

**RECORD OF PROCEEDINGS
REGULAR COUNCIL MEETING
MONDAY, JANUARY 27, 2025 – 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: Mattuck Meacham, Fairview Rd.; Craig and Grant Brugger, Champion Ln.; Colton Gile, Ashleigh Dr.; Ryan Macy, Sheerbrook; Jacob English, Bainbridge; Cara Tweed, Woodside Rd.; Matt Hanculak, Bishop Dr.; Bill Stone, Fairview Rd.; Suzanne and Tiernan Molony, Waverly Ln.

The Mayor called the meeting to order and led the Pledge of Allegiance. The Fiscal Officer read the roll. **Porter made a motion to approve the minutes of the January 13, 2025, Regular Council meeting, seconded by Cavanagh. Voice vote – ayes, all. Motion carried.**

VISITORS: Jacob English, English Dr., Bainbridge, owner of Mountain Road Cycles in South Russell, said he worked with Solon and Chardon/Burton for 25-30 years, and recognized the vision of the Committee for Safe Bicycle and Pedestrian Transport. He cautioned that it might take another 20 years to accomplish, but the connectivity between the communities could be realized with their proposal. He thought it would be amazing and last a lifetime and supported efforts to achieve it. It would take time, grants, and community collaboration.

Carry Tweed, Woodside Rd., liked what English had to say, but explained that her interest was more geared towards walkability to and from school in Chagrin Falls. She thought if there were a path, her children would also use it to walk to Gurney Elementary to use the athletic fields. She is excited by the progress and thinks it needs to be a priority to improve quality of life and home resale values.

Ryan Macy, Chagrin Lakes, expressed dissatisfaction with his children being unable to ride their bikes to school. Having access to Gurney and being able to ride bikes to Chagrin Falls for community events would make it feel like one community instead of several small communities very distant from each other. Although close by car, they are very far by bike for children because of the cars. The safety, access, walkability, and connectivity are important to him.

Colton Gile, Ashleigh Dr., addressed the safety issues and inability to ride his bike to friends' homes without sidewalks or trails. He also liked the idea of kids being able to get to Gurney.

Matt Hanculak, Bishop Dr., has small children and a family that is enthusiastic about running and bike riding. He looked forward to the day where his kids could get safely to their friends' homes in other neighborhoods, ride to school, the park, and to the Village. He would advocate for money being spent to identify a solution because it would help determine how much the project would cost and real-life alternatives, whether it is Bell Rd., both directions on 306, speed limits, or other assessments to understand the impact. Hanculak thought questions should be asked and more research done to develop information about what it would actually feel and look like to build a trail or put in some of the amenities being requested.

The Mayor stated that the Northeast Ohio Area Coordinating Agency (NOACA) controls the federal money. They gave the Village \$1.2 million to repave Bell Rd. and \$800,000 to basically get people off the roads and on to trails. He hoped Council would vote to hire the Village's engineering firm to determine where the trails should go and the cost.

Grant Brugger, Champion Ln., discussed the difficulty in biking from his house to see a friend on Ashleigh Dr. due to safety concerns with the road. A trail that would allow access would preclude him from having to ask his parents to drive him.

The Mayor asked the Chief to discuss an award he received. The Chief explained that based on the Village's community service programs, community engagement, and the traffic safety programs established by the South Russell Police Department, it was nominated by the American Automobile Association (AAA) of East Central Ohio for a number of awards. In 2013, the department received the AAA Bronze Award; 2014-2020 it received the Silver Award; and with its substantial projects over the last three years, it has received the Platinum Award. This includes the crosswalk, traffic light improvements, community education programs, and installation of guardrails. The Department plans to continue to improve safety.

The Mayor expressed concern about drivers not stopping for pedestrians in crosswalks. He said that the plan was to take the process slowly.

