

**RECORD OF PROCEEDINGS
REGULAR COUNCIL MEETING
MONDAY, DECEMBER 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

VISITORS: Misha Alexander, Chillicothe Rd.; Mary Rensel, Chelsea Ct.,
Carrie Schloss, Hickory Hill Rd., Chagrin Falls

The Mayor called the Regular Council meeting to order and led the Pledge of Allegiance. The Fiscal Officer read the roll. **Porter made a motion to approve the minutes of the November 24, 2025, Regular Council meeting, seconded by Cavanagh. Voice vote – ayes, all. Motion carried.**

The Mayor noted the presence of several visitors and commented that the evening would bring both celebratory and bittersweet moments. Specifically, Council would be acknowledging the resignation of full-time patrol officers Kevin Spackman and John Zippay, both effective December 31, 2025. The Chief addressed Council, explaining that the two officers were leaving to commit fully to START, the School Transportation Active Threat Response Training program founded in 2015 by Officer Jim Levine and Officer Zippay. The Chief described the program's growth and importance, emphasizing that although losing two excellent officers would be difficult, the mission they were pursuing was meaningful and impactful.

Officer Levine provided a detailed account of the origins and evolution of the START program. He explained that its inception was traced back to his work as a school resource officer, when he discovered that school bus drivers, who transported large numbers of students daily, were receiving little to no training in threat recognition or active threat response. Recognizing the vulnerability, Levine and Zippay developed a comprehensive training approach that has expanded nationwide, reaching thousands of bus drivers. Levine emphasized that START's mission was grounded in a desire to be proactive in child safety, rather than reactive after tragedy. Speaking for the Village, Chief Rizzo conveyed that Levine had two of the best individuals for this job. It was a proud moment for the Police Department, and he wished the officers the best.

Officers Zippay and Spackman each spoke emotionally about their decision. Zippay reflected on his gratitude for the stability and opportunities provided by South Russell but shared his concern that he might someday regret not pursuing this entrepreneurial venture. Spackman expressed deep appreciation for Chief Rizzo and the department, noting that the Chief's first question upon hearing of his departure had been about the health care coverage for Spackman's family. Spackman emphasized that remaining part-time with South Russell, which was the only department he wished to continue serving, meant a great deal to him. Both officers conveyed gratitude to Council, the department, and the community for years of support.

Councilmembers responded warmly, praising the officers for their professionalism and contributions to the Village. **Bell made a motion to acknowledge the resignation of full-time Patrol Officer Kevin Spackman, effective December 31, 2025, seconded by Galicki. Voice vote – ayes, all. Motion carried. Bell made a motion to acknowledge the resignation of full-time Patrol Officer John**

Zippay effective December 31, 2025, seconded by Galicki. Voice vote – ayes, all. Motion carried. Bell made a motion to appoint Kevin Spackman as a part-time Patrol Officer effective January 1, 2026, seconded by Galicki. Voice vote – ayes, all. Motion carried. Bell made a motion to appoint John Zippay as a part-time patrol officer effective January 1, 2026, seconded by Galicki. Voice vote – ayes, all. Motion carried. The Mayor administered the oath of office to each officer.

The meeting proceeded with a presentation from Carrie Schloss, a member of the Safe Bicycle and Pedestrian Transport Committee, who provided updates on the design and cost estimates for a proposed trail along Bell Road from Spring Drive to Chillicothe Rd. The committee had obtained cost estimates for designing the trail on both the north and south side of the roadway. The north side was estimated to be approximately \$1.48 million, while the south side was estimated to be roughly \$1.8 million. A portion of these costs, including design, ODOT oversight, and similar fees, would not be eligible for grant funding. Despite the higher cost of the south side estimate, the committee recommended that Council pursue that option. Schloss explained that the south side offered several advantages, including avoiding multiple road crossings, providing clearer long-term connectivity to other potential trail extensions, and more available open space. One challenge on the south side that was acknowledged was the proximity of the cemetery, but the committee ultimately voted in favor of the south side alignment. Given the Northeast Ohio Areawide Coordinating Agency's (NOACA) tight grant timeline, Council was advised that a prompt decision would be necessary to remain eligible for the earliest possible funding cycle.

