

**RECORD OF PROCEEDINGS  
REGULAR COUNCIL MEETING  
MONDAY, JULY 14, 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, Street Commissioner Young, Solicitor Matheney

**VISITORS:** Chuck Walder, Geauga County Auditor; Kate Jacob, Geauga County Auditor's Office; Misha Alexander, Chillicothe Rd.; Kyle Canter, Sugar Bush Ln.; Tim Schaaf, Bell Rd.

The Mayor called the Regular Council meeting to order and asked for a moment of silence for a resident who died as a result of a bike accident in the Village. The Mayor led the Pledge of Allegiance. The Fiscal Officer read the roll. **Porter made a motion to approve the minutes of the June 9, 2025, Regular Council meeting, seconded by Canton. Voice vote – ayes, Porter, Bell, Canton, Cavanagh, and Galicki. Berger abstained. Motion carried. Porter made a motion to approve the minutes of the June 14, 2025, Special Council meeting, seconded by Cavanagh. Voice vote – ayes, Porter, Bell, Canton, Cavanagh, and Galicki. Berger abstained. Motion carried.**

**VISITORS:** Chuck Walder, Geauga County Auditor, addressed recent severe phishing attempts relative to the Automated Data Processing (ADP) system. The issue began around May 20<sup>th</sup> at the County Engineer's Conference in the Columbus area and involved either a false link or QR code provided at the conference. Walder described how the ADP system was able to defend against the attack and other subsequent precautions taken to avoid such issues in the future. Two measures that have been put in place include prohibiting the use of public Wi-Fi by ADP users and not clicking on a QR code without scrutinizing the URL. Instead of public Wi-Fi, it is recommended that a hotspot is used, which is private. With the QR codes, the recommendation is to type in the address rather than use the QR code. Due to recent events, ADP has increased scrutiny of incoming emails, in particular ones with attachments and photos. This process may delay the transmission of emails. Walder concluded that the ADP system operated as designed, but more sophisticated products are being investigated.

Kate Jacobs, Geauga County Auditor's Office, encouraged Council to complete the training provided by ADP. Walder explained that the Auditor of State (AOS) proposed that the county make it grounds for termination for employees who do not complete training. Walder thought this was severe, and the AOS advised that the county must show a higher score of employees completing training. In terms of being proactive, Jacobs provided instructions on how to report a suspected phishing email. Walder concluded that the requirements of ADP are based on the Secretary of State's requirements of the Board of Elections.

Porter asked if Walder knew of the country of origin of the attacks, and Walder said no because rerouting is utilized. Berger asked about access while traveling overseas and explained that the ADP system had blocked emails he was sending. Walder said that the county has international hot spots and employees can also use their phones as a hot spot. He explained that if ADP is notified, the level of scrutiny can be reduced.

The Fiscal Officer thanked Walder for his efforts to educate county ADP users and stated that she had observed an increased level of awareness and precaution taken relative to the receipt of emails.

The Mayor advised that he, the Engineer, and Kim Brewster Shefelton, Chagrin River Watershed Partners (CRWP), walked the Sugar Bush property. Shefelton felt that it should be a stream and should not be dammed for a lake. The Engineer's perspective was that the Village created the Manor Brook floodplain and had seen a great increase in silt in Sugar Bush. The Village cleaned it out two years ago, and now there is an estimate of \$32,000 to clean it again. The matter will be considered by the Public Utilities Committee.

Porter proposed having a Public Utilities Committee meeting on August 8<sup>th</sup> at 9:00 a.m. and the Mayor encouraged people to attend from Sugar Bush and to bring charts, graphs, past bills, and anything they have showing the history. The Mayor explained that regarding the history of Sugar Bush, in 2014 when the Village paved Bell Rd., a barricade was installed under the culvert but there was a big storm that caused the backup silt to go into the Sugar Bush silt pond. The Village cleaned it out twice. A quote and dredging proposal were obtained a couple of years ago for \$32,000. When he walked the property with the Engineer and CRWP, CRWP's advice would be to turn it back into a creek. The Engineer surmised that the Manor Brook flood plain is probably causing the new island that was formed in the last 18 months in the Sugar Bush lake. At the Public Utilities Committee meeting, they would hear from everyone, and the committee would ultimately come back to Council with a recommendation. By September, a formal decision would be made as to what the Village will and will not do. Kyle Canter, 36 Sugar Bush Ln. and Tim Schaaf, 1116 Bell Rd., explained that CT Corp designed the current silt pond in collaboration with the Village. The issue is the result of the Village's efforts to improve drainage and water flow. CT designed the size and volume of the silt pond based on water flow data from the water meter at the culvert on Bell Rd. The intent was to measure how quickly it filled with silt. It took 18 months to totally fill. Additionally, the lake is shrinking and there is an island that has formed. Canter proposed that the problem needed to be remedied, which was a bigger project, and then a regular plan be developed for the silt pond. If they can get the lake under control and then have a regular plan on the silt pond, then it would be possible to accommodate everything that is coming downstream. He reiterated that it is all flowing down the way it was designed, but now dumping into Sugar Bush and the lake is essentially becoming a silt pond. Schaaf further explained the drainage and flow through Sugar Bush. He reiterated the details of the problem and said that it worsens as the silt migrates into the larger lake.

