

**RECORD OF PROCEEDINGS
REGULAR COUNCIL MEETING
MONDAY, OCTOBER 28, 2024 – 7:00 P.M.
MAYOR WILLIAM G. KOONS PRESIDING**

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

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

VISITORS: Carrie Schloss, Hickory Hill Rd.; Kelly Estes, Kimberwick Ct.

The Mayor called the meeting to order at 7:17 p.m. and led the Pledge of Allegiance. The Fiscal Officer read the roll. **Canton made a motion to approve the minutes of the October 14, 2024, Regular Council meeting, seconded by Porter. Voice vote – ayes, all.**

VISITORS: Carrie Schloss, Hickory Hill Rd., provided Council with a survey developed by the Committee for Safe Bicycle and Pedestrian Transport. She reminded Council of the committee's goals and duties, in particular to engage and learn from the community and bring the voices of the South Russell residents and community members to Council. The committee incorporated feedback that was gleaned through a committee meeting and were asking Council to approve the survey so that it can be distributed to the community. She advised that the intent of the survey is to provide information to Mayor and Council of the desire of the community members to walk, bike, and run in South Russell and the safety barriers that the community perceives to doing so. It is also to support the development of an action plan for pedestrian and bicycle transport through understanding the level of community support or opposition to different types of projects in different locations. Additionally, it is to provide insights from the survey to identify projects for existing funding sources or to identify future funding opportunities that have community support. If Council wanted to pursue grant applications, the results of the survey could be used.

Bell suggested that the committee strike the question about a crosswalk at Alderwood to the park since it is already planned. Schloss said surveys will be distributed and collected through social media, the virtual Village newsletter, posting QR codes throughout the community, reaching out to the sports teams that practice at Gurney, and any other suggestions that Council may offer. The Mayor addressed the issue of people responding to the survey who do not live in South Russell, and wondered if this would be an issue since people from many communities use the park. Schloss hoped to survey the broader community, with South Russell being part of it. Gurney is in South Russell but is part of the Chagrin Falls School District. People use the park who come from Chagrin Falls and other places. People who work in the South Russell businesses do not always live in South Russell but have ideas about safely crossing the road to get lunch, for example. It will encompass all community members who frequent and use South Russell infrastructure. Cavanagh said she understood this, but when it all boils down, it is the South Russell residents who will be footing the bill. Schloss advised that one of the questions does ask the responder to identify where they live. There are also questions identifying cross streets, whether they work or have a business in South Russell or have a child who attends school to help understand how often the person is frequenting South Russell. The data can be divided in a number of ways.

The Mayor asked Schloss about mailing the survey to every household and business. Schloss thought it may reach a better audience but questioned the cost of postage. The Mayor said he would contact the Northeast Ohio Area Coordinating Agency (NOACA) since they are giving the Village \$800,000 and see if this is a legitimate expense for that money. He thought he would have an answer this week. The Mayor suggested hiring someone to do this mailing and providing return envelopes and postage. Bell asked if Council should first approve the survey so that the committee can use it digitally or in person.

Bell addressed membership of the ad hoc committee. Since Schloss is not a South Russell resident, Bell confirmed with the Solicitor that Schloss would be permitted to serve on the committee. **Bell made a motion to add Carrie Schloss and Kelly Estes as members of the Safe Bicycle and Pedestrian Transport Committee of the Village of South Russell, seconded by Canton. Voice vote – ayes, all. Motion carried.**

Porter asked if there were a maximum number of committee members, and the Solicitor stated that under the Ohio Revised Code (ORC), there must be at least two. The Solicitor cautioned that with larger committees, it can be tough to get a quorum.

Bell made a motion to approve the proposed survey of the Safe Bicycle and Pedestrian Transport Committee of South Russell so they may start distributing it digitally, person to person, and any other methods as they choose, seconded by Cavanagh. Voice vote – ayes, all. Motion carried.

MAYOR'S REPORT: The Mayor reported that the agreement he received from Yellow Lite still has the indemnification clause on it.

There was a public records request for phone records, and the Mayor did not know how to find his phone records where he might have talked to a Village Official. The Fiscal Officer said with cell phones, the carrier can provide that information. Porter offered that they could also be obtained through a subpoena.

The Mayor discussed the upcoming Veterans' Breakfast on November 11, 2024, at 9:00 a.m. at the Sleepy Rooster.

