

**RECORD OF PROCEEDINGS  
REGULAR COUNCIL MEETING  
MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 8, 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, Engineer Haibach, Engineer Washington

**VISITORS:** Family of Patrol Officer Jonathan Munn; Misha Alexander, Chillicothe Rd.; Chris Kostura, Bell Rd.; Anthony Ivancic, Lakeview Ln.; Carrie Schloss, Hickory Hill Rd., Chagrin Falls; Elizabeth Gross, Sheerbrook Dr.; Mike Mulloy, Bell Rd.; Egor Sadovnic, Southwyck Dr.; John Wahl, Laurelbrook Dr.; John Buda, Leaview Ln.

The Mayor called the Regular Council meeting to order and asked that everyone take time to remember 911. He led the Pledge of Allegiance. The Fiscal Officer read the roll. **Porter made a motion to approve the minutes of the August 11, 2025, Regular Council meeting, seconded by Canton. Voice vote – ayes, all. Motion carried. Cavanagh made a motion to approve the minutes of the August 25, 2025, Special Council meeting, seconded by Bell. Voice vote – ayes, all. Motion carried.**

**VISITORS:** The Mayor introduced Jonathan Munn, whom he wished to appoint as a part-time Patrol Officer. The Chief explained that Munn was a former Pepper Pike Police Sergeant and realtor. He served as a field training officer and supervisor, and the Chief felt he would be a good fit for the South Russell Police Department. **Bell made a motion to confirm the Mayor's appointment of Jonathan Munn as a part-time Patrolman in South Russell, OH, seconded by Galicki. Voice vote – ayes, all. Motion carried.** The Mayor administered the oath.

The Mayor introduced Misha Alexander, 5266 Chillicothe Rd., who explained she is a candidate for South Russell Village Council and was speaking in support of the Safe Bicycle and Pedestrian Transport Committee and proposed trail. She spoke about her concern for the safety of pedestrians on Bell Rd., and the Village's receipt of a substantial grant to build a path. Alexander referenced the committee's survey and the community support for the project and acknowledged Council's concerns. Alexander stated that she supported a motion to move forward with the project to get the scoping details for the next steps. She emphasized the need for the path in terms of safety as well as health and wellness, and the importance of moving forward with the project before there is some kind of accident or tragedy.

John Buda, 106 Leaview Ln., advised that last Friday, he parked his car at the park and walked up the north side of Bell Rd. to Chillicothe Rd. and then down the south side back to the park. In terms of the right-of-way, he explained that the grades, drains, manhole covers, and road signs surprised him when he was walking rather than driving. He encouraged others to view the area from this perspective because he assumed the next step would be a more detailed engineering analysis that would better identify details and costs. He encouraged Council to take this next step.

Egor Sadovnic, 65 Southwyck Dr., appreciated the work done thus far by the committee and Council. He is a new resident and comes from an area with more walkability. Sadovnic relayed a story of trying

to create a tradition of walking with his children in a wagon down Bell Rd. to the Blossom Time Balloon Glow in Chagrin Falls. He described the difficulty of the return trip due to limited distance from the road, large fast-moving vehicles, fumes, noise, and other road dangers, while in darkness. He concluded that this would not continue to be a tradition. Even taking the precaution of wearing safety gear, he believed he was still in direct danger with the potential of distracted drivers. He stressed the importance of safety, connection, health, and accessibility that would be created with the path. The first phase needs to get momentum to accomplish this. He and his family moved to this area specifically for the school system with the intention of eventually walking and biking to the Intermediate School and High School. He urged Council and residents to make the first stage of the project go forward because the resources will come from the momentum as well as happiness from the people, which will be monumental.

Anthony Ivancic, 160 Lakeview Ln., has ridden 1,500 miles this summer alone going up and down Bell Rd. on his bike with his children. He felt it was safe for him, but he thought about the kids and accessibility and felt it would be great to have a trail system. His priority would be a crosswalk at the Bell and Chillicothe Rd. intersection.

Porter asked the visitors if they were in favor of a bike path or just a pedestrian path. Ivancic said that at the bare minimum, a pedestrian path would be great for the reasons previously shared. He added that the path would add to property values. Buda responded that his priority would be a pedestrian path at a minimum and if a bike path were possible within finances and engineering, that would be great. In his opinion, it was about getting kids off the road as well as joggers and walkers. Alexander agreed that the biggest priority is safety, and the Village has the resources to accomplish it. She urged Council to approve a motion to get the scoping done. She added that the intersection crosswalk and a crosswalk at Gurney Elementary School should be a priority. Another visitor commented that a pedestrian path would solve a lot of the problems, but if the Village only settles for this, would it potentially leave some of the disabled folks out who are unable to use it. A bike path would make it more accessible for the disabled to traverse as well as people with strollers, etc.

