

Joint HR - Streets Committee Meeting
July 8, 2025, 3:00 p.m., Village Hall

Present: Streets Chair Cavanagh, Council Member Galicki, Council Member Berger (HR), Mayor Koons, Fiscal Officer Romanowski, Street Commissioner Young

Cavanagh called the meeting to order. She advised that the purpose of the meeting was to finalize the Uniform Policy for the Street Department. The Street Commissioner explained that he worked on the policy and proposed that every year the employees are given \$300 to choose items from the list used by Orange Village to replenish their uniforms. Cavanagh clarified that this draft is from June 16, 2025; the one the Street Commissioner and the Mayor developed because there was a previous policy drafted by Berger. Berger asked if the Village is providing a clothing allowance or purchasing clothes. The Street Commissioner explained that initially the Village will purchase and then after will provide a clothing allowance. The employees do not physically receive the money but will be allowed to go through a list used by Orange Village to identify items they want to get. What is being called an allowance will be \$300 annually, and the employees can spend up to that amount on items from the list. Once each employee indicates what they want, one order will be placed on one invoice. Berger asked how the process would work with a new employee. The Street Commissioner said that the policy allows for a \$1,171 one-time charge for the initial outfit paid by the Village and would be paid to one of the vendors from the list. He reiterated that the employees would not receive checks, money, reimbursement, etc. Berger concluded that in all cases, the Village is writing a check to a vendor, with the exception of the boot allowance, which is a reimbursement. The Street Commissioner concurred. The Street Commissioner felt that the distinction between the terms purchasing and providing would allow him to dictate that the employee replace worn items so that their uniforms are neat.

Galicki stated that the word uniform implies that they are all the same, but the policy did not reflect colors, styles, stock numbers, etc. for any of the items. The Street Commissioner indicated that the list used by Orange Village contains that information. Galicki noted that this list had not been provided to the committee. Instead of referencing Orange's policy, Galicki suggested having a policy specific to the uniforms of the Village of South Russell. He asked what colors were being considered, and the Street Commissioner indicated the items on the list were safety green or blue. Galicki clarified that this applied to shirts and pants, and the Street Commissioner said yes. Galicki did not see this as being uniform. The Street Commissioner clarified that the pants were blue, and the shirts were either high visibility yellow or blue. Galicki asked if the Street Commissioner was recommending the Village adopt Orange's policy instead of having one specific to the Village, and the Street Commissioner said yes so that they do not have to reinvent the wheel. The committee discussed the vendors. Berger stated it is the discretion of the Street Commissioner to decide the best place to acquire the uniform items. However, a description of the style and color should be included. The phrasing for the policy could be that the list of approved wear will change from time to time based on experience, review, need, etc.

Berger said that originally, the idea was to save the Village money, and he wondered if this policy would do that. The Street Commissioner said that the \$1,170 was the biggest number to initially outfit everybody. After the initial expense, it would be \$300 per year per employee, which would be \$1,500. It was discussed that it was a \$6,000 up-front investment and \$1,500 per year for replacements versus paying Cintas \$3,000 per year. It would take approximately two years to break even which Berger felt was reasonable.

The Cintas contract was discussed, and the Street Commissioner explained that Cintas agreed to get rid of their contract and take it down to rugs and shop towels. There would be no need to battle to get out of the contract. According to the Street Commissioner, the Cintas Representative was more concerned about losing a customer and was also willing to allow the Village to reduce the rug quantity.

Berger concurred with Galicki that a list was needed of the specifics of the uniform to include a description of the articles (i.e. work pants) and colors for each of the items. Galicki asked if the shirts would have the Village logo and said specificity was needed with the list. The Mayor stated that the Village does not do this for the police officers. The Fiscal Officer explained that the police have a list of specific pants, shirts, etc. that are approved by the Chief that they can purchase. Galicki added that additionally, it is specified where patches, badges, etc. are applied to the uniforms. Berger thought it was fair to add this to the policy. The Street Commissioner said that Orange has a screen press print on everything they get.

