

**RECORD OF PROCEEDING
REGULAR COUNCIL MEETING
MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 22, 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: N.D. Howard - Manor Brook Dr.; Todd Dietzel - Forest Dr.; Tom Collins - Fairfax Dr.

The Mayor called the Regular Council meeting to order and led the Pledge of Allegiance. The Fiscal Officer read the roll. **Canton made a motion to approve the minutes of the September 8, 2025, Regular Council meeting, seconded by Porter. Voice vote – ayes, all. Motion carried.**

VISITORS: Newell Howard of 201 Manor Brook Dr., addressed Council about the Prisoner of War/Missing in Action (POW MIA) flag. Last year, Howard presented the Village with a POW MIA flag. He advised that this flag is flown with the American flag at the capitol, White House, and sometimes in South Russell. He wanted to see it fly every day, and if there was an issue with doing so, he wanted to hear the reason. Howard presented the Village with another POW MIA flag. The Mayor said the Village has a flag policy and flags are rotated but he could not recall the policy regarding the POW MIA flag. Howard advised that it was approved by Congress and by the President since 1990. He said it flies in downtown Chagrin Falls, Burton Village, and every post office. It flew in South Russell until about three to four months ago when for some reason, someone took it down. He asked who did this. The Mayor said he did not know, and it was a normal replacement of the flags. It was through no action of Council. Howard stated that he is a Vietnam veteran and there are 67,000 names of people who never came back from Vietnam. He believed the flag provided recognition for the sacrifice of those individuals and he failed to see why it could not be flown in South Russell with the American flag. Cavanagh verified it could be flown with the American flag and Galicki stated that the State of Ohio approved the display of the POW MIA flag. It is recommended and he did not know why it disappeared from the Village. Porter said it flies at the Cemetery. Howard again asked why it was taken down from the Village Hall flagpole. The Mayor reiterated that he did not know what happened but would find out.

Tom Collins of 50 Fairfax Dr., is a 27-year resident of the Village and stated he was attending the meeting in support of the proposal by the Chagrin Valley Fire Department (CVFD). He acknowledged the difficulty in digesting the increases but advised that as the Medical Director for the Cleveland EMS and Fire Departments for 26 years, he understood the struggles with the increasing costs. They had to give their paramedics a 22% raise to keep retention and the department has faced issues with equipment replacement as well. Collins reiterated that fee increase discussions are difficult, but this is a huge investment. Before he went to medical school, he was a paramedic and firefighter with the CVFD and would love to see it continue to provide a great service to the community.

MAYOR'S REPORT: The Mayor attended the CVFD open house, a Chagrin Valley Dispatch (CVD) meeting, and a meeting at the Ohio Department of Transportation (ODOT). He reported that CVD will be moving into a consolidated facility and have added the communities of Strongsville, Brookpark, Middleburg Heights, and North Royalton to join the organization. The ODOT meeting pertained to the proposed path and Bell Road east paving. The Village is not in the queue. There will be further discussion

in executive session. Through the meeting, the Mayor also confirmed that there are no changes planned for the Bell and Chillicothe Road intersection in terms of the Village's plans to landscape the corner property.