Mike Mulloy, 991 Bell Rd., advised that he lives across from the South Russell Village Park. He had been following the topic and did not want to discourage anyone from proposing improvements to the Village. However, he wanted to better understand the specifics of the proposed plan. He inquired about the distinction between a pedestrian path and a bike path. Porter replied that it was money and space. Cavanagh added that the width requirements were different. Mulloy noted that a pedestrian path was 5 feet, and Porter said that a bike path is 11 feet wide by federal guidelines. The Engineer clarified that guidelines state 10 feet, but if proven to be unfeasible, then 8 feet is the absolute minimum for a multiuse path. Porter asked Mulloy if he was in favor of a bike path in front of his house, and Mulloy said no. Bell asked Mulloy how he felt about a pedestrian path, and Mulloy said not in front of his house. Cavanagh asked how he felt about it being across the street, and Mulloy said he would not oppose it. However, like any Village project, he would like to better understand the costs and who will be paying for and maintaining it. He emphasized that he was not trying to discourage anything, that it is a great idea, but it seems like a rush to do something because there are available dollars. He reiterated that as a resident, he would like to better understand what is being proposed and what the long-term implications are in terms of the responsibility of the Village. Galicki asked Mulloy how his neighbors on the north side of Bell Rd. felt and wondered if they shared his concerns. Mulloy said they did share his concerns based on conversations he has had and added that one of the other residents was attending the meeting. He continued to say that the Village owns property across the street, and it seems like a much more viable option. Generally, his neighbors questioned why the path would go through their front yards.

Canton thought that Council, too, needed more information and that they all needed to think the matter through. Council wanted to make the right decision for everyone. Mulloy appreciated Canton's comments. Mulloy was unclear about the process for the project and wondered if Council made a motion to approve a scoping agreement, would that mean the release of more dollars for a more in-depth study? The Mayor said no. It is a \$800,000 grant and the Village must pay 20%. Theoretically, the project can be \$1,000,000, but the Village does not get the money until the project is complete. The Village pays for all of it up front. The Mayor explained that the next step is the scoping to pinpoint what will be done and the scoping should be done by Christmas at the latest. Then it goes into the process of getting approved. Mulloy wanted to ensure that there would be continued opportunity to get feedback or weigh in on the matter. He did not want it to move forward without this. The Mayor stated that when he and Schloss met with Mulloy in May, it was like it was a no brainer to have the path in the park where the Village has all the land it wants. Why would they put it where a child or anyone could die with six driveways. The Mayor was happy to see the residents at the meeting but did not think they needed to worry about that in his opinion. If for some reason it would be put in their front yards, the Village would do what it did with the other people and contact them directly to discuss it with them.

Cavanagh clarified that this motion would be for the scoping, not approving it to go forward. Mulloy verified it was to provide more details. Canton asked when this would go to the Planning Commission and Zoning, etc. The Solicitor did not know. Canton expressed concern about continuing the planning process without knowing this.

Chris Kostura, 995 Bell Rd., was concerned about the path going through his yard versus going on the other side of the road through the park. The park has lighting that would be beneficial for the path, where the north side of the street is dark. He concurred with Mulloy's statements. The Mayor added that there is a big ditch on the south side of the road which he viewed as a safety barrier from the road.

Galicki reviewed that the plan presented to Council previously involved the necessity to cross Bell Rd. two to three times as part of the path which presented safety concerns for the Police Chief and Council members. One continuous path on one side of the road or other would be preferable instead of crossing two to three times in less than a mile. There is debate about this and regardless of whether it is on the south or north side, peoples' driveways will be affected. Some people may be amenable to having the path in their front yards where others may say no. This must be considered when going through scoping as well as the interfaces previously mentioned by Buda and the costs involved in moving some of these things. To Canton's point, Council is trying to understand these uncaptured costs as well. Additionally, among the two engineers involved, one thinks there could potentially be a big impact on storm water, and the other does not. Collectively, he thought they would all like to see a path that makes sense. No one opposes the idea, but there is a need for a well thought out plan with an Ohio Department of Transportation (ODOT) or Northeast Ohio Area Coordinating Agency (NOACA) signature approving the plan. Council would hate to be put in a position going forward with the project to ultimately find that requirements and guidelines were not followed and there would be no reimbursement. This would not be indicative of a Council that paid attention to the fiscal responsibility it has to the citizens. There are a lot of questions that need to be asked going forward.

Canton raised the issue of blacktop. He referenced a permeable mesh used on trails in the West Wood Reservation that was covered by dirt and stone. He asked the Engineer's opinion about this method versus the use of blacktop. The Engineer Haibach referred to the multipurpose tow path trail which consists of a limestone screening and gravel surface and is pretty hard. However, with such surfaces,

the underlying dirt can soften and not support heavier vehicles. With a concrete or asphalt surface, it helps keep the water from seeping down into soil underneath. It is a more stable, year-round surface. Canton asked about the long-term maintenance of each. The Engineer Haibach explained that with a stone path, it would be necessary to scrape, grade, and add aggregate a little more often but it would ultimately be less costly. An asphalt path would require almost no maintenance for the first several years but would eventually have to be repaved which can be expensive. Canton verified it would be the Village's responsibility to maintain it, and the Haibach agreed. In some communities, it is the homeowner's responsibility to maintain the sidewalks, but it is up to the Village to set the rules. Bell thought that for ADA requirements, it would have to be a solid surface, the Engineer concurred but explained that this could potentially be appealed. There was further discussion about the maintenance of stone paths versus asphalt paths. Haibach advised that ultimately, it would be necessary to determine a maintenance schedule for the path.

Porter reviewed the considerations for the path: five-foot path or wider depending on how it is characterized and whether it is pedestrian only or bike path; whether an 11, 9, 8, or 6-foot trail fits; which side of the road it will go on; and will it be on both sides so the kids can cross at Spring Dr., go down the park side, and then cross at Alderwood and go up the hill to Gurney and then repeat the process back after school. Does it make more sense to have something on the south side completely with the crossings they have discussed? However, he thought kids mostly live on the other side.