At the November 25th Council meeting, the Mayor, Cavanagh, and Galicki will make a presentation on what they learned at the Ohio Municipal League (OML) Conference.

FISCAL OFFICER: The Fiscal Officer distributed her report. There is a certificate of availability of local funds for the Hemlock Rd. Culvert project that will require a motion for her to sign certifying the funds will be available for that project.

FINANCE COMMITTEE: **Berger made a motion to approve the Fiscal Officer to sign the Certificate of Availability of local funds in the amount of \$46,200 for the Hemlock Rd. Culvert fund, seconded by Galicki. Voice vote – ayes, all. Motion carried.**

Berger made a motion to acknowledge receipt and review of the credit card report from October 28, 2024, seconded by Galicki. Voice vote – ayes, all. Motion carried.

Berger made a motion to approve the reimbursement to an employee for software purchase in the amount of \$144, seconded by Galicki. Voice vote – ayes, all. Motion carried.

Berger advised that the next Finance Committee meeting will be November 14, 2024, at 10:00 a.m.

SOLICITOR: The Solicitor had nothing to report.

STREETS COMMITTEE: The Street Committee is scheduled to meet on Thursday, November 21, 2024, at 7:30 a.m. in the Streets Department office.

BUILDING COMMITTEE: Bell stated that the Building Committee is scheduled to meet on November 14, 2024, at 8:00 a.m. in the Building Department.

POLICE CHIEF: The Chief referenced the Budget Work Session discussion about the potential for the Police Department to switch to Geauga County Dispatch from Chagrin Valley Dispatch (CVD). If there is good chance this will occur, the Chief advised the Village should cancel the CVD IT contract since there is a 90-day cancellation term. This would mean only having to pay into January. If the decision ultimately is to stay with CVD, this request can be cancelled. Porter asked who would handle IT for the police after January 31st, and the Chief said it would be ADP. Cavanagh recalled there were issues with the Police Department and ADP, and the Chief explained that while with CVD, the department chose to stay with CVD IT. ADP provides service for the remainder of the Village campus. The Chief is getting proposals to connect the Police Department with the Service Building creating a network for all three buildings. He reiterated that the expense would go from \$15,000 per year to about \$2,200 per year. The Chief further explained that ADP supports the Geauga County Sheriff as well.

Because the Village has not yet had the conversation with CVD, the Chief wondered if the Village could instead send them a notice of intent without providing an actual cutoff date of no earlier than January 31st. The Mayor proposed he contact the head of CVD as a member of the Executive Committee to talk about leaving. Berger concurred. Porter indicated that if the cancellation is approved tonight, there is a 90-day window during which the Village can rescind or postpone. Berger cautioned that this would depend on CVD allowing the Village to rescind, and the Solicitor concurred. The Solicitor clarified that the IT contract is separate from the dispatch contract. The 2023 agreement specifies termination terms. **Berger made a motion to give notice to terminate the IT portion of the contract with Chagrin Valley Dispatch with notice effective October 31st and the 90-day provision effective January 31, 2025, seconded by Galicki. Voice vote – ayes, all. Motion carried.**

The Chief reported that the electrical upgrade was completed on Friday, and everything is converted over to the 200-amp service. He submitted a request to Dean Hayne, First Energy, for completion of a work order so that the Village can do the solar panel meter swap. Hayne has not responded, but the wiring is done, and it is just a matter of First Energy coming out and the Building Inspector conducting an inspection. The Chief thought it could be complete within the next few weeks. The Fiscal Officer asked to be informed when everything is done so she can apply for the grant associated with the project.

SAFETY COMMITTEE: Canton reported that the committee will meet on November 14, 2024, at 9:00 a.m. in the Police Department.