Suzanne Moloney, Waverly Ln., stated that she had been a resident for 20 years. She acknowledged that the people who do not support the building of trails were concerned about losing the rural feeling of the community. However, the community has changed over 20 years, and the residents need to change. Technology has contributed with distractions of phones and computers in cars. Whenever she is driving on Bell Rd., she sees people driving in front and/or behind her drifting into the bike lane. She used to run down Bell Road into Chagrin Falls but is too afraid to do so anymore and cannot let her son bike or walk to school. How much longer will they wait? Will it be until somebody gets hit? Do the community members want this on their conscience? She did not think so and added that they needed to be proactive and not reactive. She and the other committee members are trying to get information out to the community to drum up support because they feel it is important to the future.

Tiernan Moloney, Waverly Ln., attends Chagrin Falls Middle School and has participated in the Walk/Bike to School Days. He would like to be able to do this more often, but it is too unsafe, and his mother will not allow it. Cars swerve into the bike lane and roadway that has poor visibility. Additionally, people obstruct the bike lane with garbage cans. He would like to see sidewalks in the town so he can walk and bike to school.

Bill Stone, Fairview Rd., thanked everyone for their comments and was happy to see the traction the topic had gotten, and that it is being taken seriously.

Mattuck Meacham, Fairview Rd., recently purchased his home and did so because of the ease of walking into town. There are still some places where there is no sidewalk, but the walkability to town is what brought them to their neighborhood. He also recognized the value of connectivity across communities and hoped to see the matter move forward.

Bell shared that in growing up in South Russell, he was able to ride his bike to see friends and felt that the youth of today are being robbed of this activity because of distracted driving. He understood residents' concern with biking and running on Bell Rd. and appreciated the attendees' civic

engagement. **Bell made a motion to give the Mayor and Fiscal Officer the authority to hire Verdantas to create a master plan for trails in the Village not to exceed \$15,000, seconded by Canton.** Cavanagh stated that prior to the current meeting, the discussion was for trails west of Chillicothe Rd., but now it has expanded out to the Newbury Line. It will encompass a lot more than what was originally conceptualized. The Mayor said he would not say anything until Verdantas identified where trails should be built. He thought that in late March or April, there would be an open meeting to share ideas and a Verdantas representative will be present to say what will and will not work. Cavanagh explained that this matter was addressed in 1992, and it came to a vote but did not pass. The current project is an even larger scope. Hurdles include the crossing of Chillicothe Rd. and the maintenance expense. **Voice vote – ayes, all. Motion carried.**

The Mayor advised that normally, the term sidewalk is not used. Instead, they are called concrete paths. The Mayor referenced sidewalks being installed in Chagrin Falls, which are costing each homeowner \$9,500. The Village is not looking at any tax money, although the federal money is still taxpayer money. But he is not looking at anybody from South Russell having to foot out anything financially. His goal is to see everyone at a ribbon cutting ceremony someplace in the summer of 2027. The Mayor encouraged people to get their ideas down on paper and he would be in touch.

MAYOR'S REPORT: Canton made a motion that the Village of South Russell donate \$500 for the Chagrin local schools After Prom 2025, seconded by Porter. Voice vote – ayes, all. Motion carried.

Berger made a motion to approve a proclamation from the Village for Jack Overman, seconded by Porter. Voice vote – ayes, all. Motion carried.

The Mayor distributed his report as well as the yearly HAZMAT report. He also distributed Orange Village's newsletter for Council to view. Berger asked for clarification about HAZMAT, and the Mayor explained it is a regional Council of Governments (COG). Berger asked if the Village had a seat on the COG, and the Mayor said yes, that he attends the yearly meeting. HAZMAT membership was discussed.

FISCAL OFFICER: The Fiscal Officer received the certified balances from the County Budget Commission. She will have multiple budget amendments at the next Council meeting.

Annual disclosure forms were distributed to Council, and the Fiscal Officer requested that they be completed and returned to her in the next couple weeks.