Bell asked for clarification about the next steps. The layout the Village currently has is just a schematic. If Council agrees to move forward after determining the details of where the trail will run, the next step would be for the Engineer to complete the paperwork with NOACA as part of the grant. The Engineer said that once the Village has its ideal path alignment (how it will look from 10,000 feet up), he would rather go to NOACA much sooner rather than later. This is even if it is just a red line drawn identifying the best fit path as determined through the committee and Council meetings and receipt of public input. Feedback from the funding agency is always helpful. Bell thought the next step would be to develop an engineering plan where finite details are provided by Verdantas. At that point, Council will review it, look at the estimates, and decide whether to move forward to the next step, which would also involve NOACA and ODOT. If everyone agrees, then the project would go to bid. Once the bids are received, a bid must be accepted and then move forward. If Council were to agree upon the generalized 10,000-foot view, he verified that the next step would not be costing any money. The Engineer said there would be an hourly cost for engineering. Bell concluded that they would be stuck at an impasse until there is agreement on the 10,000-foot view.

Cavanagh said she would not support the trail on the south side of the road by the Cemetery. She understood the issue with the multiple crossings but did not want the path running in front of the Cemetery. She preferred that it start on the north side and cross at Alderwood to the park.

Elizabeth Gross, 1175 Sheerbrook Dr., favored a multi-use path over a pedestrian path because if the Village were to change its mind at some point, then it would have to do this process all over again for a bike path. This would cost more and have other procedural requirements, etc. It might be more efficient from a process standpoint to do a wider path.

Carrie Schloss, 290 Hickory Hill Rd., acknowledged the work session conducted with Council during which concerns were raised. The committee then attempted to find answers. One issue was about the need to cross Bell Road several times. She explained that the schematic the committee is recommending is a 5-foot single side asphalt pedestrian path on Bell Rd. between Spring Dr. and Chillicothe Rd. with crossings at Spring Dr., Gurney Elementary, and the Chillicothe and Bell Rd.

intersection. The crossings would not be a part of the path but rather access to the path and the path would remain on a single side. Porter asked whether this would be on the north or south side of Bell Rd. Schloss said the proposal is a little vague regarding the side because it is dependent on more detailed engineering. She thought they were leaning towards the south side because they have spoken with residents who have shown the committee that it makes sense to use public property. Additionally, it brings people to the park and creates the potential for a path through the park which can connect to other trail systems. The committee does not know whether it is possible to get past Rarick Cemetery, but recent conversations have indicated it could be possible. However, if further research reveals a problem, they will have to reconsider. She concluded that the committee has asked to look at the south side as a primary option.

Schloss continued to explain that the path will be 5 feet wide, which will be a pedestrian only path. It would be an acceptable project for NOACA funds, and it does not have to be a multiuse path. The benefit of it being a pedestrian path is that construction costs would be less so it can go further. Additionally, in the schematic, it fits within the right-of-way. Ohio laws and South Russell ordinances were researched specifically to whether or not bikes can use pedestrian paths. It would be designed as a pedestrian facility, but under state law, people are allowed to ride bicycles and e-bikes if the motor is not engaged on a sidewalk, which is a pedestrian facility. The path would be the width of or wider than a sidewalk. Many local jurisdictions allow people under a certain age to ride on a sidewalk, but no jurisdiction can require bikes to be ridden on the sidewalk. According to South Russell ordinances, it appears that a person operating a bicycle shall ride on the sidewalk rather than the roadway when sidewalks are available, unless specifically prohibited. Schloss concluded that there is no state law or South Russell ordinance that prohibits riding a bike on a sidewalk. For all these reasons, the committee thinks a 5-foot path would be feasible to implement because it would be in the right-of-way, have a lower cost, and would meet the needs of the community.

Regarding ADA accessibility, through Verdantas it was determined that other than creating accessibility to the path, the path can follow the grade of the road, which means no additional costs. Schloss added that there was concern that the first phase of the plan was not detailed enough to make the decision, but she found out that the level of detail on the current plan is enough to move forward. She addressed concerns that the Village would get too far into the process and then find NOACA would not provide funding by explaining that this was not how the process worked. The committee is asking to fill out scoping documents so NOACA can start reviewing and engaging with the Village on the project. They will be involved the whole way providing approvals.

Schloss addressed the question about the need for construction easements and costs. Verdantas created a plan that provided a cost estimate in the event 7-foot construction easements were needed for the full length of the trail.

Lastly, Schloss said she kept hearing that the Village had the money and was trying to find ways to spend it. She clarified that the committee had been meeting for almost two years. It consists of citizens who want to enhance the safety of the community and are walkers, bike riders, or people who want to access the parks and schools. A survey was conducted, and it was found that there is a general consensus according to a high response rate of 25% with a high level of support. There are over 70 people on the committee's communication list, and it has been a big groundswell movement. Luckily, the Village has money and has had it since 2023 for the project and the funds were meant to be disbursed this year. The committee is asking Council to take the first step so that the Village does not lose the funding. The grants are only given out every two years and she felt if the Village does not take advantage of the grant, it is unlikely it will get a grant like this in the future. Verdantas prepared a

list of the steps needed to move the project through the NOACA process, which was distributed to Council. Schloss reiterated that she encouraged Council to take the first step to allow Verdantas to fill out the scoping forms to get the project into the programming of NOACA. She did not think it committed the Village to anything other than taking the next step and moving the conversation forward.