Regarding the matter with CVD, Galicki asked if it is Council's intent that the Mayor address the Executive Committee to get out of the contract and asked if a motion is required for this. The Solicitor thought this would be preferable. Galicki asked if this was Council's intent that the Mayor go forward to try to negotiate the Village's departure from the contract. Canton asked if it was possible that since there is more than one governmental entity looking in another direction, could this make CVD take a long look and do something with their demands. Galicki replied that the demands are already under contract, and it is a done deal. The Village is the only participating municipality that has an option of leaving at this time. Others are investigating and perhaps forming their own dispatch or joining independent dispatches. If the Mayor approached the Executive Committee, it might prompt the other mayors who are involved to say that CVD did not give them a great deal either. Canton verified that Council gave the Mayor the okay to address the Executive Committee earlier. The Mayor said no, nothing was done officially, but it seemed Galicki was preparing to make a motion. Galicki explained that he was asking if one was necessary because it seemed like the Mayor was reticent to approach the Executive Committee and plead the Village's case. Galicki was seeking the opinions of Council. The Mayor said this was not the proper perception of him, that he is not reticent to approach this at all. The Mayor said he and the Chief had spoken months ago about looking at Geauga County Dispatch, which they are doing and are going to go there. Galicki noted that at the Safety Committee and Finance Committee meetings, it appeared the Mayor was fully behind it and today he was saying he was blindsided with the proposal to go to Geauga County. The Mayor said to be fair, he came into the Safety Committee meeting late and the discussion about switching was ongoing and he suggested it should continue to be ongoing. Furthermore, he was at the Finance Committee meeting for about two minutes. **Porter made a motion from Council for the Mayor to approach the Executive Committee of Chagrin Valley Dispatch with a goal of negotiating a departure of South Russell from Chagrin Valley Dispatch with the exception of dispatch for fire services, seconded by Canton. Berger proposed an amendment with an eye towards something less than a 12-month continuation of the agreement and the costs associated therewith.** Porter offered that if the Mayor succeeds in the Village just paying for fire dispatch, would that not solve the problem of police? The Chief indicated that Berger's point is that if the Village is permitted to opt out, that the Village would only be obligated for six months from July 1st. Berger explained that if the Village tells CVD it wants to leave from a police standpoint, the Village is committed to continue to pay CVD for police dispatch through December 31, 2025. Porter explained that his motion was just to go from CVD for South Russell police and fire to fire only. The Solicitor offered that this may have been Porter's motion, but the intent is that the Village will still be paying for the police dispatch. Porter explained that he meant effective as soon as possible. Berger's concern was that if the Village continues to pay CVD for police and are not using them, it is wasted money. If CVD responds that they cannot release the Village until December 31, 2025, would that change Council's opinion to move to Geauga County now or wait until the end of next year? Porter proposed amending the motion to state effective January 31, 2025. Berger advised that this would need to be negotiated with CVD as an exception to their contract and would require their Executive Council to vote, etc. Berger summarized that the Village wants to go with the proposal that it is leaving, but not with the proposal that the Village is leaving but continuing to pay for another year. The Mayor cautioned Council to be careful and asked for the motion to be explained. The Fiscal Officer reviewed that the motion was to negotiate the South Russell departure from CVD for police only effective as soon as possible. The Mayor asked that it be read once more. The Fiscal Officer read

“negotiate the South Russell departure from Chagrin Valley Dispatch effective ASAP for Police Department only.” Voice vote – ayes, all. Motion carried.

HR COMMITTEE: Cavanagh stated HR met on October 21st and discussed Berger’s continuing policy proposals. There was a discussion on health cost increases which will be 4.48%. The deductibles will increase to \$3,500 for an individual and \$7,000 for a family. The Village contributes to the Health Savings Account (HSA), \$2,000 individual/\$4,000 per family, lowering the employee cost. The committee would like to continue reimbursement of \$250 for employees who get an annual check-up. Raises were also discussed. The holiday Village luncheon date is to be determined.

Berger made a motion to approve renewing the Village healthcare plan with Medical Mutual with a 4.48%, seconded by Cavanagh. He advised that the initial quote was 7.48%, and a 3% discount was offered if the Village did not shop the account. The Fiscal Officer added that the deductibles changed. Berger noted that 4.48% is good for group renewals. Other renewal quotes Berger heard about were anywhere from 7% to 15%. **Voice vote – ayes, all. Motion carried.**

Berger made a motion to approve the \$250 annual incentive for employees to get their physical exams for 2025, seconded Cavanagh. Voice vote – aye, all. Motion carried. Berger offered that the Village had 100% participation last year when the amount was moved from \$100 to \$250.