Canton asked if the plan was still to make the path 5-feet wide, and the Mayor said yes. Canton commented that this is not very wide. The Mayor said it is the size of a normal sidewalk. Cavanagh reported that in Sagamore Hills on Pettibone Rd., there are both paths and bicycle lanes and she recommended Council look at this model. Galicki shared at the meeting, ODOT personnel indicated that the 5-foot path suggested a pedestrian path. Generally speaking, the 5-foot path would not accommodate two-way traffic and there would need to be a complimentary path possibly on the other side of the road if this were the option pursued by the Village. There is a lot of design work that remains to be done, and the engineering work is not covered by the grant and will have to be paid by the Village. The grant strictly covers construction. Canton verified it is the Village's responsibility to maintain it. Galicki added that if there were other items like fences or additions to the path, the cost would also be borne by the Village. Canton asked if ODOT recommended that a 5-foot path is a pedestrian path, that could or should not be used by any other type of vehicle like a bicycle, stroller, etc. The Fiscal Officer clarified that this was the reason ODOT suggested a second path. The 5-foot path is generally a pedestrian path, but if bikes were going to be allowed on it, then generally one side of the road would go one way and a complimentary path on the other side would go the other way. Canton asked if this meant the Village would be making two paths, and the Fiscal Officer said that this would be the case if it determined that bicycles were allowed on the path. Canton expressed concern about enforcement of managing bikes and pedestrians on the same path. The Solicitor said that it would be through existing ordinances. Porter proposed that the Village could permit bicycles on the 5-foot path. If the Village does not bar them, then they are allowed. The Solicitor thought this would be possible, but would be going against ODOT's suggestions, which would be ill-advised. Canton felt sure that someone would ride a bicycle on it, and then it would have to be enforced. Porter countered that the Village could just allow bicycles, strollers, etc. on the 5-foot path. He asked if ODOT told the Village and were willing to put in writing that the 5-foot path is okay for the grant purpose. Galicki said that ODOT's response had to be caged because they had not seen any design or any details for the path. The Village currently has a concept for the trail and is taking action to engage the engineer for the next phase of design. Until this is presented to ODOT, they cannot provide any confirmation.

Berger asked how much the engineering services would cost to get to the point that ODOT could approve or disapprove. Galicki said that in addition to the design, there was also an issue of having a clear right-of-way before ODOT will even start the process. In terms of the right-of-way, when Council last discussed the trail, the side it would be on was still undetermined. Berger noted that Council voted to go ahead with the next step but did not approve additional funds for the project for engineering work. This will now be required because Verdantas has expended the original \$15,000 that was provided. The Fiscal Officer added that the Village is waiting for a work authorization for an estimated cost to do the next phase of engineering. Berger concluded that the process cannot move forward until funding for the engineering is approved. Thus, Verdantas cannot move forward to tell the Village which side of the road it will be on. He assumed there was no appetite for putting a 5-foot path on both the north and south sides of the street. Cavanagh was not in favor of doing this. Berger added that it would double the expenses. Porter clarified that this would be a path on the north side of Bell Rd. from Spring Dr., across Bell Rd. to the park, down the park, crossing back at Alderwood, and then east to Gurney. Berger clarified he was speaking in terms of each path being a single direction path east to west and west to east on either side of the road. This is ODOT's suggestion. Porter responded that the Village would need something from the Engineer like an estimated cost to go forward with the engineering that will result in drawings specifying the path. He thought the Engineer was interested in knowing where the path is

supposed to go. Porter did not think Council voted on this or provided that direction. Council can approve the money for the Engineer to do the drawings, but he must know where the path will go in order to do the drawings. Galicki offered that part of what is needed is the engineering firm's evaluation of the topography and suitability on either side of the road. The other option is that the Village could make the path wider. Porter proposed that the path would go on the north side as discussed by the committee and then 20 years from now, another Council could decide to put one in one on the other side. The upshot for him is that Council has not decided where the path will go to tell the Engineer to provide a drawing estimate.

Bell clarified that the committee asked for the path to be on one side of the road for safety reasons and did not have a preference of north or south side. At the conclusion of the last meeting, they thought the south side might work better. Bell did not think Council or committee could identify a side or the potential for multiple paths until the engineer examined the topography and all other factors. Galicki added that there are many factors involved in making a free and clear right-of-way. The accurate expense cannot be captured at this stage. Bell concluded that the Village needs the estimate from the Engineer immediately for the drawings.