Berger asked Schloss if she could confirm that the NOACA grant application from 2023 specified an 8-foot-wide path. Schloss said she could not confirm this but was aware of an email from the planner at NOACA stating a 5-foot pedestrian path would be an appropriate project for these funds and it would just need to be changed in the draft scoping documents that were given to the Village in February. Berger asked where that email was, and the Mayor said he sent it to Berger a couple weeks ago. He sent emails from Mr. Allen and Mr. Shop which discussed that ODOT said a 5-foot path is acceptable.

The Mayor let the visitors know that there were copies of the survey available in Council Chambers. He encouraged them to carefully take a tape measure some Saturday morning and run out to the middle of Bell Rd. They would find that Bell Rd. is 11-foot wide and in some cases, there are 40 inches or 4 feet of shoulder. There will be approximately 15 feet from the last piece of asphalt on the shoulder to the telephone poles. With an ideal path, your shoulder would be against the telephone poll, 5 feet of asphalt, and 10 feet of green space. The ditch provides safety if someone runs off the side of the road. Regarding the cemetery, the road is 11-foot wide with a 4-foot shoulder and a 4-inch curb. It is 59-inches from the curb to the bottom step of the cemetery. Theoretically, they could squeeze in a 5-foot path. The problem with that is your shoulder would be right near the cars. There is the 4 feet of the bike path where something could possibly be done. He concluded that there is room down there. From the edge of the road, there is 19 feet of space. He encouraged everyone to carefully take a look. The Mayor stated he would be available the following morning at 9:00 a.m. to answer questions.

The Mayor stated he was looking for a motion. Canton asked if Council felt there was enough information to go forward, or should the matter be tabled. Galicki said he was unclear whether the Village could go forward with more granularity and a study without going to NOACA or ODOT, or would the Village need their participation at this stage of planning. The Engineer said the Village should get NOACA and ODOT engaged early. Galicki asked what their engagement would entail. Would they assist in design? The Engineer said no and explained that it gets it on their planning and meeting schedule to work towards knowing when they would be disbursing the funds set aside for the project. Galicki clarified that submitting the new paperwork will not affect the grant money the Village currently has, and the Engineer said no. He explained that it puts NOACA and ODOT on notice that the Village has determined it wants to do the project and what it will potentially look like. He would welcome any feedback from NOACA. Galicki wondered if the plan was specific enough given that they still do not know what side of the road it will be on, etc. The Engineer explained that he would get this directly from the committee because it is necessary to give NOACA something to get them engaged. Even a map with a red line on it would suffice. Once NOACA is engaged and real money is being spent on engineering, the next phase would be to get a survey to determine how exactly it will fit. This would include a cross section of the road and path and identification of where all the obstacles are located and whether they need to be relocated or whether it will be necessary to enclose some ditches. Until there is a survey, these details will not be known. He clarified that both sides of the road would be surveyed. Right now, all that is needed is a map with a line on it to show the preliminary alignment and scope of what the Village wants to do. The scope can change once there is more information. Galicki asked if any of the costs in the engineering work he described can be

reimbursed through the grant or are they born by the Village? The Engineer could not answer this yet but said it would be a good question for NOACA once they are engaged with the scoping documents.

Porter clarified that right now, what is being discussed is a path primarily on the southern side of Bell Rd. from Spring all the way up to Chillicothe Rd. Anyone who accesses the path from the north side would presumably use a crosswalk. Schloss advised there would be three crosswalks at Spring, Gurney, and Chillicothe Rd. Bell verified it would be a four-way crosswalk at Chillicothe and Bell Roads, and Schloss concurred. Porter said he jogs up and down Bell Rd. and sees sanitary lines, storm water lines, and added that it gets tight especially around the area of the cemetery and the Village would not want to disturb any graves. He stated that this is a preliminary step and puts the project on NOACA's radar, but he has concerns that 5 feet not being enough because they had been talking about a bike path forever in the Village. Now they are talking about a pedestrian path that might be ok to use by bikers and e-bikes. This did not sound like a good idea to him. The Chief clarified that class 3 e-bikes would not be permitted on the path, but class 1 and 2 would. Porter said he would not want to get hit by a bike going 28 mph or 35 mph. His point was that the Village had discussed a bike path for years but are now talking about a pedestrian path. He is fine going forward with the preliminary step but thought it would be better if it were wider.

**Bell made a motion to have the Mayor and Verdantas move forward with filling out necessary scoping documentation associated with the NOACA grant for 5-foot-wide pedestrian pathways from State Route 306 to Spring Dr., with crosswalks at Gurney School and Spring Dr. and additional crosswalks at the intersection of Bell and State Route 306, seconded by Galicki. Voice vote – ayes, Canton, Cavanagh, Galicki, Porter, and Bell. Nay – Berger. Motion carried.**

**MAYOR'S REPORT:** The Mayor distributed a picture of a bat house and explained that Warren Stevens built four for the Village as his Eagle Scout project.