The Mayor encouraged Canter and Schaaf to provide as much information as possible to the Public Utilities Committee and to let residents know to come to the meeting for a discussion. No action will be taken. Schaaf invited Council to view the lake and consequences from his deck.

Porter suggested that the Engineer be present for this meeting. He noted that it had been established that the silt came from Manor Brook Phase I. The second matter to consider is what if anything should the Village do about the Sugar Bush silt pond and lake? Thirdly, can the Village stop this from happening like it has happened this time, which is an engineering question. Canter shared that when Fox Run was developed, the developer was allowed to remove a large retention pond like the Central Retention Basin. Porter stated that the Central Retention Basin resolved the Parkland Dam issue, and the Village continues to do stormwater mitigation throughout the Village.

Cavanagh asked Canter if soundings had been conducted of the lake, and Canter said they were about two years ago. Cavanagh verified that the lake was a pass through and not a spring fed lake, and Canter agreed. Cavanagh asked where it drained, and the Mayor said Chelsea Ct. Schaaf explained

that at the west end of the lake there is a spillway leading to the next subdivision. The Mayor added that in 2006, the Village put \$475,000 into the drainage area where Chelsea Ct. comes into Southwyck. Cavanagh said that what Canter and Schaaf described with the silt pond filling and overflowing into the lake is exactly what continues to happen in Paw Paw Lake.

**MAYOR'S REPORT:** The Mayor explained that the two people organizing the bike ride event originally scheduled for August 17<sup>th</sup> are unavailable on that date and it is necessary to change it to August 24<sup>th</sup>. **Cavanagh made a motion to change the date of the bike ride to August 24<sup>th</sup>, seconded by Porter. Voice vote – ayes, all. Motion carried.**

The Mayor showed Council a picture of South Russell Police Officer Kevin Spackman rescuing ducklings in Chagrin Lakes. He also thanked former Council member and veteran Brian Morrison for donating a new Air Force flag. The Mayor reminded Council that the Safe Bicycle and Pedestrian Transport Committee meeting will be held on the last Friday of the month at 8:30 a.m. They are getting closer to a proposal. At the Chamber of Commerce Mayor's luncheon, participants from Orange, Pepper Pike, and Chagrin stated that trails improve property values. Also addressed in the Mayor report was the grand opening of the Police Department drone vehicle garage, an executive session for employee evaluations, and a meeting with Congressman Joyce's representative.

**FISCAL OFFICER:** The Fiscal Officer distributed her report. She reminded Council that the Budget Commission hearing will take place on Tuesday, August 19<sup>th</sup> at 9:45 a.m. Porter noted that balances were over \$4 million as of the end of last month. The Fiscal Officer concurred, but said she did not know when the salt structure would be started. With the receipt of income tax and property taxes, July will have the highest balances of the year, so she will be moving money to STAR Ohio later this week to take advantage of higher interest rate.

Regarding tax revenue collection, Berger noted that the Village was \$210,000 ahead over the previous May, but then June was down. He asked about the outlook. The Fiscal Officer explained that April tax collections are received in May and sometimes are estimated. This balances out in July or August. Historically, it fluctuates. A few taxpayers have significant income and can throw off the curve depending on when they pay.