The Mayor summarized that the Village has spent a little under \$15,000. The Mayor stated that an estimate from the Engineer would be necessary to continue to fund the work. Then, Council will have to work with the committee and engineers to determine the best option. The Mayor said that at the ODOT meeting, the advice provided was that if the plan was to put a path in the park, the Village should do this part on its own with its own money. This way, the Village would not have to deal with the property owners or environmental issues. A 5-foot path could easily be installed from the park to Spring Drive. The Mayor could not envision anything but a path from Alderwood to the gas station on the north side. It would avoid the cemetery. Furthermore, three of the six homes on the north side of Bell would not even see the path. These residents have been spoken to at length and there is no opposition from them. Bell said that the plan's roadblock is the safety issue with crossing at the park. Pedestrians would be forced to cross the road rather than staying on the path the whole way. The Mayor responded that someone could go from the gas station straight down to Alderwood where there is a crosswalk to the park. He is convinced that nothing on the south side of Bell Road is better than the north side. He had a long discussion with the co-chairs of the committee, and they think the south side is best. If money is approved for the engineering, the engineers will determine the best placement of the trail. The Mayor reiterated that his opinion would be that the path go from the gas station to Alderwood. He further described that pedestrians would walk with their shoulders next to the telephone poles, and then there would be five-feet of asphalt and ten-feet of grass or the ditch which would separate the path from the side of the road. The Mayor added that anyone would be crazy to ride a bike up the hill next to the cemetery with cars going by at 35 mph or more when they can ride on the path from Alderwood up to Gurney. He indicated that this is where he would be on his bike. There would never be spandex bikers on the path.

The Mayor further shared that the person at the Northeast Ohio Areawide Coordinating Agency (NOACA) said that walking is transportation which is why there was no issue with funding. Also discussed was whether paved concrete could be used for the path in the park.

Porter asked if Verdantas would be told to create drawings for a path that is partially on the south side and partially on the north side. The Mayor said he would not do anything on the south side. The path in the park can be done by the Village whenever it wants. Cavanagh verified that this would be out of pocket for the Village. The Mayor concurred but said a path in the park was not needed because there is plenty of room to walk in the park. It would be a path from Alderwood to the gas station. Cavanagh

asked about the date and time of the next committee meeting, and Bell advised it would be at 8:00 a.m. on September 30th.

During the ODOT meeting, the Fiscal Officer asked how the money would get allocated. They explained that the whole region is examined with the goal to connect communities. They really wanted to do the Bell Road east paving and thought a trail would be good to add because eventually it would result in walking connect ability for different communities. As a result, they gave the Village grants for both. However, they are being pressured by the state because they get grant funding and have allocated it to communities, but the Village is not progressing to get it done. The Fiscal Officer explained to them that the Village knew it would be doing the Bell Road east paving, but no one had previously discussed trails. Then the Village was given the grant and told it had to be done in 2026, but it is a long process. They realized their process may be a little flawed and offered that the project will be pushed to 2027. The 2026 fiscal year ends June 30th of 2026 and then the next calendar year starts July 1st. However, they also cautioned that there is a lot of work to get this project completed in the 2027 calendar year, and thought it would likely get pushed to fiscal year 2028, which would be July 1, 2027. The project would be completed by June 30th of 2028. She clarified that the Village has been notified that it has the grant, but the Village has not done anything to secure it. It has not been assigned a number and is not in their system. The paving project has been assigned a number, but there is more to be done to get it completed in the 2026 schedule.

The Fiscal Officer also shared that the Village was informed it must have an independent third-party managing both projects, which is another cost to anticipate. The Engineer designs the project, so he cannot manage it. Furthermore, there is a full process that must be followed for the bidding, etc. When the Village paved Bell Rd. west, she recalled that ODOT Administrative costs were much higher than anticipated.

The Mayor was surprised by the concern about spending the money. They are under pressure from the Department of Transportation to do so. The Mayor asked about the next grant and was told the Village should apply for the next grant "yesterday." Realistically, with the trail, there may be a ribbon cutting in July 2027 when they can start. However, if the Village wants to do anything in the park, it can start whenever it wants. The Fiscal Officer explained that the reason ODOT suggested doing the park portion in-house was to avoid the constraints of environmental rules required by federal funding. With the Village absorbing this cost, it will be possible to make the trail longer taking it to the gas station. Porter thought it was important to determine the cost of the portion of the trail in the park since it would be taxpayer money. The Mayor said that the Village has gotten along without a path in the park for 19 years. He thought it should just be a path from Alderwood to the gas station. Porter asked if anything west of Alderwood was being considered and the Mayor said he would not muddy the issue. Porter thought the whole idea of the path in the park was to avoid the six houses on the north side of Bell. Those residents did not want the path in front of their houses. It is going on the south side to avoid this, but there may be opposition further to the east that has not yet surfaced. Bell added that the purpose of the park portion was to connect Country Estates. Canton asked about the location of the path through the park, and the Mayor explained that the area between the ditch and the trees is mowed, and this would be where the path would go. It could run from the park to the old Muggleton property. He would not mess with this now, though, because there is no demand for it. Canton concluded that people can just walk in the grass, and the Mayor agreed adding that this is how it has been done for years. Bell commented that the Village has had no path for 123 years, so that argument does not work for him. Porter shared that the whole idea was that kids walk to school, people bike here and there, and people with strollers have a safer place to be. How many people would a path from Alderwood to the gas station serve? The Mayor thought that anyone who currently uses Bell Rd. would be on the path from the gas