The Mayor reported that on August 13<sup>th</sup>, the six municipalities who utilize the Chagrin Valley Fire Department met to hear why they needed 12% or 18% with ambulance billing going in and out. Different offers were heard for four years at 9%, three years at 9%, and the six municipalities decided that the 12% increase every year was acceptable pending Council's approval. On September 18<sup>th</sup>, the proposal will be discussed by the Safety Committee and then it will go back to Council on September 22<sup>nd</sup>. If anyone has questions, he encouraged them to go Thursday night at 6:00 p.m. to the grand opening of the Chagrin Valley Fire Department. He also encouraged everyone to look up John Finley, who is a Chagrin Falls Township Trustee who is an actuary and did hours of research. He recommended 9% but was the first one to agree to 12%.

The Mayor also reported on the ice cream bike ride. Problems were observed with the use of the crosswalk.

The 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the South Russell Village Cemetery was observed on August 27<sup>th</sup>. Former Cemetery Committee members Patty Mills, Cindy Nairn, and Ed Pyle attended. A Chagrin Valley Times article with pictures was subsequently published, as was an article about the path. Both were accurate.

The Mayor complimented the Geauga County Engineer's Office for their fast service in repairing the shoulder on the north side of Bell Rd. over Silsby Creek. While they were there, the Mayor discussed the possibility of a boardwalk that would go on the other side of the guardrail. They recommended

putting an extra section of culvert under Bell into the wetland and then putting the boardwalk right across the top of it. They did not discuss who should pay for this, but he thought it was a nice idea.

The Mayor also complimented Carmella Shale, Geauga Soil and Water Conservation District (GSWCD), for helping with an issue with Chagrin Lakes and the Woods of Wembley neighborhood. Due to accumulated vegetation and debris, the water does not flow and ends up in yards. Shale sent a letter and negotiated with the Woods of Wembley resulting in a crew going through the interurban area and cleaning it out so the water will stay in the swale that was originally there 100 years ago. He planned to recognize her efforts at the annual GSWCD dinner in October.

The Gurney School sign is on the Fox Run property. For years, the school district mowed this grass but ceased due to discord with Fox Run. Fox Run stated they are letting the grass go, but Village ordinances say it must be cut. Typically, when this occurs with residents, a letter is sent stating that if they do not cut the grass, the Village will, and the cost is put on the resident's tax bill. According to the Mayor, for the Village to send such a letter to Fox Run, it requires Council approval. Canton was under the impression that the school planned to move the sign. The Solicitor explained that the date for the public hearing for the conditional use permit for the sign will occur at the September 11, 2025, Planning Commission meeting.

**FISCAL OFFICER:** The Fiscal Officer distributed her report. The Mayor asked how long the streak of income tax collections setting records would last. He commented that it was six this year. The Fiscal Officer reminded Council of the Budget Work Session before the September 22<sup>nd</sup> Council meeting. She attended the Streets Committee meeting and had also obtained the information from the Building Committee. The Fiscal Officer will distribute the budget worksheets once she has them all together.

**FINANCE COMMITTEE:** Canton made a motion to acknowledge the receipt and review of the 9-8-2025 Credit Card Report, seconded by Porter. Voice vote – ayes, all. Motion carried.

Canton reported that the second round of checks had been signed and crosschecked for the month of August. He reminded Council of the upcoming Budget Work Session on Monday, September 22<sup>nd</sup>. Income tax collected in August amounted to \$195,028, which was a record high. The next Finance Committee meeting is scheduled for Friday, September 12, 2025, at 3:15 p.m.

**SOLICITOR:** The Solicitor provided a refresher for the difference between suspending the rule for three readings of ordinances and resolutions and what it means to declare an emergency. All ordinances and resolutions must be read on three different days, but the rule can be suspended by moving to suspend the rule for reading three times and having approval of 3/4 of Council members. This means the ordinance/resolution does not have to go through the three readings and can be adopted upon the first reading with a vote. The difference between waiving readings and declaring an emergency is that each ordinance and resolution does not become effective until 30 days after it is passed. Waiving readings does not mean it becomes effective the next day. Declaring an emergency means that it is passed immediately upon adoption. You cannot have an emergency motion without waiving the three readings, but it is possible to waive the three readings and still not have an emergency motion and have the ordinance/resolution go into effect 30 days later.

The Solicitor referenced an email sent by Cavanagh. Cavanagh explained she sent out a map showing an alternative to the proposed path location. She asked whether the path could be started on the Board of Education property at Gurney Elementary school alongside the driveway. Cavanagh realized it



would involve getting permission from the School Board, potentially purchasing land from the homeowner with a large piece of adjacent land, and then staying on the north side of Bell Rd. in front of one home as opposed to the five homes and also meant spending a longer time on Bell Rd. She asked whether the Village could ask the Board of Education for this access. The Solicitor thought this could be done through an easement or purchase, and Cavanagh suggested a long-term lease. The Solicitor explained that the matter would go before a court and public purpose would be considered. The court would decide which public purpose had more priority. She did not think they would want to utilize eminent domain. She thought the Village's public purpose for a path versus the public purpose of public education would be a tough sell. Cavanagh asked Council to look at her suggestion and give her feedback. The Mayor commented that it was a good idea, and Council should chew on it.

**ENGINEER:** The Engineer reported that the Road Program Preconstruction meeting with Specialized Construction would occur on Thursday, September 11, 2025, at 1:00 p.m. After that, he would provide the Street Committee with the anticipated start schedule and construction sequence.