**FINANCE COMMITTEE:** **Canton made a motion to acknowledge the receipt of the Credit Card Report dated July 14, 2025, seconded by Porter. Voice vote – ayes, all. Motion carried.**

He advised that the committee meeting minutes of June 13, 2025, were distributed. The committee met on July 11<sup>th</sup>, and minutes are forthcoming. The Fire and Ambulance contract was discussed, and further details will be provided by the Safety Committee.

Regarding the Budget Work Session date, the committee proposed September 22, 2025, at 5:30 p.m. before the Regular Council meeting. **Canton made a motion that Council vote and approve September 22, 2025, at 5:30 p.m. for the Budget Work Session, seconded by Porter. Voice vote – ayes, all. Motion carried.**

A proposed payment process and responsibility policy was distributed to Council. It was drafted by the Fiscal Officer, reviewed by the Solicitor, and discussed by the committee. The Fiscal Officer explained that in March 2025, the State Auditor determined that any late charges/finance charges/late fees are on the shoulders of the Fiscal Officer to personally pay. She is requesting Council put something in place stating that if it is the Fiscal Officer's fault, she will take responsibility, but if it is the fault of another Department Head for not getting paperwork in on time, then it should be his/her responsibility. The State Auditor is understanding of the occasional occurrence, but not something that

happens on a regular basis. Canton stated that the committee suggested to all Department Heads that they do whatever they can to follow procedures and get bills in on time. Porter asked if an ordinance was required to adopt the policy. The Solicitor said that some policies have been passed by motion and others by ordinance. Porter suggested adding it to the Employee Handbook, and the Solicitor said this could be done by motion but added that it did not apply to all employees. Galicki offered that it would be an internal Village policy. The Solicitor concurred and thought a motion would suffice. Porter suggested waiting to vote on the policy until the next meeting.

To clarify, Berger noted that the policy stated that “under state law, late payments are considered gross negligence and are the responsibility of...” the Fiscal Officer. He noted that despite a policy adopted by Council, the Fiscal Officer would still be responsible per state law. The Solicitor concurred. Porter suggested including the Ohio Revised Code (ORC) section as a reference and then questioned why the Village would need this policy if it was already in ORC. Galicki explained that the issue was whether the Fiscal Officer should be responsible for someone else’s negligence. In his opinion, if the Fiscal Officer per ORC must write a personal check for the fee, then she should be reimbursed by the negligent individual. Porter agreed with the idea, but said the policy contradicts state law. The Solicitor did not think it did, but rather it codified the procedure for the Village for getting invoices and purchase orders processed and submitted. Porter concluded that the policy should be amended to include the ORC section and will be considered at the August Council meeting.

Canton proposed August 8<sup>th</sup> at 8:00 a.m. for the next Finance Committee meeting.

**SOLICITOR:** The Solicitor had nothing to report.

**ENGINEER:** The Mayor explained that in the Engineer’s absence, he conveyed that the Road Program Bid Opening would be at noon on Wednesday, July 16, 2025. Additionally, CMG is coming up with a contract for the salt storage building.

**STREET COMMISSIONER:** The Street Commissioner distributed his report. He provided an update on the repair of the plow truck.

He sent a letter to residents on Countryside Dr. about doing driveway culvert replacements ahead of the Road Program. The Street Commissioner also addressed a few inlet basins on the street that currently have steel piping and inquired whether the Village would want these replaced with plastic. Ultimately, other than addressing some sink holes, he thought they would be a month ahead of the contractors and would be out of their way by the time they were ready to pave.

Porter noted there were trees planted along the Central Retention Basin. The Street Commissioner stated that he, the Engineer, the Greenliefs, and their neighbor went over to the area and came up with a pattern to plant the trees that would make them happy. The trees were then planted on a mound they constructed.

**STREETS COMMITTEE:** Cavanagh stated that the minutes from the June 16<sup>th</sup> committee meeting were distributed. She advised the Road Program bid opening would be July 16<sup>th</sup> at noon. Cavanagh reported on the availability of a grant for the South Russell Village Cemetery in the amount of \$2,500 for a project that is useful to the Cemetery like a path, expanding the property, or trimming bushes. The grant application is due July 31<sup>st</sup>, and Berger offered to write it.

Cavanagh asked the Street Commissioner to address the proposed Uniform Policy. The Street Commissioner said he had gotten some samples and forwarded them to the Street Committee and HR.