The Fiscal Officer explained that with the approval of the TextMyGov agreement, the Village will have the ability to text residents. So far, 1,300 individuals are in the database. The Fiscal Officer explained that with the program, they will be able to see on a map every house in the Village that is registered. With this ability, the texts can be targeted to a specific neighborhood if needed. Once the numbers of most of the residents are obtained through the system, there will be communication pushed out to the residents who are not signed up. The goal is to get 100% of the residents. Regarding the newsletter, when it is ready, a text can be sent containing a link to it.

Canton referred to the section of the Fiscal Officer's report that discussed the park restroom. He asked if Council decided to have the preparation for the restroom done in-house. Cavanagh said yes, but the Fiscal Officer explained it still was not in the 2025 budget. She could not encumber the costs for the overall project unless there is an exact vendor and amount. Canton clarified that the Fiscal Officer

needs the cost of the man hours required to prepare the groundwork. The Fiscal Officer replied that it would be man hours and the cost of the well. It would be necessary to amend the budget this year for those costs. If it is being done in house, it would not be an additional cost. Canton verified that the information would need to come from the Street Commissioner. Cavanagh said that the Service Department is prepared to dig the vault and there was an \$11,000 quote from Ayers which she thought was included in the total. Canton thought it was \$10,000. The Fiscal Officer advised that no agreements were entered into and no purchase orders cut. The budget amendments can be made at the next meeting. The Mayor asked if the man hours were required, and the Fiscal Officer explained that this was up to Council. There are not many projects where the labor is done in house, but it is a cost. That portion of the project will not increase the overall budget for the Village. Berger stated that the Street Commissioner should provide what major equipment would be needed as well as the amount of time. A dollar amount should be assigned to the use of the backhoe and allocated to the project. Good cost accounting would enable the Village to see if doing it in house is the most economical alternative. Cavanagh said she would ask the Street Commissioner to provide this information.

FINANCE COMMITTEE: Canton advised that the committee met on January 10th at 9:00 a.m. and the minutes were distributed. The next Finance Committee meeting will be February 21st at 3:15 p.m.

The Ohio Municipal League (OML) made a request for member contributions for advocacy work in the amount of \$250. **Canton made a motion that Council vote and pass a \$250 donation to the OML, seconded by Porter. Voice vote – ayes, all. Motion carried.**

Berger explained that the Village pays a Microsoft 365 license fee through ADP, which the Village anticipated would be \$274 per user for 20 users. The Village was informed by the county, however, that due to changes they are making, the license fee will now be \$432 per user. The total is \$8,640. The Fiscal Officer clarified that it is actually for 21 people with G3 licenses, and the total is \$9,072. The Chief added that the G1 licenses are coming up for renewal in a couple of months. There are 10 G1 licenses at \$116.40 and also charges for governmental cloud service. The grand total for the invoice will be \$1,884. Berger said that the total licensing will be \$9,956, which is a 40% increase over what was expected and budgeted. Other than leaving ADP, he did not feel the Village had any options. The county was asked how long it knew about this increase. Earlier notification would have allowed the Village to budget for it. A good response was not provided. Cavanagh asked for clarification about the yearly expenses with ADP. The Chief explained that the upgraded license recommended by ADP bolsters the security. It is an optional program for general Microsoft users. However, ADP is mandating the Microsoft 360M with Autopilot. Berger offered that the Village could walk away from ADP, but a bunch of money had just been spent to get established with the county. However, the Village did not anticipate the significant increase with the licenses. Bell asked if it is mandatory to use the Microsoft suite or whether Google products could instead be used. Berger said the Village must use Microsoft. The Mayor suggested giving ADP five more months to bring it to a year. He made inquiries with Bainbridge, Russell, and Chester Township. No one said great things, but they were satisfied. He recommended paying the increased license fee. Berger pointed out that by paying for it, the Village is committed through 1/31/2026. If the Village chooses to go in another direction, the Finance Committee will have to consider the matter within the next 90-120 days. The Chief added that if the Village decides to go in a different direction, the licenses belong to the Village.