Construction activity should start at the end of the month on the salt storage building. He thought the first step would be to stake out the area and clear the construction limits. There have been discussions with the Street Commissioner about how to best utilize the topsoil that is stripped off the site.

The Mayor asked if the people who will be looking at the back of the salt structure should be contacted to talk about planting trees or waiting until spring. The Engineer responded that it would be best to let them know sooner rather than later about the construction and convey the Village understands their potential concerns, but no promises should be made to anyone until the structure is built. The Mayor added that if they did want something he would not want a drawn-out situation.

**STREET COMMISSIONER:** The Street Commissioner submitted his month-end report. He discussed the elimination of two Illuminating Company meters through rewiring. This will be a savings to the Village.

The Mayor addressed repair of an area on Bell Rd. east of the intersection, and the Engineer explained this will be addressed with the Road Program.

**STREETS COMMITTEE:** Cavanagh stated that the Streets Committee met on September 4<sup>th</sup>. The salt structure will start in late September. The three Village signs require a motion to replace. The injured Service Department employee has returned to full duty. Cavanagh's minutes were distributed.

**Cavanagh made a motion to approve Construction Progress Payment Application 1 for the salt storage facility design build project by CMG, LLC, in the amount of \$59,892, seconded by Galicki. Voice vote – ayes, all. Motion carried.**

**Cavanagh made a motion to approve the three South Russell Village signs, in the amount of \$1,100 each for a total of \$3,300, seconded by Galicki. Voice vote – ayes, all. Motion carried.**

**Cavanagh made a motion to approve the purchase of one Service Department garage door, not to exceed \$7,300, seconded by Porter.** Berger referenced the minutes and asked if the doors would be with or without glass. The Street Commissioner said that the door would have glass panels. Cavanagh explained that although Galicki disagrees, in discussing this with the employees, they would appreciate more light coming in. She understood that replacing it now would mean only one of the doors would have glass and would not match. Next year, the remainder of the matching doors could be

obtained. Galicki explained that this repair was already approved as an emergency two months ago. At the last Streets Committee meeting, the glass panel was proposed. He took exception to it because having mismatched doors is not aesthetically pleasing. Galicki understood, however, that the plan was to budget for replacement of the remainder of the doors to match. Porter asked why all the doors would not be done now, and Cavanagh said money was the issue. Porter had concerns about waiting and finding that the door would be unavailable. The Street Commissioner discussed this with the Fiscal Officer and clarified the one door is an emergency, and then he is gathering three new updated quotes for the rest of the doors. **Voice vote – ayes, Canton, Cavanagh, Porter, Bell, and Berger. Nay- Galicki. Motion carried.**

Porter asked the Engineer if the salt structure plans had been reviewed by the Building Inspector. The Engineer explained that they had not yet been generated, which is the construction progress payment the Village voted to pay. The Fiscal Officer explained that the contractor must get permits but the Village waives the fees. Porter verified this would be the next step.

**BUILDING COMMITTEE:** Cavanagh reported that the Building Committee met on Thursday, September 4, 2025. The minutes are forthcoming. The Building Inspector provided updates on the draining of pools, and the Building Department Administrative Assistant reported difficulties with the new iWorQ software but anticipated some better training this week. Cavanagh verified the Building Department submitted budget numbers to her, and the Fiscal Officer concurred. She also discussed the resolution of a zoning violation, new construction site issues, paving property in the industrial park, issues with a new business tenant, and disposition of records.

Porter raised the issue of how the Village informs residents of tall grass according to the Codified Ordinances. An interpretation is that Council must vote to send out the notice, but he did not recall this ever having been done. He suggested amending the ordinance to reflect that Council's designee, the Building Inspector, would be authorized to generate written notice to be served on the property owner. The Solicitor agreed that the verbiage that Council shall cause means that Council can designate the Building Inspector to send out the letter. She suggested making the motion to move forward since it is getting late in the season. Porter indicated that it was more time sensitive because of the issue with Fox Run and Gurney School regarding the sign and the grass not being mowed and may exceed 8-inches requiring a notice to be sent to Fox Run. He thought the ordinance should be amended before sending a letter out to them. Berger suggested amending the ordinance and designating the Building Inspector to send out the notice.

**POLICE CHIEF:** The Chief distributed his monthly report. He stated that the GovDeals auction closed on Friday and brought in \$1,337. There is legislation to dispose of the remaining items. The Chief added that quotes would be obtained for additional tree trimming around the solar powered school zone flashers.

Regarding the proposed 5-foot-wide trail, Canton asked how the Chief would police the trail in the event Council passed an ordinance specifying that no vehicles would be allowed on the path except for strollers and wheelchairs, for example. He suspected kids and adults would ride bicycles on it despite the ordinance. The Chief said it would be up to Council to determine what would be prohibited, and the police would enforce it. The Mayor proposed passing an ordinance allowing those vehicles on it and then they would not have to worry about it. The Solicitor thought there was more information that needed to be obtained from ODOT because there seemed to be a suggestion that no bicycles would be allowed on the 5-foot path, which may be tied to something from ODOT. She did not know if it was the funding or where it was coming from but advised this needed to be nailed down. She thought this

was where everything was getting stuck. Galicki added that in the meeting earlier, sidewalks and paths were kluged together, but the ORC is specific about requirements for each. Granularity is needed for this whole question. The Chief offered that there are some conflicting ordinances that need to be examined.