station to Alderwood and then they would cross over to the park. They will not be biking to Gurney because it is not allowed.

Porter proposed that the committee make a recommendation about a path. Bell reiterated that their last recommendation was the south side of Bell from Chagrin Lakes down to Country Estates, with the caveat that the most important thing was to get people off the road. If it must be on the north side, the committee was okay with that, but they agreed that keeping it on one side was best for safety instead of having to cross the road. The end result is to get people off the road and they are open to how the Village does this. The last discussion was to put it on the south side and install a retaining wall in Rarick Cemetery to allow more room. He thought the committee would agree to however the Engineer suggested accomplishing this. Porter thought that Council should vote for it to be on the south side from Spring Dr. all the way up Bell Rd. to the Village's quarter acre. The Mayor said Porter did not want to do this. It is best for the Engineer to say where it should go.

The Solicitor reminded Council that a motion was made at the last Council meeting to have Verdantas start filling out the necessary documentation for a 5-foot-wide pedestrian pathway from Chillicothe Rd. to Spring Dr. with different crosswalks. If Council was changing this motion by altering the proposed location of the path, Verdantas should be notified so that they do not scope the wrong location. Porter suggested leaving it as it is to see what they come up with. Porter continued to comment on the Village's lack of decision about the location of the path. The Mayor said that the project is right where it should be. The Village has spent \$15,000 and has a preliminary. Council voted to go through the scoping process and there had been a meeting with ODOT. Now the Engineer will look at what the best location would be. Galicki reiterated that the grant money cannot even be spent until construction starts. All the preliminary funding will be paid by the citizens. The Mayor suggested a motion to spend another \$15,000, and the Fiscal Officer advised that a work authorization had not been received from Verdantas. The Mayor recommended everyone attend the next committee meeting on Tuesday at 8:00 a.m.

Bell asked the Mayor to expand on the issue with Bell Rd. east, and the Mayor stated that the Village is not in the que for Bell Rd. east at this time. The Village may know more at the end of the week. The remainder of the discussion will take place in executive session.

Regarding the proposed fire contract, the Mayor stated he went to Russell Township and spoke to the Trustees last Thursday evening. He told them he was conflicted because he did not want to be there, but Council passed a motion. The Mayor distributed the revised contract with CVFD to Council. The Solicitor explained minor corrections she made to the contract and asked if the Mayor distributed the clean version. The Mayor said it was. In terms of the wording of the contract, Canton asked if the Village could get out of the contract if it found a better arrangement in a year. The Solicitor explained that the Village would have to give a 90-day written notice to terminate. Canton asked if there would be any negative repercussions and it was noted that the Village would have to specify why it would be doing so. Berger questioned an item on p. 5, section 13, first paragraph. The Solicitor thought this verbiage should have been removed because it pertained to the previous contract. The Mayor thought he told CVFD to remove this as well.

Berger asked the Mayor to expand on his meeting with Russell Township, and the Mayor said he did most of the talking and spoke about 2013 when the Village previously asked for a quote for services. He also spoke about the other communities involved with CVFD. When he left, one of the Trustees suggested he return to speak to them in January. Another Trustee said that the Village requested a quote in 2015 and then patted them on the head and went with CVFD. The other Trustee would be willing to talk about the situation. He informed the Trustees he did not want to be there and did not think it was

right to desert the other five communities with CVFD. This was the 33rd month of a 36-month contract and he felt that you just do not do that to your colleagues. They work together. Without Russell, the Village would not have a Trash Day, and he did not want to disrespect them with coming in and asking for a bid.