Porter observed that the reason the Village went with the county was for security at a lower cost. The lower cost does not seem to be happening, and he feels like the Village is stuck in the program given the investment. He was concerned that going forward, the Village would get held up every year. Berger thought it would be worthwhile to schedule a meeting with the County Auditor and ADP.

Galicki did not think lower cost was necessarily a criterion used by the Village in the decision to go with ADP, but rather increased security. The Fiscal Officer explained that prior to engaging with ADP, she and the Chief had overseen the IT. She acknowledged that ADP is expensive, but with the increase in cyber-attacks and concern for the security of the Village's system, she felt secure having ADP. She did not want the responsibility of IT security. The Chief explained further that he and the Fiscal Officer spoke to two other providers for quotes prior to selecting ADP. At the time, Council decided that it was in the Village's best interest to go with ADP. Porter asked for the pricing of the two other vendors. The Chief could not recall but thought they were lower than ADP. He added that he is still investigating IT providers for the Police Department. Porter thought that the Village was somewhat trapped with ADP, but the Chief explained that ADP made it clear that if the Village chose at any point to go another direction, the technology was in place, and it would be a matter of switching vendors for monitoring. It would take time to make this type of transition, but the Village has options, and the Village needs to decide at what risk and cost. Berger reiterated that it would behoove the Village to ask for a meeting with the County Auditor and staff to discuss the increases. **Berger made a motion to accept the quote from Expert IT, LLC, the vendor for the Microsoft 365 G3 licenses, 21 at \$432 apiece for a grand total of \$9,072, seconded by Canton. Voice vote – ayes, all. Motion carried.**

SOLICITOR: The Solicitor had nothing to report.

STREETS COMMITTEE: Cavanagh reported that the Streets Committee had not met since before the previous Council meeting. She reported that the guys survived the enormous snowfalls the Village had. The Street Commissioner let her know that the state approved the plans for the park restroom and is hoping to have the restroom delivered in late March or April. Berger advised that on behalf of the Properties Committee, he signed the Building Permit Application for the restroom, which had not been signed. All the paperwork has been completed and permits pulled so the work can be done.

The Mayor clarified that although there had been discussion in the Streets Committee meeting of the corner lots, this matter should have been addressed in a Properties Committee meeting.

BUILDING COMMITTEE: Cavanagh stated that a new copier will be purchased for the Building Department and is around \$4,800. **Cavanagh made a motion that the Building Department get its new copier in an amount not to exceed \$6,000, seconded by Porter. Voice vote – ayes, all. Motion carried.**

POLICE CHIEF: The Mayor offered congratulations to the Chief for the AAA award discussed earlier. The Chief had nothing further to report.

SAFETY COMMITTEE: Bell had nothing to report. The next meeting is February 13th at 8:00 a.m. in the Police Department.

HR COMMITTEE: Bell stated that HR Committee will be meeting on February 11th at 7:30 a.m. in Village Hall.

Berger explained that due to the inordinate amount of snow the Village received, Service Department employees had accumulated significantly more than the 80 hours allowed in their comp banks. To cash these hours out at one time would mean the employees would have to pay at a significantly higher tax rate. Galicki indicated that taxes are based on what is made in a year, and Berger said no, that they are paid based on what is made in a pay period. The Fiscal Officer explained that taxes are based on