**SAFETY COMMITTEE:** Bell stated that the next committee meeting will be Thursday, September 18<sup>th</sup> at 8:00 a.m. in the Police Department.

**HR COMMITTEE:** Bell reported that the HR Committee minutes were distributed. The next meeting is on September 9<sup>th</sup> at 7:30 a.m.

**PROPERTIES COMMITTEE:** Berger stated that the committee met on September 8, 2025, and the minutes will be forthcoming. The committee discussed the need for a written document defining duties and responsibilities of the Properties Committee and some changes they want to consider. Those will be submitted to Council for review within the next 30 days. Additionally, Berger suggested Council add a standing committee titled Administration and Technology to deal with IT issues for the Village as well as insurance issues. Berger said he would write a proposal and submit it to Council for consideration.

**PARKS COMMITTEE:** Berger reported that the Parks Committee met, and minutes were distributed. He thought they were prepared for the Fall Festival.

Berger advised that there was an observation deck built and placed in the park as an Eagle Scout project and required Council's ratification. The Solicitor questioned whether a building permit was required for it, which Berger felt needed to be resolved before ratifying the project. He suggested tabling the discussion pending the opinion of the Building Inspector. Berger said he would do this and provide the information at the next Council meeting. Porter thought that part of the Boy Scout project mission was to have the Building Inspector look at the plan. Galicki clarified that the Boy Scouts did not submit anything before Council on this project. Porter understood this but was talking about the Building Inspector. Berger was unaware of whether the Building Inspector received any information or not. He further stated that his suggestion to the Parks Committee is to put together a process for the Boy Scout projects so that these things do not fall through the cracks. Porter thought part of the Boy Scout program is to check with the proper authorities when they do something like that. He was uncertain whether the sign that was created in Rarick Cemetery went through Planning Commission or any of the other boards. Porter supported creation of a process.

**PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMITTEE:** Porter stated that the committee met in August, and the minutes were distributed. The next meeting will be on September 11<sup>th</sup> at 4:15 p.m. He verified the Engineer could attend to provide updates on the Fairview/Hazelwood project and other items. Porter relayed that one of the Russell Trustees mentioned that they had not received an update in a while. The Mayor advised that the residents from Sugar Bush will also be attending about their silt pond.

Bell shared that at the Geauga County Fair, he spoke with a representative with GSWCD and wondered if they had been engaged for pond sediment. Cavanagh and Porter had mixed reviews with previous contacts with them while the Mayor had a positive experience.

## **ORDINANCES AND RESOLUTIONS:**

Porter introduced an ordinance amending Chapter 678 of the Village ordinances specifically 678.02 Notice to Cut; Service to amend the first sentence of the section in the part beginning "Council shall cause". Porter proposed amending it to read, "Council shall cause, by and through its designee, written notice to be served on the owner or person having charge of such land that such weeds must be cut..." Porter made a motion to waive further readings and declared an emergency, seconded by Cavanagh. Roll call – ayes, all. Motion carried. Porter made a motion to adopt, seconded by Cavanagh. Roll call – ayes, all. Motion carried. **ORD 2025-47**

**Porter made a motion that the designee of Village Council under Section 678.02 of the Village ordinances be designated as the Building Inspector of the Village of South Russell, seconded by Cavanagh.** Bell questioned whether it should be Building/Zoning Inspector. The Solicitor pointed out that this is a property issue and not in the zoning code. The Council designee could be anyone. Perhaps for this property, the motion can be specific to designate the Building Inspector. Porter thought it would be more efficient to specify that it is the Building Inspector, since that is who has been doing it for years. **Voice vote – ayes, all. Motion carried.**

Porter introduced an ordinance authorizing the Mayor and Fiscal Officer to enter into an agreement with Thrasher, Dinsmore & Dolan to act as the Village's Solicitor for the time period January 1, 2026, through December 31, 2027. Porter made a motion to waive readings and declared an emergency, seconded by Berger. Porter noted that it was a pay raise for the Solicitor in that fees were increasing \$50 per hour. Roll call – ayes, all. Motion carried. Porter made a motion to adopt, seconded by Berger. Roll call – ayes, all. Motion carried. **ORD 2025-48**

Canton introduced a resolution accepting the amounts and rates as determined by the Budget Commission and authorizing the necessary tax levies and certifying them to the County Auditor. 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. **RES 2025-49**

Berger introduced an ordinance approving the Secondary Manufacturers' Combined Subdivision Participation and Release Form to allow the Village of South Russell to obtain benefits pursuant to the Secondary Manufacturers' Settlements and release all entities involved in the Manufacturers' Settlements, ratifying the Mayor's execution of the Combined Participation Form on August 22, 2025, and declaring an emergency. Berger made a motion to waive readings, seconded by Galicki. Roll call – ayes, all. Berger made a motion to adopt, seconded by Galicki. Roll call – ayes, all. Motion carried. **ORD 2025-50**

Berger introduced an ordinance approving the Facility Rental Application for Permit – Non-Auditorium for the use of Gurney School parking lot for the 2025 Fall Festival to be submitted to Chagrin Falls Board of Education, authorizing the Mayor to execute the application, 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 2025-51**

Berger introduced an ordinance approving the contract between Flower Entertainment, Inc. and the Village of South Russell for various services for the 2025 Fall Festival in an amount not to exceed