Berger questioned the Mayor about whether he asked Russell Township to make the proposal for Fire and EMS. The Mayor said he was there to ask them if they would like to make a proposal. He indicated they were not interested at this time, in his opinion. Berger thought the Trustees were confused because they did not feel the Mayor asked for a proposal. His understanding was that they were prepared to respond to a proposal that was not requested. Although Berger was not at the meeting, this was the information provided to him. The Solicitor asked if Russell Township responded to the Mayor's email. The Mayor said Kristina Port did. The Solicitor asked if she gave the Mayor a proposal, and he said no, that she just said she would be willing to talk in the next few weeks. Porter addressed the three questions for which Council wanted answers. The Mayor said they had that in writing. Porter verified the Mayor forwarded the email. Berger said it was evidently clear that Council had an obligation to the residents to do what was in their best interest. This was why they were elected. An 80% increase in the cost of the service over the next three years was far beyond the scope of reasonableness. He had asked for alternatives. He asked the Mayor for a one-year contract at 12% to be presented to CVFD and received no response to that suggestion. It was clear where the Mayor thought the Village should be, but Berger thought a disservice had been done to the residents by not seeking alternatives. He is not saying the Village would go with an alternative, but Council should know what the options are and that should have been in July. It is almost October, and they have not done their job. The Mayor said that on August 13th, the six municipalities sat with CVFD and agreed that they would accept 12%, 12%, and 12%. Four South Russell Council members were in the room. Canton recalled that the representative from Chagrin Falls Township had a good argument as to why the increase should not be that much. He talked for 20 minutes, but it was still down to those who were representing the communities who agreed that they could live with the contract increase of 12% per year. However, Council must vote on it, so there is no deal right now.

FISCAL OFFICER: Regarding the Hemlock project, the Village received the bid documents, and the bid opening will be on October 3rd at noon in Village Hall. It will be sunshined as a Special Public Utilities Committee meeting.

The Fiscal Officer requested a motion to approve the date for the Holiday Luncheon at Augies. **Cavanagh made a motion to approve December 5, 2025, for the Village Holiday Luncheon at Augies, seconded by Porter. Voice vote – ayes, all. Motion carried.** The luncheon will take place at noon.

FINANCE COMMITTEE: Canton reported that the Finance Committee met on September 12th and the minutes were distributed. The first set of checks for the month were signed and cross-checked. Canton reviewed balances in Huntington Bank, Star Ohio, and U.S. Bank, which totaled \$4,744,722.51.

In looking over the finances, Porter noted that the Village is doing well right now, which can change. The big thing on his mind is the Fire and EMS contract because of the increase. Next year it will be \$620,000, the year after it will be over \$700,000, and the third year it will be \$800,000, which is double the cost. It is within the purview of this government and Mayor to look for alternatives. He understood loyalty and said they have provided excellent service, but the question is whether Russell can provide as good or better service, which is why Council wanted the three questions answered concerning response time. What if Russell offered the service for \$300,000 for three years. That would be a differential of

\$1.1 million, which is another bike path or Bell Rd. east or west paved with savings from the EMS contract. He thought they owed their constituents inquiries to determine whether CVFD is the best service available for the price since no one currently had the answer. Porter wanted to know the alternatives. Porter said he was disappointed that there were no answers to the questions that were asked. He did not think the Village should just go with CVFD out of a sense of loyalty.

Canton stated that at the end of the fire contract this year, the Village will have paid them \$1,525,171.30. This new contract compounded and not including the ambulance billing and dispatch costs will be \$2,040,927.23 which is a difference of \$515,755.93. This is where people get upset with government. In his experience, when a business cannot reach the budget, it either increases the price of the product, or lays people off. Business balances its budget and government just spends, spends, and spends some more. He believed a one-year contract with CVFD would be something to consider. That will give them time to sharpen their pencils and come up with a realistic budget proposal and give the Village time to seek another fire department. Porter added that there are three months until the end of the current contract. Before the next Council meeting, he wanted answers to the questions that were to be asked of Russell. Porter wanted to attend the next Russell Township meeting to make this inquiry on behalf of Council. Canton directed a comment to residents watching the meeting on YouTube and stated that the Village needed to hear from them about the CVFD contract matter.

