

**RECORD OF PROCEEDINGS
SPECIAL COUNCIL MEETING
TUESDAY, MARCH 11, 2025 – 7:00 P.M.
MAYOR WILLIAM G. KOONS PRESIDING**

MEMBERS PRESENT: Bell, Canton, Cavanagh (7:05 p.m.), and Galicki

MEMBERS ABSENT: Berger and Porter

OFFICIALS PRESENT: Solicitor Matheney, Engineer Rich Washington, Administrative Assistant Galicki

VISITORS: Richard T. Smith, 36 Forest Dr.; Carrie Schloss, 290 Hickory Hill Rd., Chagrin Falls; Ryan May, Chagrin Lakes; Mike Gray, 130 Leaview Ln.; John Buda, 106 Leaview Ln.; Suzanne Maloney, 100 Waverly Ln.; Amanda Bencic, 33 Woodside Rd.; Egor Sadovnic, 105 Southwyck Dr.; Kathryn Garvey, Chagrin Falls; Kaley Richard, Chagrin Valley Times

The Mayor called the meeting to order, and the Administrative Assistant read the roll. Porter and Berger were absent. Cavanagh arrived at 7:05.

The Mayor referred to the agenda, and advised he was removing discussion of the survey results and committee recommendations. This will occur in the beginning of the March 24th regular Council meeting. The Safe Bicycle and Pedestrian Transport committee received over 373 responses. The Mayor explained that the Village has authorized to pay its engineering firm, Verdantas, up to \$15,000 to develop a master plan for trails. He continued to say that during the public comments section of the meeting, participants can present their proposals for trails.

As background, the Mayor stated that the Village received \$800,000 from the Northeast Ohio Area Coordinating Agency (NOACA) basically to get people off the roads. It gave the Village \$1.2 million to repave Bell Rd. in addition to the \$800,000. He thought participants would make suggestions for dirt, stone, and asphalt paths and would convey some good and bad ideas. The Village will provide all the ideas to Rich Washington, the Verdantas path/trail engineer. A Village map was displayed on the screen in Council chambers and participants were provided with a paper copy to document their ideas. He hoped that Washington would provide feedback by June and the Mayor looked forward to a ribbon cutting ceremony in the Summer of 2027. He asked participants to simply provide the details of where they want the trails to be, and nothing else because he did not want to get into a discussion. The Mayor offered that he had eight proposals.

Carrie Schloss, 290 Hickory Hill Rd., Chagrin Falls, advised that she would share her ideas, which were informed by the survey. She shared that there was a lot of interest in paths on Bell Rd., with paths to access South Russell Park, and with children trying to access schools. Her priority is a path through South Russell Park to connect into the neighborhood that starts at Spring Dr. and extend slightly beyond Gurney Elementary School to include the Chagrin Lakes neighborhood and Fox Run. This would connect a lot of residents to the park and schools.

Amanda Bencic, 33 Woodside Rd., Rolling Ridge, wanted to see a path starting at South Russell Park on Bell Rd. connecting all the way to the sidewalks in the Village of Chagrin Falls. She also wanted to

see one on East Washington starting at the park and connecting to the sidewalks in Chagrin Falls. This would provide access to St. Joan of Arc School as well as the Chagrin Falls Intermediate School. This would benefit the residents of South Russell as well as the businesses down East Washington.

Rick Smith, 36 Forest Dr., Rolling Ridge, stated that he was part of a committee that studied this issue in 2007 and 2009. Their efforts went nowhere. At the time, he predicted it would take five to ten years to do it. Now it is 15-20 years later, and maybe it will happen. Back then, Matt Brett was the Mayor and Mayor Koons was a Council member. The committee had the idea of a path along Bell, possibly going through the Village Park and connecting Bell to Washington St. and then going up Washington to connect to the sidewalks. He thought this was important because of the South Russell restaurants. The committee thought that doing it in phases would work. In the first phase, they attempted to identify property that was not privately owned. He indicated an area on the map which he said was Village owned property and then continued east where he said Kensington Green has a 30-foot easement along Bell Rd. That would take the path all the way to Sun Ridge. This would be from Sun Ridge to Chillicothe Rd. and then Chillicothe Rd. to Gurney Elementary. This would get kids to school. The hard part was getting from Gurney down the hill on Bell Rd. to the park because of the cemetery. The committee considered going through the back of Gurney and connecting to Kimberwick. Because there is just not a lot of room for the path, it would probably have to go on the north side of Bell Rd. He reiterated that 15 to 20 years ago, it never went anywhere, but this committee was thinking about going as far as Sun Ridge because there is only one piece of property on Sun Ridge and Bell that is private and then it would connect on to Kensington, which would mean being able to get all the way to Gurney without touching private property. Smith thought that having a bike path or walking path even if it is gravel through South Russell Park would be important.