He distributed them to Council as well. The clothes will be similar to what is currently being worn, fluorescent T-shirts and/or blue t-shirts with the logo on the back and on the breast of the shirt. He provided the pricing for the shirts, jackets, and vests and for the embroidery through the Future Image website. The Street Commissioner said he also had the rough list that the Mayor and committees have seen. Porter asked if this was a reimbursement program. The Street Commissioner explained that there would be an initial cost of \$1,200 per employee and then they would be able to choose replacement items up to \$300 per year thereafter. The purchase would be made at one time with one purchase order. The employees do not physically get a check. Porter clarified that the Village would pay based on an invoice. Bell asked if the Street Commissioner had seen the items to determine quality, and the Street Commissioner concurred and said they are currently being used by Orange Village. Porter asked if there would be names on the shirts, and the Street Commissioner said they could be added if Council wanted, but in the past names were not on the shirts. Canton asked what is added to the jackets for visibility during the winter. The Street Commissioner said that hi-visibility jackets have been provided every couple of years, but most of the guys wear their Carhart jackets. He will start to push a vest on top of this, especially if they are on the road working. There was further discussion about including first names on the uniform items. Berger clarified that the term used on the documentation, safety green, is the same as the yellow the Street Commissioner had been discussing.

The Fiscal Officer pointed out that the logo should read, "Village of South Russell." There had been a legal case involving the distinction between Village of South Russell, which is the legal name, and South Russell Village. Cavanagh said she loved "South Russell Village." The Fiscal Officer advised that if the Village is going to have to pay for the setup of the logo by the company, it should be correct going forward.

**Cavanagh made a motion to accept the bid prices from Future Image with the protocol done by HR and by Streets for the Street Department going forward, \$1,200 initially and then \$300 per year afterward, seconded by Porter.** Porter verified the employees are getting two pairs of boots for \$500. The Street Commissioner said this would be the boot allowance, which is separate from uniforms. The proposal is \$500 a year given in July and January for boots and associated items. They would buy and submit a receipt. Porter confirmed that this is a reimbursement. **Voice vote – ayes, Porter, Bell, Berger, Canton, and Cavanagh. Nay – Galicki. Motion carried.**

The Mayor said that spending \$1,200 on five employees would cost the Village \$6,000 and would take the Village two years to break even. In five years, the Village will be up almost \$7,000, not counting for inflation. This is compared to Cintas.

The Mayor addressed the burial process. There was a burial where the family wanted to have the funeral service and burial the same day, but the Village was not able to do it. The Mayor proposed that someone from the administrative office walk over to the Street Commissioner's office at lunch time or at the end of the day so that he can simply ask the employees about availability for the burial on Saturday and so that an answer can be provided for the family. The family ended up having a funeral mass one day and had to have the burial later. He thought the process could be improved with communication. Trying to get a hold of the Street Commissioner any day when he is sitting on a backhoe someplace is not going to work. He would be captive at lunch and at the end of the day, and his guys would be there. Porter asked how much notice the Village received for the burial, and the Fiscal Officer thought it was over a week, and it was a cremation burial. Cavanagh pointed out that they wanted it on the weekend and asked if the Village posts that it tries to get the burials done during the week. The Fiscal Officer said burials are permitted on Saturday mornings. Bell clarified that it took a week to get back to the family. The Fiscal Officer explained that the Administrative Assistant

called the Service Department office and left a voice mail, she also called the Street Commissioner's cell, but received no reply. Given they had not heard back, she asked the Mayor to see what he could find out about their availability. The Fiscal Officer added the residents were understandably upset; they had out-of-town guests who made it to town for the mass, but were unable to stay until a later date for the burial, so it was just the son and daughters in attendance for that. Bell verified this was because they were waiting on a response from the Village and said this did not reflect positively on the community. The Street Commissioner said they talked to Admin on May 9<sup>th</sup> and he responded on May 13<sup>th</sup>. The Mayor responded to the family on Tuesday and told them the Village could not do the burial on Saturday.

Berger advised that the Properties Committee, which covers the Cemetery, is in the process of looking at the Cemetery procedures. They were created in 2015 and have not been updated. He suggested that this would be part of the procedure manual, which would then be presented to Council with a recommendation. Bell asked that someone respond faster the next time, especially in the terrible time for the family. It was verified that the funeral mass was on May 17<sup>th</sup> and the burial was a couple of weeks later. Bell said they had failed the resident. The Mayor said he talked to the resident before and after and that describes his view.