Berger reminded Council that with CVFD, the Village is compelled to use CVD at a cost. With Russell Township, the dispatch would be through the county at no cost. The difference is about \$60,000 or \$180,000 over the three-year contract. Porter asked about how ambulance billing is impacted by the new contract, and the Fiscal Officer said that in the first year, the Village would lose 1/3, the next 2/3, and in the third year, it would receive no more ambulance billings. Last year, the Village received \$135,000 in ambulance billing. Porter said that this and the dispatch should be incorporated into the proposal by Russell Township.

Regarding Canton's request to hear from residents, Galicki offered that there were many people who were going to attend tonight's Council meeting to talk in support of the proposal but were waived off because they were informed an agreement had been made. People are willing to offer their opinions, and it is important that the Village is transparent with the people. Canton added that if the people of South Russell convey that they really like CVFD, and that they are their neighbors and friends, and do a great job, then sign the contract. If they are willing to pay for it, it is their money. But to be prudent, Council should investigate it.

Bell said that it is wise to investigate a competitive bid, but outside of the monetary consideration, the CVFD will continue to provide the Village with four or five firefighters on duty 24 hours a day, two advance life support ambulances, and two fire engines. He did not know what Russell would be able to provide. Each year, CVFD responds to approximately 301 emergency medical patient calls and 89 fire service calls in the Village. These services are provided annually for approximately \$153.27 per capita. Outside of the dollars, what are the lives of your spouse, children, and neighbors' worth? They are dollars and cents, but these are people's lives. If his child's life was on the line, he would want a fully staffed fire department with the best equipment. Until Russell Township can provide that, he did not care about the numbers. He wanted to know if they could be competitive with people, training, and equipment as well as response time. It is more than just the dollars. Canton agreed and emphasized the need to determine training levels. He hoped that the Russell Trustees feel the same way about their own constituents. Porter added that the Village would want to know about Russell Fire Department's equipment and training as well.

Galicki offered that Russell Township, according to the Geauga Maple Leaf, is planning to build an extension to the fire department to add dormitory space. Engineering work is in place, but the costs are unknown. The Village just paid for improvements with the CVFD and whatever happens with the contract, Russell may welcome the Village because it can help pay for the extension on their department.

The Mayor spoke to the viewers on YouTube and said Council would be available at the Fall Festival on October 5th and at the next Council meeting on October 13th. Mayor and council can also be contacted by email.

SOLICITOR: The Solicitor had nothing to report.

STREETS COMMITTEE: Cavanagh reported that the minutes of the last meeting were distributed. The Street Commissioner had nothing to report. The next Street Committee meeting will be determined.

BUILDING COMMITTEE: Cavanagh advised that the committee had a meeting on September 4th and the minutes were distributed. The iWorQ computer program is causing difficulty and the Building Department Administrative Assistant is trying to seek better training than what has been provided to date. The Building Inspector's commendable handling of property maintenance issues was discussed. The next meeting will be on October 9th at 8:00 a.m.

Berger noted that the Village must go to Planning Commission (PC) and the Architectural Review Board (ARB) for the salt structure. His understanding was that the contractor was ready to break ground and wondered if there was a new schedule and whether it would be completed before winter. Cavanagh hoped so but needed to speak with the Engineer. The Solicitor replied that she had spoken with the Engineer who told her that the contractor would not be starting at the end of September. The building plans are being submitted to the Building Department in October. Additionally, the contractor will be completing the applicable paperwork for plans, zoning, etc. The next PC meeting will be on October 16th, but with the time constraints of building the project, perhaps there could be a special meeting. The purpose of the PC meeting would be for development review. Assuming they were provided with complete information, they could make a decision that night. The same applies to ARB. The Mayor said there is a meeting scheduled for Tuesday, October 7th at 9:00 with the Engineer, contractor, and Building Inspector to plan out the salt structure building process. The timeline was discussed, and the Solicitor stressed the importance of communicating with the Building Department. Porter volunteered to do this.

POLICE CHIEF: The Chief had nothing to report.