what an employee makes for the year at the end of the year when taxes are filed. If an individual check is higher, it could put the employee in a different bracket for that check, but at the end of the year, it comes down to pay now or pay later. Galicki concluded that it is really a wash in terms of taxes. Berger stated that the Service Department requested Council allow the employees a period of time to get back under the 80-hour maximum comp hours. One employee may currently have 130 hours, which would mean 50 hours that needed to be either used or paid out. To give them flexibility as a one-time situation, **Berger made a motion that Council allow those employees with comp time in excess of 80 hours will have until May 1st to get back under 80 hours with their comp time, seconded by Cavanagh.** This would take them through the snow season and would give HR the opportunity to review the policy and decide if changes are needed. Galicki clarified that currently, at 80 hours, the employee gets paid out for any excess. Galicki recalled that this had been recently discussed, and Berger concurred that there was a previous request to change the policy, but the recommendation of Council was not to change it. Galicki asked for clarification with the current situation in terms of the previous decision, and Berger said that this involves a situation that was not anticipated that resulted in a significant excess of overtime hours because of snow plowing. Galicki asked if the proposed exception applied across the board for all employees, and Berger said that it would have to. Galicki asked how the accounting would be managed. The Fiscal Officer advised that it is another rule and a pain to manage, which is the reason payroll is so time consuming. The highest balance currently is 117 hours, but the employee plans to take a couple of days off which will bring it down to 101. The 80-hour rule has been on the books since she joined the Village. There are different ways to approach it, with pay now or pay later with the taxes being one. The reason for the 80-hour limit is because federal law states that anyone who works overtime must be paid overtime. In the private sector, it must be paid. In the public sector, the federal government gave local governments the ability to put it in a comp bank. The true intent was to benefit the government. Potentially, employees could be directed to go home and use comp time if the schedule dictated. The Village chooses not to use that process. Employees are allowed to bank it for additional time off. However, if an employee asks to be paid out, the Village must pay it. This is the reason for capping it at 80 hours. If all employees had 80 hours in their comp bank and came to her at once to be paid out, she would be required to pay them out. This is the first time in 18 years she has had this request. Canton asked if the employees could transfer any of the overtime to a tax deferred account. The Fiscal Officer said this could not be done. She could, however, pay the employees their regular check and then pay out their overtime in a separate check, taking out the mandatory items like PERS, Medicare, and South Russell and not charge them the other taxes. At the end of the year, however, they will have to pay taxes on their total compensation.

There was discussion about how the date of May 1st was established, and Berger clarified it was just a suggestion. Bell asked how many labor hours are in question, and the Fiscal Officer advised it is just one individual who is asking for this. Another employee was paid 35 hours at time and a half and 5 hours at double time. This employee worked these hours and was following the current policy. Galicki asked if the issue was about taxes or wanting to take the time as comp time. The Fiscal Officer advised that the tax issue can be addressed with issuing two checks as she described.

The Solicitor asked for clarification about the 80 hours, and the Fiscal Officer explained that the 80 hours can be carried over from one year to another. A previous Street Commissioner would allow the employees to earn 80 hours per year so that everyone would drain their comp banks by the end of December and start building in January. When the policy was revised, it was permissible to hold 80 hours in the bank. In essence, what is being requested is to raise the bank until May.

Porter asked for clarification. Berger explained that currently, any overtime earned that is over the allowable 80 hours in the comp bank is automatically paid to the employee. Bell suggested that there could end up being significantly more hours earned between now and May 1st. The Fiscal Officer also asked for clarification about how long she is to hold off on paying the excess overtime, and Berger stated May 1st. The Fiscal Officer asked what would happen in the following month if more overtime were earned, and Berger explained that she would not pay them for the overtime until the employee requested it and/or until May 1st. Porter asked why an exception was being made for one person. Berger understood that it was not one person. It came from the Street Commissioner on behalf of his department. Porter clarified that what was being proposed is that the employees could keep more than 80 hours on the books with the option of requesting to be paid out or banked until May 1st. He asked what would happen May 1st. Berger responded that on May 1st, anything remaining over 80 hours must be paid. The Mayor asked the Chief if he had anyone in his department with over 80 hours in their comp bank, and the Chief said no. The Fiscal Officer requested a **roll call – ayes, Berger, Canton, Cavanagh. Nayes – Galicki, Porter, Bell.** The Mayor stated that the three guys do not want the money now. They want the time. Berger said no. Galicki asked if this is the case, and Porter said if they want the time, they have to take it. **The Mayor voted aye.** Motion carried.