**BUILDING COMMITTEE:** Cavanagh reported that the Building Committee and Solicitor met and discussed ongoing issues, including draining swimming pools. The committee also discussed the Cemetery grant and the need to go over the Cemetery procedures document to bring it up to date. Cavanagh also provided a status update for the implementation of the iWorQ software. The committee discussed pool fences and pool covers.

The Mayor thanked former Street Commissioner Johnson for discussing Cemetery matters with Berger and the Street Commissioner. The Mayor also informed Council about an ongoing dispute between Gurney School and the Fox Run development about the mowing of the piece of property on which the Gurney School sign is located. The Mayor said the Village has been asked to stay out of the dispute. The Street Commissioner added that the Village is still mowing around the guardrail to maintain the roadway.

**POLICE CHIEF:** The Chief submitted his monthly report. Porter asked for an update on the resident who passed away on Annadale Dr. The Chief said the coroner's report is still pending.

**SAFETY COMMITTEE:** Bell stated that the next Safety Committee meeting will take place on Thursday, July 17, 2025, at 8:00 a.m. in the Police Department. Bell reported that Chagrin Valley Fire Department (CVFD) held an informational meeting with local officials, and the presentation was distributed to Council. If they continue running things as they currently do, they have a projected budget shortfall of \$603,000. This is with their current wages which are not competitive when compared to surrounding departments. It also is with delaying capital expenditures, the cost of which has increased significantly. Bell noted that Galicki attended the meeting, but Galicki shared that he is precluded from discussing any issues concerning the contract due to a conflict of interest. However, the Mayor attended and said that the other attendees were shocked, but he felt this was the start of a negotiation. He did not think the Village will be paying 12% for the next three years, but he thought they have definite issues. The Mayor has been in contact with Russell Township to ask if its fire department was interested in bidding, and he will know more after the Trustee's meeting on Friday. He did not want to abuse Russell Township, but Russell Fire Department and Bainbridge Fire Department are the Village's only options. The Mayor suggested that he inquire with Russell and have the committee determine interest and/or obtain a bid from Bainbridge. Cavanagh verified this would

be for fire and emergency medical services (EMS). The next meeting with CVFD is on August 13<sup>th</sup> at 6:00 p.m. at the fire station. Bell noted that there are significant increases in revenues CVFD needs.

Canton stated the inflation rate is currently 2.35%. He thought Council wanted its safety forces to be well equipped, well trained, and safe. However, a 36% increase over three years is quite a bit of money. Part of the challenge is keeping part-time employees, and he questioned how their pay was structured over time. He thought that it would have been better for adjustments to have been made previously rather than asking for a 36% increase now. Galicki added that the Chagrin Falls Township Trustee expressed that the problem was that the contract only increased 2-3 percent in the second and third year and should have increased more so that it would not be necessary to ask for so much money now. While this is a valid point, during the past three years, costs have gone up all over and CVFD is faced with economizing as much as they can. As stated by CVFD, the starting pay for a new hire is closer to \$19 per hour. The surrounding fire departments pay more, and new recruits are reluctant to go with CVFD when they can get a lot more money elsewhere. Galicki further explained that at the recent Geauga County Township Association meeting, the Budget Commission spoke to the membership about the potential for the elimination of property taxes. When asked how fire and EMS would be handled, the individual leading this movement suggested that the cost could be billed to the individual utilizing the service. On average, an EMS call is \$900 and a police call is \$850. Regarding the proposed 12% yearly increase, Berger pointed out that over three years it is actually a 40% increase due to compounding.

Since Galicki could not be involved with the fire contract, Berger asked if someone other than the Mayor could offer to help Bell with it. The Mayor proposed that if he could get a better deal out of Russell Township than Bell could get with Bainbridge, then Bell would have to buy him a meal at the Washington Street diner. Galicki cautioned that Council went down this road four years ago with Russell Township, and there are differences with each department. It is important to look at a big picture in terms of response times, and all the costs involved. The Village has extensive records from previous negotiations, so Bell will not have to start from scratch.

The Mayor had two items concerning Safety Committee. First, Chagrin Valley Dispatch (CVD) lost Highland Hills. He thanked the Chief for setting up a system for summer door-to-door solicitations. He added that the residents know that the individuals with the lanyards have been through the Police Department.