\$3,100.00, 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. Motion carried. **ORD 2025-52**

Cavanagh introduced an ordinance approving the agreement with Specialized Construction, Inc. to perform the 2025 Village Road Program in the amount of \$324,748, ratifying the Mayor's August 30, 2025, execution of the agreement, and declaring an emergency. Cavanagh made a motion to waive readings, seconded by Galicki. Roll call – ayes, all. Motion carried. Cavanagh made a motion to adopt, seconded by Galicki. Roll call – ayes, all. Motion carried. **ORD 2025-53**

Bell introduced an ordinance approving the agreement between Simvay Systems LLC and the Village of South Russell for information technology services for the Village's Police Department in an amount not to exceed \$4,600, authorizing the Police Chief to execute the agreement, and declaring an emergency. Bell made a motion to waive readings, seconded by Galicki. Roll call – ayes, all. Motion carried. Bell made a motion to adopt, seconded by Galicki. Roll call – ayes, all. Motion carried. **ORD 2025-54**

Canton introduced a resolution authorizing the discard or salvage of property not needed by the Village 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. **RES 2025-55**

**BILLS LIST: Canton made a motion to ratify the bills list of August 15, 2025, in the amount of \$55,422.96, seconded by Berger. Voice vote – ayes, Canton, Cavanagh, Porter, Bell, and Berger. Galicki recused himself. Motion carried. Canton made a motion to ratify the bills list of August 30, 2025, in the amount of \$51,632.50, seconded by Berger. Voice vote – ayes, all. Motion carried.**

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

Porter addressed the CVFD contract. There had been mention of looking around at other services, and he suggested sending a letter to the Russell Township Trustees about what they would charge the Village for Fire and EMS Service and secondarily what the estimated response times would be for Russell to get to the further homes in the Village. Dispatch and the CVFD have been discussed in terms of cost increases for the next three years when the budget will go from \$400,000 to approximately \$800,000 in 3 years. He did not want to put Russell Twp through a rigmarole but thought a letter to the trustees from the Mayor would accomplish the same result and get the Village some idea of what they might be able to do. Canton had discussed this with 15 to 20 constituents, and the response he received was that the increase was ridiculous, but on the other hand there were comments about knowing the fire fighters, being satisfied with the service, and feeling comfortable with CVFD. Cavanagh thought Porter's statement was valid. Porter noted it would be a huge bite out of the budget, and after three years, where does it end? Would there be additional increases? Berger said the Village had never seen a year without an increase. It is unreasonable to think they would come back with a 3% increase. The Mayor said that they did not need a motion. He will take the letter to the next Trustee Meeting. Porter understood the loyalty to the CVFD, and understood that if the Village were to leave, the number would go from six communities to five which would increase the cost of the five remaining communities. However, he felt it was owed to their constituents to look into the possibility that the Village will get the same or similar service from a provider that is just down the

street. Porter appreciated the loyalty to the five communities the Village is with right now with CVFD but must bear in mind its own. Canton and Berger noted it would be \$60,000 savings to the Village to not have to use CVD as the dispatch service per year.


**Porter made a motion that the Mayor be authorized to send a letter to the Russell Township Trustees requesting a quote from them with regard to the provision of fire and EMS services by their Fire/EMS Department for the calendar years 2026, 2027, 2028 per year and also that there be an estimate provided by the Township Trustees as to the response times of their unit whether it be fire truck or ambulance to the furthest South Russell Village house on Champion Ln. and the furthest South Russell Village house on Daisy Ln. from their fire station.** The Mayor thought instead of Champion, they wanted Ashleigh which would be further. Porter thought Champion would be harder to navigate the turn. Canton said he would be interested to know the ages of their vehicles and how much money they invest in training. Porter thought these were follow on questions. If the answer to the first question is \$799,000, it would be the end of the discussion. If it is more in line with what the Village has been hearing, then Porter would want to see it in writing. Bell offered that in line with what Canton said, the feedback he had received from residents is 'charge me more' because they would rather stay with CVFD. He thought they should do their due diligence. There are a lot of variables to consider with community members, community relations with Chagrin Falls, and how the community is seen as one with the school district. Porter said there were a lot of unanswered questions at this point. The last time a comparison was done, the big difference was response time. CVFD was better on the western side of the Village and Russell was much better on the northern side. Bell offered that in terms of equipment, sooner or later, both departments will face the same issues with a monopoly in the industry for new equipment and replacement parts. Those costs will be significant for either department. **Cavanagh seconded the motion. Roll call – Ayes – Canton, Cavanagh, Porter, Bell, and Berger. Galicki recused himself. Motion carried.**

Berger submitted a draft letter to Council suggesting they send a letter out to their constituents and have a meeting concerning Chagrin Valley Fire Department. His recommendation is to table this until a response from Russell Twp. is received.

The Fiscal Officer inquired about how many Council or Safety Committee members planned to attend the CVFD event. Galicki indicated it is only an open house to see the renovated facility. The Mayor stated that if Council members need some advice, the people they need to talk to will be there. The Fiscal Officer recommended sunshining the event.

**ADJOURNMENT:** Being that there was no further business before Council Cavanagh made a motion to adjourn at 9:15 p.m., seconded by Porter. Voice vote – ayes, all. Motion carried.

  
William G. Koons, Mayor

  
Danielle Romanowski, Fiscal Officer

Prepared by Leslie Galicki