The Fiscal Officer reported that Friday, December 5th was the deadline for the third-party reviewers to submit their Statement of Qualifications, and the Village received one response from StructurePoint which was distributed to Council. The Solicitor clarified that the Village does not get a price proposal with this beginning step.

MAYOR'S REPORT: The Mayor reported that Dennis Marino agreed to continue as a member of the Architectural Review Board (ARB). **Cavanagh made a motion that Dennis Marino is appointed to the Architectural Review Board for a three-year term beginning January 1, 2026, and expiring December 31, 2028, seconded by Porter. Voice vote – ayes, all. Motion carried. Berger made a motion to appoint Greg Studen to the Parks Committee for a four-year term beginning January 1, 2026, and expiring December 31, 2029, seconded by Galicki.** The Solicitor reminded Council that at the last Council meeting, legislation was passed regarding the selection of committee members for the standing committees and the Parks Committee at the organizational meeting in January. Bell noted that the motion was premature and Berger **tabled the motion to January 5, 2026.**

The Mayor distributed his report. A bike rack donation was mentioned in the report, which Berger stated he did not have an issue with but was confused by the process. He noted that on December 1st, the Mayor sent an email to some of the Park Committee, but not all and asked for text responses. Berger asked if the Mayor received text responses, and the Mayor said yes that he heard from a couple of the members. Berger noted that he did not, and as a result the Park Committee would be unable to make a recommendation to Council as to accepting the donation since he did not know what the Park Committee said. The Mayor asked whether Berger received the email, and Berger explained he received an email from one of the Parks Committee members, but no others, and wondered why some people were excluded from the communication. The Mayor said he sent an email on Monday, December 1st to Galicki, Berger, Greg Studen, Greg Gamm, Libby Sharkey, and Martha Bistriz and asked them to respond. Berger pointed out that Ted Kruse was omitted from the distribution. The Mayor said he heard back from Gamm, who said it was a good idea to accept the bike rack. Bistriz responded by email and

he also heard back from Sharkey. The Mayor offered to table the issue. Berger reiterated that he had no problem with accepting the bike rack but did not understand why it was done as it was if the Mayor expected a recommendation. The Mayor explained that the way he normally has dealt with the Parks Committee is to ask for their advice. He never asks them to vote because he does not want them to go against Council. So, he sent an email to them asking for a text response because he did not want to get into a Sunshine violation. The Solicitor commented that it already was. Bell clarified that the Mayor asked for opinions and a vote via text message, and the Mayor said yes, just to get the opinion of the Parks Committee. The Solicitor clarified that gathering input from a majority of a committee outside of a noticed meeting could violate Ohio's Sunshine Laws. Bell verified this would have constituted a meeting, and the Solicitor agreed. He surmised the Mayor would have known the ethics laws from his 20 years of experience with the Village. The Mayor indicated that the bike rack was not a pressing issue.

FISCAL OFFICER: The Fiscal Officer distributed her report which included updated financial graphs and an overview of revenue and expenditure patterns. She noted that annual cash balances tended to peak in July due to revenue timing and that current balances appeared high only because of the delay of major expenses, such as the nearly \$1 million salt dome project and a Road Program payment exceeding \$300,000 that had not yet cleared.

FINANCE COMMITTEE: Canton announced that the next Finance Committee will be held on December 11th at 3:15 p.m. He reported that the first round of checks had been signed and cross-checked. As reported by the Fiscal Officer, the transition to UAN software has been successful.

Porter discussed an apparent significant drop in the electric costs for the Police Department based on the utility bill comparison spreadsheet contained in the Fiscal Officer's report. The Fiscal Officer described several possible account and administrative factors that might have resulted in this discrepancy.

Canton observed several major expenses, including stormwater improvements, EMS and fire cost increases, and the proposed trail would require careful fiscal deliberation in the coming year.