Galicki questioned why the Village cannot develop its own policy. The committee had been discussing the uniform policy for months. What is being provided to the committee is a lot of fluff, but no specificity. The Mayor indicated that there was nothing stopping Galicki from providing this, and Galicki responded that he is not the one who should be deciding what the Street Department wears. He wanted the Street Commissioner to put something together instead of relying on the Mayor to write a policy for him. He wanted to see what South Russell is going to do, not all the surrounding municipalities. The Mayor thought Galicki was micromanaging. Galicki thought it was ill advised to just let the employees randomly select uniform items. The Mayor said they knew specifically what they wanted. Galicki asked for these specifics, explaining that the committee had been asking the Street Commissioner for months to do this, and at this late date the committee was instead presented with what Orange does and vague details of who the vendors might be. This information was also requested previously by Berger after he provided a draft Uniform Policy. The Streets Commissioner clarified that he should order samples for Galicki's approval. Galicki said he was not asking for samples, but for a description of the uniform, stock number, etc. A description of a shirt, for example, should include whether there will be a logo on it and location of the logo on the shirt. If the uniforms are to be used exclusively for work at South Russell, he recommended that they have a South Russell identifier, so that the uniforms will not be used on side jobs. When the police do part-time jobs in another jurisdiction, they do not wear a South Russell patch on their sleeves. He felt sure that the vendor or supplier of choice could provide stock numbers of various pants and shirts.

Berger concurred that this was a fair request and that he had asked for this information previously. He had no problem with the initial expense and added that the yearly cost will change because costs go up. It will be the responsibility of the Street Commissioner to come up with a new starting number annually and to provide this number to Council in the form of a yearly price sheet. The Mayor did not think the committees wanted to get into the specifics of the quality of the shirts, patches, and logos. Cavanagh and Berger both expressed that they wanted the South Russell logo on the uniform. Berger explained that all that was needed was a line drawing of a shirt with a square identifying where the South Russell logo would go. The Mayor reiterated that they were micromanaging. Cavanagh asked if they were ready to make a decision. Berger thought they were spending a lot of time, but the relative dollars were not that great. If the Street Commissioner could get the committee a document with more specificity of the products, he would be prepared to go forward. Galicki concurred and said he was not concerned about the costs but wanted specifics of the uniform.

Cavanagh asked about the boot policy, and whether it was still \$250 per year. The Mayor said the boots were an issue. Berger told the Street Commissioner that he had spoken to the Service Department employees who were excited about getting the increase to \$250 per year for boots. Now the proposal is to increase it from \$250 to \$500, which did not seem to have been an issue for the employees. The Street Commissioner said it would give them the ability to buy two pairs of boots a year. Cavanagh clarified the boot purchase was a reimbursement. Berger said there would be a dress pair of boots so that when they have Cemetery events, they will have a clean pair of boots.

Cavanagh said that in summary, everybody wants to see what the uniforms look like so she will talk to Future Image and have them send her that information and she will distribute it to the committee. She hoped to have it by Friday so they can vote on it on Monday.

The Fiscal Officer noted that in the last discussion of the policy, references for part-time employees were to be removed, but they are still in the current version. There currently are no part-time employees in the department, but if there were, how would the amount provided for uniforms be decided? In the Police Department part-time reimbursement is based on the number of hours worked. The committee agreed this could be added when needed and should be removed.

The Fiscal Officer also pointed out that the draft policy states that uniforms are not taxable, but they are. She explained that according to IRS law, uniforms are subject to taxation. The Street Commissioner asked if this was only if they wore the uniform home and added that the police would be taxed if they wore their uniforms home. The Fiscal Officer said the police are taxed because they get an allowance. The Village will be purchasing the Service Department uniforms directly, but by IRS law, the clothing could be worn to the store, on a side job, etc., which makes it taxable. Boots are not as long as they are safety boots. The Street Commissioner proposed including in the policy that they are not to wear the uniform outside of work. The Fiscal Officer explained that if the employees came to work and changed into a uniform and then changed out of it at the end of the day before leaving, then it could be non-taxable. Just having a policy stating they are not allowed to wear it outside of work would not suffice. Berger thought the Street Commissioner was going after something that was difficult. The uniforms are a benefit, and he thought the taxes paid would be innocuous. The Mayor clarified the verbiage in the policy to reflect that the uniform items were subject to tax.

The Mayor suggested sending the policy to the Solicitor to have it ready for Monday's Council meeting and offered to do this.

The Fiscal Officer indicated that under 3 – General, first paragraph, “part-time Service Department Employees” should be removed. Additionally, the reference to the Employee Handbook should read page 14 because under Uniform and Clothing Allowance, the verbiage will be replaced with what is in the proposed policy. The Mayor asked if the Police Department policy is currently in the Employee Handbook, and the Fiscal Officer said it was on page 15. The Fiscal Officer indicated other necessary changes to the handbook to include removing the third bullet point and last bullet point containing the reference to part-time.

Cavanagh adjourned the meeting.