is paying for training, someone attends. It does not appear to have been a priority and could have been offered to a plethora of people who could have attended.

Berger adjourned the meeting at 11:00 a.m.