SAFETY COMMITTEE: Bell stated the committee met on September 18th and the minutes are forthcoming. He asked the Chief to update Council about staffing. The Chief reported that he is looking to fill the open full-time position and to do a promotion since there is a Sergeant who indicated he would be retiring next year. He thought by the next Safety committee meeting there would be interviews to conduct.

Bell advised that there was legislation for tree trimming relating to the solar panels for the crosswalks. Lastly, the committee reviewed the cyber security policy from the county. The Solicitor asked if the committee reviewed the 14-page policy because it was just updated to a 69-page document. The committee will have time to review it before it must be adopted by legislation.

The next meeting is scheduled for October 16th at 8:00 a.m. at the Police Department.

Canton asked if the Lieutenant position was still open and would continue to be open. The Chief said yes. The full-time position will be for a patrol officer.

HR COMMITTEE: Bell reported that the HR Committee met on September 9th, and the minutes were distributed. Bell referenced an overtime issue and said he recalled that the former Street Commissioner had an informal policy that when the Service Department employees would come in to empty garbage at the park they would receive an hour and a quarter overtime. Bell asked the Streets Committee to provide an official policy for the Employee Handbook. Cavanagh said she would get it done.

The proposed vehicle policy was addressed. It was suggested to Berger that GPSs be placed on all Village for tracking and he asked Council for any concerns about putting the policy into effect. Cavanagh asked if the police vehicles were included, and Berger said they already have GPS as do the drone vehicle and two administrative cars. The Service Department trucks are not, and the Chief said it would be about \$22 per month per unit. For the entire fleet it is currently about \$200 per month. The Mayor wanted to know what advantage there would be to doing this. The Chief said it would be beneficial in the event there were resident complaints about Village vehicles, for tracking mileage, and for protection of employees. Berger indicated that the State Auditor recommended the Village have a vehicle policy, which Berger created but then it went nowhere. He is now bringing it back. The Street Commissioner spoke in support of having the GPS on service vehicles and added it can also contain a diagnostic feature. The Chief thought this would drive the cost up and that it would be better to manually check the maintenance issues. Porter suggested getting the cost of this feature. The Street Commissioner said that for Verizon it was \$35 per trucks and cars. Berger advised that he would amend the policy to include the GPS and would present it at the next Council meeting.

The next HR Committee meeting will be October 7, 2025, at 7:30 a.m.

The Mayor referenced item 3 on the policy that prohibited a Village vehicle from being used for the purpose of transporting any Village employee to and from work unless the operator of the vehicle has been preapproved by the Police Chief. The Mayor thought it should be Police Chief or Street Commissioner. He thought the Street Commissioner should have authority. Porter suggested adding the Fiscal Officer as well. Galicki asked if they were diluting the policy. The Fiscal Officer explained that currently the Chief does the tracking with a master schedule. It works well. Galicki thought this portion of the policy was addressing domicile to duty vehicle use, and there should not be many opportunities in the Village for anyone to need this. The Mayor said correct, but if it must be done, the Street Commissioner should have equal authority over his guys and his vehicles. Galicki countered that they should not dilute the policy. The Mayor thought it was ridiculous that if one of the Service Department employees needed the vehicle, they would have to get permission from the Police Chief. The department heads should have equal authority. Cavanagh agreed. Porter suggested changing the verbiage to requesting permission from the department head. The Mayor thought it was fair to treat them all equally, and Galicki asked who then would be keeping track? Berger explained that the paragraph in question is all about taking the vehicle home, keeping it overnight, and driving it to work. The Police Chief was arbitrarily chosen as the keeper of the schedule, and it could be anyone. The Police Chief reminded Council that what is being discussed are the administrative vehicles, not a plow truck. Porter suggested keeping it at Department Head level for permission and the Chief can keep the master schedule. Berger said he would amend the policy.

PROPERTIES COMMITTEE: Berger advised that the Properties Committee met, and the minutes were distributed. The next meeting will be October 16th at 9:00 a.m.

PARKS COMMITTEE: Berger made a motion to approve the revised date of October 1, 2025, from 5:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. for the use of the South Russell Village Park by the Chagrin Falls Middle School Cross Country team for a meet and to waive the required fee, seconded by Galicki. Voice vote – ayes, all. Motion carried.