PROPERTIES COMMITTEE: Berger reported that the Properties Committee met January 20th and the minutes were distributed. The next meeting is scheduled for February 18th at 9:00 a.m. Berger included notes on Parks and Cemeteries, but was informed that there is no Cemeteries Committee, and it is part of the Properties Committee.

The Mayor stated that there were inaccuracies with two completed Eagle Scout projects. In spring, one or two interns or AmeriCorps Volunteers from the Chagrin River Watershed Partners or through the Western Reserve Land Conservancy will correct the errors. Ideally it will be corrected before the hike on May 21st.

Berger described an issue with the solar panels with the accumulation of snow. It will be necessary to put up heating coils to prevent the snow from interfering with the solar panels. The Chief explained that the heat tape will keep the buildup of ice from preventing the solar panels from clearing. He obtained a quote for \$750, which can be done from the building maintenance budget.

PARKS COMMITTEE: Cavanagh met with Andrew Mizensak, Century Village, and the America 250 grant application was submitted for \$5,000.

Galicki addressed Scout projects in the park. He invited Council to be more consistent in the recognition of the Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts who complete projects. He did not think the Village had done a good job of tracking and giving every one of them a proclamation. He did not want unfairness. Cavanagh asked if someone was missed, and Galick thought there were a couple in the past few years.

PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMITTEE: Porter stated that the Public Utilities Committee met earlier in the month and the minutes were distributed. The next meeting will be February 7, 2025, at 3:15 p.m. in Village Hall.

Regarding the solar panels, Porter reported that the solar panels installed on the Police Department roof produced 5 watts per day totaling \$36.5. He considers the project to be one for the books but would like to see the savings at the end of the year.

The committee will address a concern by the neighbor to the south of the Central Retention Basin who believes that it has deprived him and his neighbors of significant coverage from view by drivers on Chillicothe Rd. The committee will also be considering the Fairview/Hazelwood project which involves the piping.

Regarding the issue of screening reported by Porter, Galicki asked if this should remain in the realm of Public Utilities, or should it be a Properties Committee matter. Porter wanted to keep it under Public Utilities because every time a tree is planted, it helps stormwater issues. Galicki countered that adding dollars to any Village property is a property improvement. Once the project is done and the matter involves cosmetic improvements, it would not appear to be a Public Utilities issue. Berger said that Public Utilities can keep it until they need money and then they can come to Properties to ask.

ORDINANCES AND RESOLUTIONS:

Canton introduced an ordinance authorizing all actions necessary to accept Northeast Ohio Public Energy Council (NOPEC) 2025 Energized Community Grant.

Canton introduced an ordinance authorizing the Fiscal Officer to apply for and accept NOPEC grant funds for the 2025 Community Event Sponsorship Program on behalf of the Village of South Russell and declaring an emergency. Canton made a motion to waive readings, seconded by Porter. Roll call – ayes, all. Motion carried. Canton made a motion to adopt, seconded by Porter. Roll call – ayes, all. Motion carried. **ORD 2025-09**

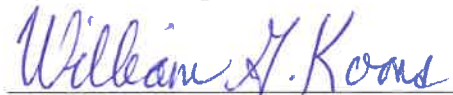
Berger introduced a resolution authorizing the discard or salvage of personal property not needed by the Village and declaring an emergency. Berger made a motion to waive readings, seconded by Galicki. Roll call – ayes, all. Motion carried. Berger made a motion to adopt, seconded by Galicki. Roll call – ayes, all. Motion carried. **RES 2025-10**

BILLS LIST: Canton made a motion to ratify the bills lists of January 15, 2025, in the amount of \$128,335.70, seconded by Porter. Voice vote – ayes, all. Motion carried.

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

Porter asked when the next Building Committee meeting would be held, and Cavanagh said it was to be determined.

ADJOURNMENT: Being that there was no further business before Council, Bell made a motion to adjourn at 8:21 p.m., seconded by Canton. Voice vote – ayes, all. Motion carried.



William G. Koons, Mayor



Danielle Romanowski, Fiscal Officer

Prepared by Leslie Galicki