**HR COMMITTEE:** Bell said the next meeting will be on Tuesday, July 15<sup>th</sup>, at 7:30 a.m. in Village Hall.

**PROPERTIES COMMITTEE:** Berger reported that the Properties Committee will be meeting July 22, 2025, at 9:00 a.m. He asked the Police Chief to address the Police Department parking lot. The Chief distributed pictures of the parking lot and explained that to complete the Police garage project, he wanted to pave between the Police Department building and the new garage. It is 20' by 50' area that currently consists of asphalt grindings. They get tracked into the building and garage and he would like a more permanent solution. He reached out to paving contractors to put down a layer of heavy aggregate as a base layer. Once the salt structure is complete and campus paving is conducted, it could be paved with everything else. **Berger made a motion to approve the bid contract with Advanced Asphalt Paving for a total of \$6,637 and to note that this is part of the budget from the donation, seconded by Galicki. Voice vote – ayes, all. Motion carried.**

Berger reported that at the June 26<sup>th</sup> Properties Committee meeting, the flags that are flown on Bell Rd. and Chillicothe Rd. were discussed. Consideration is being given to change from U.S. Flags to bunting

since the Village is not flying the flags in compliance with federal regulations in that they are not lighted at night.

**Berger made a motion that Council approve himself, the Fiscal Officer, and the Mayor to go out to make the application for the state grant for the Cemetery for extraordinary repairs, maintenance, and training for \$2,500, seconded by Galicki. Voice vote – ayes, all. Motion carried.** Cavanagh invited other Council members to join her and the Street Commissioner in walking the Cemetery to determine potential projects.

The Mayor discussed finding a temporary replacement for the cleaning service used by the Village and suggested collaborating with the Lutheran church to find one person to do both. The Mayor also stated that Judy Harvey had hired her own landscaper to take care of the Tom Harvey Memorial Garden in the park. The Street Commissioner described the work that was done, and the Mayor said Mrs. Harvey was very happy. The Mayor said that regarding Eagle Scout projects, bat houses were submitted and already up as was the platform. There is a scout who is interested in landscaping on the East Washington side of the park and will come up with a proposal. The Mayor referenced the yearly walk of the park and said that Pete McDonald of the Western Reserve Land Conservancy (WRLC) had some ideas that were not so restrictive and encouraged the Village to find someone to do the burn and not to rely on the county coming to do it. Inquiries were previously made with Davey Tree, and they wanted \$10,000 to do it.

**PARKS COMMITTEE:** Berger reported that a Parks Committee meeting would be scheduled. As part of the Fall Festival discussion, he noted that there had been the suggestion of having food trucks instead of the Village providing hot dogs. He was not sure how Council felt about this. Cavanagh said Council felt great about it since the main hotdog workers were done working the event. Berger concurred but said it did not mean the Village could not continue the practice. He was not comfortable with the change from providing food to asking people to buy their own. He wanted more discussion at the Park Committee meeting. He welcomed Council's thoughts as well.

Berger addressed the mulching of the playground. The Street Commissioner explained that the Village's insurance company visited and found the playground was deficient in the amount of mulch. The state's recommendation is based on the height of the highest platform on the playground apparatus and is a total depth of 12 inches. The current mulch is 7 inches. Cavanagh asked if it would be necessary to have truckloads of mulch delivered, or did the Village already have it? The Street Commissioner said he would have it delivered and installed because based on the quote he received, this would be cheaper than having Village personnel do it. Berger clarified that the company would blow it in and said there were options. Currently, the Village is using a shredded wood mulch. However, rubber mulch, a water permeable surface, shredded tires, etc. could be used. To continue with what the Village has been using will cost \$6,000 to \$7,000. The Street Commissioner said that he figured it would be less. Subtracting the seven existing inches from the 12 required inches would be in the neighborhood of almost \$9,000 with the kids carpet wood chip mulch. Berger verified that mulch had been put down every year, and according to the past bills, it was in the \$1,500 to \$2,000 range yearly. Berger was unaware of the depth requirement and acknowledged that the Village would take a big hit this year by replacing five inches. Next year, \$2,500 to \$3,000 should be included in the budget to replace the mulch. Berger was uncertain how much yearly mulch loss there would be with the rubber mulch. The Fiscal Officer advised that the Village received a Natureworks grant, and was uncertain this type of mulch could be used. Berger also expressed concern that with the timing of the mulch replacement, since there will only be three months until winter which would mean not getting the full value of the replacement mulch. Canton stated that the original intent of the playground was to



be as natural as possible. Bell asked if the Village had a deadline from the insurance company, and the Fiscal Officer explained that they want the Village to respond within 60 days. In the past, the Village took pictures and reported to the insurance company what was there. She surmised that if the Village could not do the full amount this year, a partial amount would suffice so long as an explanation was given about the late time in the season and that the remainder would be installed next year. Berger proposed doing three inches this year and topping it off to the full 12 inches next year.