Berger stated at the last Council meeting, there was discussion about the Boy Scout platform project in the park and whether it should have required a building permit. The Building Inspector reviewed the project and suggested that a building permit was appropriate. Berger will handle filing of the permit, and at the next Council meeting, a motion can be made to approve what has already been built.

PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMITTEE: Porter said that the Public Utilities Committee met and the minutes were distributed. The next meeting will be October 17, 2025, at 3:15 p.m. The Sugar Bush silt issue was discussed, and the committee recommends that the Village pay 80% of the silt removal costs. He asked the Street Commissioner about a quote of \$33,950, and the Street Commissioner said he would need to contact the contractor to see if it was still valid. Porter said this information will be needed for a vote at the next Council meeting. The Homeowners' Association (HOA) leadership indicated they were willing to enter into a license agreement with the Village for pond monitoring of silt build up for stormwater control and mitigation. As a side note, members of Paw Paw Lake HOA attended the meeting and indicated they would also be willing to enter into a license agreement with the Village for the same purpose. Porter asked the Solicitor to draft the two license agreements for Kyle Canter, Sugar Bush HOA and Claire Rousch, Paw Paw Lake HOA. The Solicitor asked if Sugar Bush reinstated their corporate status, but Porter did not know. He would check with Canter.

Porter announced that the Village would be going out to bid for the Hemlock project. The bid opening will be October 3rd. He hopes the project will be completed by the end of the year and that the Village would secure half of the amount due after the grant from Russell Township.

The Mayor stated that there is a proposal by Chagrin River Watershed Partners (CRWP) to update the Village's storm water codes. Porter stated that the committee discussed this and believed it was a good idea. The cost would be \$5,400. The Solicitor advised this was part of the Codified Ordinances and offered to review it. She questioned whether there was an agreement, and the Fiscal Officer confirmed there was. The Fiscal Officer explained that it is a proposal to give CRWP approval to go through and review the codes. Legislation would need to be created, but she wanted to first make sure this was something Council wished to do. The Solicitor offered that the ordinance could be done now, but the Mayor said he had guessed at the \$5,400. Porter suggested waiting on the matter.

ORDINANCES AND RESOLUTIONS:

Bell introduced an ordinance approving the proposal with terms and conditions from Falls Enterprises, Inc. for tree pruning services in an amount not to exceed \$1,375.00, authorizing the Police Chief to sign the proposal, 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 2025-56**

Porter introduced an ordinance authorizing the Mayor and Fiscal Officer of the Village of South Russell to enter into a contract with Dennis M. Coyne, Esq. to provide Chief Prosecutor services for the time period January 1, 2026, through December 31, 2027, and declaring an emergency. Porter made a motion to waive readings, seconded by Bell. Roll call – ayes, all. Porter made a motion to adopt, seconded by Bell. Roll call – ayes, all.

Motion carried. **ORD 2025-57**

BILLS LIST: Canton made a motion to ratify the bills list of September 15, 2025, in the amount of \$137,045.40, seconded by Berger. Roll call – ayes, Canton, Cavanagh, Porter, Bell, and Berger. Galicki recused himself. Motion carried.

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

Bell asked permission to be dismissed from the October 27th Council meeting. **Berger made a motion to allow Councilman Bell to be absent from the October 27th Council meeting, seconded by Galicki. Voice vote – ayes, all. Motion carried.**

At 8:43, Cavanagh made a motion to enter into executive session to consider the employment of a public official pursuant to section 121.22(G)(1) of the Ohio Revised Code and to invite into executive session the Mayor, Fiscal Officer, Street Commissioner, and Solicitor, seconded by Porter. Roll call – ayes, all. Motion carried.

Council reconvened at 9:03 p.m.

ADJOURNMENT: Being that there was no further business before Council Cavanagh made a motion to adjourn at 9:03 p.m., seconded by Canton. Voice vote – ayes, all. Motion carried.



William G. Koons, Mayor



Danielle Romanowski, Fiscal Officer

Prepared by Leslie Galicki