Berger made a motion to consider pay increases for the Village employees effective January 1, 2025, of 2.75%, seconded by Cavanagh. Porter asked how this was determined. Berger explained that the committee used the State Employee Relations Board (SERB) data which collates the union and non-union increases and examines the information with different variables. Over the last 10 years, the average increase was 2.43% for the Village’s category. Porter asked if the committee also looked at the Consumer Price Index (CPI). Berger said this is currently running at 2.8% but is problematic because it excludes food and fuel. Canton asked what the Village pays for individual healthcare for the employees. The Fiscal Officer thought that a single person cost about \$817 per month. Berger added that the Village pays 100% of this. There is a deductible of \$3,500 single and \$7,000 family, but the Village contributes \$2,000/\$4,000. Canton added that employees are also given a \$250 incentive to have a physical and some of the employees have their work apparel provided. Berger advised that this varies by department. He added that he looks at the healthcare benefit as a huge component of the compensation plan and the fact that it is a zero co-pay is a significant benefit to the employees. Galicki clarified that because the raise pertains to all employees, he would not have to recuse himself. The Solicitor concurred. **Voice vote – ayes, all. Motion carried.**

The Mayor stated that a new part-time employee would be starting on November 4th. He suggested that the people who will be using her get something in writing about the work they plan to have her do. For example, the Mayor said he would be having her prepare a letter to the Bell Rd. residents about the culvert that will be replaced and repaving from Snyder Rd. to the Newbury line. He also wants her to do a report on the Fall Festival. He thought the Village was relying too much on volunteers and wants her to contact everybody with the Fall Festival and get a report, so the Village knows what it costs, what has been done, what has been successful, and

what has been a failure. The Mayor also wants her to survey the community through the newsletter to find out about Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts who have received either the Gold or Eagle Scout award so he can create a plaque with names of residents who achieved Eagle Scout, or did a scout project in the Village. It would have the name and date. Lastly, the Mayor said there is an application to obtain possibly \$5,000 for the America 250th Birthday. He has a bunch of activities in mind and wants to give them to the part-time Administrative Assistant to come up with all this information by January 1st. He did not think she would have enough information from the scouts, but they would have to go out and dig. This gives her something to do if there is ever downtime and gives her something to show her skills. The Mayor suggested the Department Heads who will utilize her do the same thing.

The Solicitor offered that in one of the ordinances for consideration is the job description for the part-time Administrative Assistant. She will be reporting to the Fiscal Officer and Police Chief. Although the Mayor has great ideas, they should be careful that the chain of command is being followed. Cavanagh thought that the committee said she would report to the Street Commissioner when she was working in the Building or Street Department. The Solicitor said this is not reflected in the job description. Porter said it would be necessary to amend it if she is going to work in all three departments, and the Mayor agreed. Bell asked who would be doing her annual review because that is a lot of bosses. Berger stated that the way it was formulated was that the Fiscal Officer and the Police Chief would do her review. Since the Fiscal Officer is responsible for finding the back-up at the Building Department and providing that support, his suggestion was to leave it with the Fiscal Officer for that area. There are unique requirements specific to the Police Department, which is why the Chief would be involved with the evaluation process.

As background, the Chief stated both he and the Fiscal Officer were each separately looking for an administrative assistant. In reviewing applications, the Fiscal Officer identified the current part-time Administrative Assistant who had experience in juvenile court, which prompted the Chief to consider sharing the employee. However, he did not want to see her get overwhelmed and recognized that there was a lot of work to be done in the Building Department, so he would be less demanding. If she reports to the Police Department, he will take care of her evaluation as well as the Fiscal Officer. Cavanagh agreed to leave it as is. Porter asked who does the Building Department Administrative Assistant's evaluation, and the Mayor said he does. The Solicitor asked if Council was considering changing this because the position reports to Mayor and Council as does the Fiscal Officer. The Mayor wanted to make sure the part-time Administrative Assistant will be kept busy. Berger thought a list of target dates could be provided and the Fiscal Officer will work it out with the admin staff and Chief, and report to the Mayor if changes need to be made.

PROPERTIES COMMITTEE: Cavanagh reported that the park restroom had been ordered. Delivery date has not been determined.

PARKS COMMITTEE: The Mayor referenced the minutes of the October 21, 2024, Parks Committee meeting and said they did a good job of reflecting all the opinions. Cavanagh stated that the meeting was with Rich Washington, CT Consultants, and Pete McDonald, Western Reserve Land Conservancy (WRLC). The Safe Bicycle and Pedestrian Transport Committee

also attended and had a lot of ideas. There will be another meeting between Thanksgiving and Christmas. The burn was discussed as well as tree planting.

PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMITTEE: Berger reported that the committee met October 25th and the minutes are forthcoming. The committee discussed the solar panels and other pending projects. The next meeting will be November 15th at 9:00 a.m.