The Street Commissioner said he was told that it needed to be brought up from day one, and that it was never full. The Mayor said he did not remember. Berger said the matter would be discussed at the Parks Committee meeting. Porter suggested another solution of shutting down the platform, but he was not sure the Village would want to do that. Berger advised that even lowering the height of the apparatus to four feet would drop the mulch requirement to six inches. It would still involve adding mulch next year. It is an ongoing maintenance issue that requires a line item in the budget. Porter pointed out that the Village has been publicly put on notice that the playground is five inches short of what is required, and children are using the playground a lot. He presumed the purpose of the mulch depth is to cushion falls. It has not happened nor does the Village want it to happen, but it may be that the most efficient solution is to close the tallest structure. Canton offered that this would be the slides. Berger suggested getting the mulch in and keeping the playground open. Galicki thought closing parts of the park is not a good decision for the taxpayers. He suggested finding the money, adding the mulch, and going forward with having a happy summer.

The Mayor invited Council to walk behind the new restroom. In his opinion, it was not built properly when looking at the stacks. The Street Commissioner stated that the stacks are leaning. He has been in contact with the company and was asked to send them pictures. He needs to do this, but it has been precarious sending pictures lately. Once they receive these, the company will decide what to do. Canton verified that the building is under warranty. The Street Commissioner assumed it was under a one-year warranty. The Mayor showed some flowers he took from around the South Russell sign and shared that they were previously planted at the art studio. After the flowers have finished blooming, they will take a hard look at the outdoor sign.

The Mayor asked the Street Commissioner to talk about the Welcome to South Russell sign that was brought into Village Hall. The Street Commissioner said the signs should be located at every entrance and exit to the Village. He discussed how the sign was damaged and added that all the signs need to be refurbished or replaced. The Mayor asked the cost of refurbishing the signs, and the Street Commissioner had not obtained this information yet because refurbishing is a different price than new. A decision needs to be made first. The quantity and location of the signs was discussed, and the Mayor thought the signs were \$1,800 each. The Fiscal Officer said that the Village previously bought only two per year because they were expensive. Cavanagh asked if anyone else thought that they looked dull and needed color, and Galicki said no. She thought they needed color. Berger offered that if the price of refurbishing is close to the price for new, then the signs should be replaced. If it is much less, then the Village should refurbish the signs that are not too damaged. Until Council is given numbers, Berger could not make that decision. The Mayor said he was told they looked dated. The Street Commissioner added that they are one sided.

**PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMITTEE:** Porter said the Public Utilities Committee met on Friday, July 11<sup>th</sup> and the minutes are forthcoming. The topics discussed included the Fairview/Hazelwood project. The calculations for the County Engineer's request for the flow rate to the north are taking longer than planned. They should be completed in July, the project will be bid out in August and awarded in September according to the Engineer. The project will not be completed before school starts and will

go into the winter. Once the bids have been received, the Village can approach Russell with the actual cost of the project to determine their willingness to split the local share. So far, they have been receptive. The Engineer estimated the project would be approximately \$96,000.

The next committee meeting will take place on August 8<sup>th</sup> at 9:00 a.m. The Sugar Bush issue will be discussed with the Engineer in attendance.