John Buda, 106 Leaview Ln. advocated for a path from Chillicothe Rd. along the south side of Bell east to at least Sun Ridge as described by Smith. If people want to go to the market or towards downtown, it will get them off Bell Rd. If it could be extended to Gurney, that would be even better. However, his priority was having a path from Chillicothe Rd. east to Sun Ridge and as far as it can go. Suzanne Malone, 100 Waverly Ln., asked why only to Sun Ridge? Buda explained that he would want to see it go as far as it could go. However, beyond this point, it could get complicated with peoples' properties, the culvert, etc. and his proposal was to start with the easiest solution.

Igor Sadovnic, 105 Southwick Dr., explained he is a new resident and has three young children. He agrees that taking the path as far down to Chagrin Falls as possible would be imperative to allow people to go down there during Blossom Time, to take longer bike rides together, and to enable people to do more running and physical activities. Moving from University Heights has shown him how difficult it is to go outside and move around in the cul-de-sacs, so the physical aspects of navigating this gorgeous area is imperative. He also proposed taking the path all the way to Chillicothe Rd from the park and possibly down Chillicothe Rd. to the Heinen's area. This creates even more accessibility. His caveat with regard to the materials used for the path would be to use what is used in the Metroparks. He explained that there are passing lanes, and a continuous line. This helps with bicyclists and strollers, and with any settling over time. It is easier to patch and matches European standards for pedestrians and people with wheelchairs etc. The smooth gradient of the material tends to conform with the shifting of time instead of cracking and breaking up causing barriers. He summarized that what he would like is to have a path with the ability to pass if it is single sided, and crossings around critical areas while retaining the continuity of the path itself. Again, he would

propose a path that goes as far down as possible to Chagrin Falls and a contiguous, non-poured surface for ease of movement across the pavement. A participant asked for clarification about the trail running down to the Ace Hardware area, and Sadovnic explained he was suggesting the path go south on Chillicothe Rd. Galicki noted this was outside the Village's jurisdiction in Bainbridge. Sadovnic acknowledged this was a dream, but his point was relative to the importance of connecting people to the businesses.

Suzanne Maloney, 100 Waverly Ln., stated that when she thinks about the whole project, she sees it as building something for the entire community, so ideally, she would like to see the path run from the far edge of South Russell all the way east and west to Chagrin on Bell Rd. to connect with Ridgewood. In terms of it going down Bell to Gurney Elementary, it would need to be on the north side in order to allow the students to get to the school, all the way to Waverly. She proposed that on the south side at the park, the cross walk could be utilized and then the path would continue on the south side of Bell to Ridgewood. She did not want it to go through Rolling Ridge Colony because she thought it was a bit intrusive for these residents. She would like to see the Village utilize the park but realized that the land was donated for a specific purpose and only certain things can be built there. Perhaps the surface could be more natural for the park, like a gravel path, that would be accessible by bicycle as well as strollers, but not an asphalt path. It could cut through the park and continue onto Washington St. so the children can get to St. Joan of Arc, the businesses, Cleveland Clinic, and then on to the High School and Middle School. This would be great for the runners and walkers, and it would get better buy-in by the residents if it was necessary to do a levy to support it. This way, no one would be left out. Maloney also thought that the material of the path is important. Concrete is more expensive than asphalt. Asphalt melds better with the natural scenery and is good for bicycles and runners. Gravel is ok for runners, but not so good for some types of bicycles and strollers. An asphalt path would be ideal. Maloney worried about who would maintain and absorb the cost of maintenance of the path and wanted to see something from the Village for this. She considered that perhaps this would mean making it only accessible for three seasons and not four, and did not see that it would need to be shoveled and cleared in the winter.

Ryan Macey, Chagrin Lakes, has two kids who attend Gurney, and he wants them to be able to bike to school, which they currently cannot do. He would like to have a trail that ran from Gurney to the park, and it would be fantastic to get into Chagrin for Blossom and take longer bike rides. He is also fine with going east to include everyone but thinks it should be a four-season trail even if it cannot be plowed consistently. He described how limited he is in this area with running during the winter. Bell Rd. is too dangerous and there is not enough room with trucks and traffic.

Cavanagh stated that she dealt with trails in 1992. They tried and it failed, and at the time there was more open land without homes. It does not mean that it would fail now, but it is just harder. She described South Russell when she was a teenager. Sheerbrook was not developed, and the Village could have easily made a trail, but no one asked. Perhaps there was a supposition that it would stay open, but it did not. She would love to do something like this, and offered that Council is trying very hard. She sees runners, bikers, and electric bikers go by her home on Bell Rd. The Village has given them the extra 3-feet on each side of the road. The village has tried. It will cost a lot of money to do this.