ORDINANCES AND RESOLUTIONS:

(Tabled) Third reading of a Power a Clean Future resolution authorizing the Village of South Russell to become a Power a Clean Future Ohio community and to adopt a goal to reduce the carbon footprint of the Village, increase energy efficiency, and reduce the energy costs to the Village.

Porter provided a second reading of an ordinance approving the interconnection agreement between the Village of South Russell and the Illuminating Company, authorizing the Mayor to execute the agreement, and declaring an emergency.

Bell introduced an ordinance authorizing the Mayor to prepare and submit an application for the Village of South Russell to participate in the Ohio Public Works Commission State Capital Improvement and/or Local Transportation Improvement Program(s) for the Hemlock Road Culvert Replacement Project and to execute contracts as required and declaring an emergency. Bell made a motion to waive readings, seconded by Porter. Roll call – ayes, all. Bell made a motion to adopt, seconded by Porter. Roll call – ayes, all. Motion carried. **ORD 2024-89**

Cavanagh introduced an ordinance amending Appendix D – Job Descriptions of the Village’s Employee Handbook and declaring an emergency. Cavanagh made a motion to waive readings, seconded by Berger. Roll call – ayes, all. Motion carried. Cavanagh made a motion to adopt, seconded by Berger. Roll call – ayes, all. Motion carried. **ORD 2024-90**

BILLS LIST: None.

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

Cavanagh reported she was initially reluctant to be involved with the 250th but received information about it during the OML conference. Although there are different ideas for commemorating the anniversary, it all brings good attention to municipalities.

Berger made a motion to enter into Executive Session for the purpose of discussing employee compensation pursuant to ORC 121.22(G)(1) and inviting the Mayor, Fiscal Officer, Solicitor, and excusing Councilman Galicki, seconded by Porter. Roll call – ayes, Berger, Canton, Cavanagh, Porter, and Bell. Galicki recused himself.


Canton made a motion to enter into Executive Session to consider the employment of a public employee pursuant to Section 121.22 (G)(1) of the Ohio Revised Code and consider the employment of a public employee pursuant to 121.22 (G)(1) of the Ohio Revised Code and to invite into Executive Session the Mayor and Solicitor and whoever else Council wants to invite. There was a question of whether Galicki was included, and Galicki indicated he

was excluded from the first one and said if the motions were reversed, he could stay. Bell asked if the two Executive Sessions had to be done in the order presented. The Solicitor said no. The Mayor said no and have it excusing Councilman Galicki and inviting the Mayor and Solicitor. The Fiscal Officer, Solicitor, and Bell clarified that the second motion had not been voted on yet. Canton asked if they should start over. The Fiscal Officer explained that the first motion was voted on for discussing compensation. With the second one, there has not been a vote. The Mayor said that the only difference is that they would not need the Fiscal Officer for the second motion. Porter offered that they could excuse Galicki in the second motion. The Mayor said yes. Galicki said he was just trying to figure out what they were doing and whether he was staying or leaving. The Mayor said Galicki was leaving. The Solicitor clarified that there were three reasons they were going into Executive Session: one for compensation of a public employee and to exclude Galicki; the second were two motions to talk about employees because two employees cannot be considered at the same time, which would include all of Council and the Mayor. The Mayor said Galicki should be excluded, and the Solicitor questioned why this was the case. **Roll call – ayes, Berger, Canton, Cavanagh, Porter, Bell. Galicki was absent.**

Council reconvened at 9:06 p.m.

Bell introduced an ordinance to allow the Fiscal Officer to delegate her duties as the Cemetery Coordinator to the Administrative Assistant at the Village Hall and for those duties increase the Administrative Assistant's compensation by \$1.44 an hour effective November 1st and declaring an emergency. Berger made a motion to waive further readings, seconded by Canton. Roll call, Berger, Canton, Porter, Cavanagh, and Bell. Motion carried. Berger made a motion to adopt, seconded by Porter. Roll call – Berger, Canton, Porter, Cavanagh, and Bell. Motion carried **ORD 2024- 91.**

ADJOURNMENT: Being that there was no further business before Council, Berger made a motion to adjourn at 9:07 p.m., seconded by Bell. Voice vote – ayes, all. Motion carried.


William G. Koons, Mayor


Danielle Romanowski, Fiscal Officer

Prepared by Leslie Galicki