The Mayor had some information to share. The Engineer and Kim Brewster Shefelton, CRWP, walked the Manor Brook floodplain to look at the vegetation. It is working well, and they were both happy. He also advised that there are some neighborhood swale issues which are occurring when an older development has a new development come in behind it. With Laurel and Country Estates, Laurel was there first, and backyards are next to each other and slant to send the water to the other neighbor. The swales have filled in and they want the Village to do a swale from Bell Rd., behind Laurel, all the way up to Hazelwood. This is all on private property through back yards. Porter verified that it would be like what the Village did north of Bell and Chillicothe Rd., and the Mayor concurred. The Mayor said another swale issue is with Chagrin Lakes where Wembley was built 50 years later. The interurban separates Chagrin Falls from Bainbridge and trees from the interurban are falling onto South Russell property. He contacted Bainbridge who told him to pound salt. He spoke to Carmella Shale from Geauga Soil and Water and she came with maps and met with the homeowners. She explained that the trees belong to Wembley, and it would be up to Wembley to take care of them. The Solicitor explained that if it is a damaged or diseased tree and the owner has notice of it, then the homeowner is liable if it falls into a neighbor's property and creates damage. If a storm were to blow over a live tree on your property onto your neighbor's property, it is not the owner's responsibility. The Mayor advised that Shale is sending a letter to the Wembley Homeowners' Association (HOA) to tell them it is their responsibility. The Street Commissioner had gone to Chagrin Lakes two or three times and told residents that it is private property, and the Village could not cut up the trees that fell in their backyards.

The next neighborhoods with issues are Country Estates and Alderwood with their ponds. Country Estates had money saved to address the dredging of their pond and building a pavilion. The drainage work the Village did on Anglers is working perfectly, and the Country Estates contractor cleaned out the ditch again. The Village and HOA both did their part, but there was still an issue with ponds flooding the backyards of homes on Alderwood which back up to the Country Estates. The Village will get those people together to encourage them to work this out.

As previously mentioned by Porter, the Village addressed the drainage issue at the Chillicothe Rd. backyard and Bell Road ditch, which is working well. This includes the red ranch and house next to it that used to flood. They have sump pumps that are pumping the water to the Bel Meadow ditch that runs under Chillicothe Rd. over to the Manor Brook floodplain. The water is flowing through, and they are very happy.

The Manor Brook Gardens HOA just completed their Erosion Special Improvement District (ESID) project. They had a similar issue with the land flattening out and the swales disappearing. They poured a lot of their own money into resolving the issues.

The Northeast Ohio Areawide Coordinating Agency (NOACA) held a water quality seminar on June 20<sup>th</sup> that the Mayor found very interesting. The United States Geological Survey (USGS) comes to the Village every few years to talk about water quantity, and the new people in charge want to come in fall to talk about water quality also.

Lastly, the Mayor reported that there was a good webinar on Tree City. With the plantings in the Central Retention Basin, he thought the plantings should work their way around to behind the salt structure. It would be nice for the neighbors to see the Village putting up trees, arborvitae, and mounds so that they are not looking at the back of the salt structure.

#### **ORDINANCES AND RESOLUTIONS:**

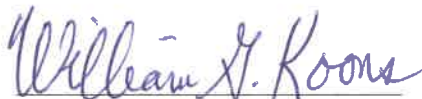
Berger introduced an ordinance approving the contract between Maria Didonato doing business as Hip to That (collectively "The Band") and the Village of South Russell for musical services for the 2025 Fall Festival in an amount not to exceed \$400, authorizing the Mayor to execute the contract, and declaring 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. **ORD 2025-40**

Cavanagh introduced an ordinance approving the Purchase/Lease form for the itemized list of equipment pursuant to the Master Agreement between Canon USA and the Village of South Russell, ratifying the Mayor's execution of the form on July 6, 2025, and declaring an emergency. Cavanagh made a motion to waive readings, seconded by Porter. Roll call – ayes, all. Cavanagh made a motion to adopt, seconded by Porter. Roll call – ayes, all. Motion carried. **ORD 2025-41**

**BILLS LIST:** Canton made a motion to ratify the bills lists of June 16, 2025, in the amount of \$113,621.12, seconded by Porter. Voice vote – ayes, Porter, Bell, Berger, Canton, and Cavanagh. Galicki recused himself. Motion carried. Canton made a motion to ratify the bills list of June 29, 2025, in the amount of \$64,476.93, seconded by Porter. Voice vote – ayes, all. Motion carried. Canton made a motion to ratify the bills list of July 15, 2025, in the amount of \$83,416.15, seconded by Porter. Voice vote – ayes, Porter, Bell, Berger, Canton, and Cavanagh. Galicki recused himself. Motion carried.

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

**ADJOURNMENT:** Being that there was no further business before Council Bell made a motion to adjourn at 9:09 p.m., seconded by Porter. Voice vote – ayes, all. Motion carried.



William G. Koons, Mayor



Danielle Romanowski, Fiscal Officer

Prepared by Leslie Galicki