The Mayor presented his ideas. The first is a small path from Fox Run to the Gurney sidewalk which would involve going over the creek. The second is a path that connects Chagrin Lakes to Sugar Bush,

which would require a bridge going over the creek, but would keep people off Bell Rd. so that they would simply cross Bell to go to Gurney. There is a guardrail there, and he would suggest that the path run on the south side to keep the kids off of Bell Rd. The Mayor's third idea would be to put a path on the east side of Alderwood, which curves and people park and drive too fast on it. It would run from Bell Rd. north up to Manor Brook. Another path would go from Whitetail on the north side of Manor Brook, down to Chillicothe Rd., which would get people off Manor Brook Dr. The Mayor discussed an existing path on Bell Rd., that disappears when it goes into Chagrin Falls at Ridgewood. He would like to see something done to better connect this section. The Mayor addressed the Bell and Chillicothe Rd. intersection and proposed a scramble crosswalk where the entire intersection is shut down for 20 seconds to allow pedestrian crossing without having to worry about cars making turns. Suzanne Maloney clarified that there would be no right on red, and the Mayor reiterated that everything shuts down. She verified that the signs indicating no right on red would need to be put back. The Mayor said no, every traffic light would be red. Galicki pointed out that without the sign, people would still turn right on red. It would be necessary to disestablish the right turn on red. The Mayor said his last proposal would be to connect the Gurney Fields to the power lines.

The Mayor indicated that the burden now falls to Rich Washington and proposed having a meeting with the committee to go over details. Galicki advised that there are a lot of visions people have when it comes to trails and paths, from a three-foot wide trail to something better. The Village has the opportunity to use the \$800,000, but if it uses it to build paths, the Village must go according to the guidelines that the State of Ohio or other funding sources put on the Village. He explained that in using the funds, there are requirements that dictate how wide the path must be. Galicki asked Washington to explain the requirement so they understand that the paths could involve taking portions of residents' front yards for either a right-of-way or easement, especially given the limited room on Bell Rd. Washington explained that the Ohio Department of Transportation (ODOT) trail requirement is 11-foot wide for a multi-use pedestrian/bike access trail. There are different requirements based on what side of the street it is on, the width, whether it is two or one direction, etc. As far as construction, prevailing wage must be bid out to the public companies to get the best price. There are also guidelines for materials. Typically, if it is going to be next to a road, it will be an asphalt material. At the intersection, there are different turning radii, striping methods, etc. Galicki offered that in addition to the 11-foot swath for the trail, there is a required buffer zone of three feet on either side which must be clear of trees and other vegetation. His concern for the residents who might be affected on Bell Rd. or major thoroughfares where paths are being envisioned, is that a considerable amount of private property could be consumed. Washington acknowledged that where the path goes, there may be poles, trees, driveways, culverts, ditches, etc. that must be considered with planning. Sometimes the trail is separated into two one-direction pieces, so it could be narrowed. There are a lot of utilities that must be accounted for in addition to criteria pertaining to traffic load. Speed limit is also a factor for the trail design. Galicki added that if there are any designated wetlands along the path, they will have to be bridged. Washington concurred and advised that even ditches can be regulated by ecological readings. He added that if trees need to be cleared, there is a specific timeframe in which this can be conducted, which impacts the bidding and construction schedule. Permitting is another factor that can take anywhere from a few months to a year depending on the wetlands and other environmental conditions. A participant asked if 11-feet is the standard for the Metroparks, and Washington explained that these are internal to the park, so it is not a public right-of-way. The widths of these paths are sometimes based on maintenance and emergency vehicles that may need access.

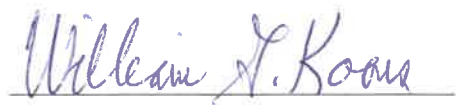
Smith offered that Lander in Pepper Pike put in a sidewalk, which is only four or five feet wide. Galicki explained that sidewalks are different from paths and trails. Smith wondered if the Village wanted to consider sidewalks because they take up a lot less space. It would be a matter of weighing the width and getting easements through peoples' yards versus putting a five-foot concrete walkway in front of the homes instead of taking 16 feet.

The Mayor noted that Bentleyville has been discussing a sidewalk path from Solon to Chagrin Falls, which will be \$4 million. The south side of Chagrin Falls is also discussing sidewalks which will cost the homeowners almost \$11,000. Pepper Pike put in sidewalks and is running a path through Gates Mills Blvd. up to Mayfield, but Mayfield Heights declined the money to continue the path.

Galicki added that although the sidewalks would be narrower, the cost according to the Ohio Revised Code, is born by the property owners. He suspected this was one of the impediments that the committees reached in 1992 and 2007. It may be a benefit to the entire community, but to the individual property owner, it is a tough sell. Smith asked if a concrete sidewalk were to be installed in front of Kensington Green, would it be an easement on Kensington and not a piece of private property. Galicki and Cavanagh indicated that it is private property so the Kensington Green HOA would have to apportion that cost to its homeowners. Maloney thought the costs should be spread across the South Russell residents, and Galicki said this would have to be taken to a vote in that case. Otherwise, the property owner absorbs the cost according to Ohio law.

The Mayor introduced Kathryn Garvey, Chagrin Falls, who asked how many of the meeting participants had taken the survey. She noted that their feedback would be incorporated into what the committee would be presenting which would provide a good sense of what the whole community is saying.

ADJOURNMENT: Being that there was no further business before Council, Canton made a motion to adjourn at 7:40 p.m., seconded by Cavanagh. Voice vote – ayes, all. Motion carried.



William G. Koons, Mayor



Danielle Romanowski, Fiscal Officer

Prepared by Leslie Galicki