SOLICITOR: The Solicitor had nothing to report.

ENGINEER: The Village Engineer provided updates on several infrastructure projects. The annual Road Program was nearing closeout, with a payment of \$311,740.94 issued and final documentation pending. Grant funding plus a 0% loan totaling \$350,000 for the Hazelwood Storm Sewer Project, estimated at approximately \$700,000, had been approved by the Ohio Public Works Commission (OPWC). The Engineer explained that final paperwork for the grant application required signatures and a formal certification from the Village regarding its matching funds.

Galicki asked the Engineer to share information about the Bell Road East project and the third-party reviewer. The Engineer explained that the Village has been in a holding pattern with NOACA and ODOT because the next task is to have a formal scoping meeting. They did not want to have this meeting until the Village had its third-party plan review consultant selected. Only one firm, StructurePoint, has submitted qualifications which the Street Committee reviewed. The Solicitor described the process for selecting the third-party reviewer required by ODOT for the Bell Road East project. She explained that the Village does not engage them but notifies them that the Village has determined they are qualified and asks them for a pricing proposal. In the first step of the project, the Village cannot ask for a fee for their services. She explained that the Streets Committee will make a recommendation asking Council to determine that StructurePoint is qualified and that the Mayor be authorized to send a letter stating that

Council has determined they are qualified and is now requesting a fee pricing proposal for their services. Next, StructurePoint would provide a fee proposal and possibly a contract, which Council would have to consider. The Engineer explained that ODOT just wants to know who the Village has selected.

STREET COMMISSIONER: The Street Commissioner submitted his month-end report. He thought the Service Department staff had done a great job with the storms that moved through. Canton thanked the department for the installation of the holiday lights.

STREETS COMMITTEE: Cavanagh reported that the committee met with StructurePoint on December 2nd. Galicki explained that StructurePoint provides a third-party review required by ODOT to review the plans to ensure that everything is in compliance with ODOT guidance. Cavanagh noted that the Streets Committee found that StructurePoint is qualified. **Cavanagh made a motion that the committee is determining StructurePoint to be qualified, that no other firms submitted a statement of qualification, and that StructurePoint be selected as the third party reviewer pending an appropriate contract between StructurePoint and the Village and authorizing the Mayor to send out a letter to StructurePoint regarding the Village's selection and requesting a fee pricing proposal, seconded by Galicki. Voice vote – ayes, all. Motion carried.**

Cavanagh shared her observations from her ride-along experience with one of the snowplow operators. The Street Commissioner explained the process of replacement of mailboxes due to snowplow related damage.

Galicki suggested the Village discontinue the display of flags at the East Washington St. side of the park during the winter months. He concluded that the solar lighting was inadequate for proper illumination at this time of year.

Cavanagh reported that the next Streets Committee meeting will be Thursday, December 11, 2025, at 3:15 p.m. at the Service Department.

BUILDING COMMITTEE: The Building Committee met and reported ongoing issues with the Village's iWorQ permitting software. The Committee will be meeting at 8:00 a.m. on Thursday, December 18th.

POLICE CHIEF: The Police Chief requested postponement of the December 11th Safety Committee meeting until full-time police applicants could be assessed.

SAFETY COMMITTEE: Bell stated that the committee meeting would be postponed until there are some candidates to interview. Cavanagh thanked the Chief for providing callouts for the snowplowing, and the Chief explained that the Street Commissioner asked that the callout times occur an hour earlier to facilitate completion of the plowing before the morning rush.

HR COMMITTEE: Bell noted that the HR Committee would be meeting on December 9, 2025, at 7:30 a.m.

PROPERTIES COMMITTEE: Berger stated that the committee would be meeting on Thursday, December 18th at 9:00 a.m. On behalf of the committee, Berger acknowledged challenges with the weather and thanked the Village staff and members of the community for the plans and holiday decorations which received many positive comments. Bell concurred.

The Mayor asked if the decorations included wreaths for the veterans in the Cemetery, and Berger thought it was to have been included on the order. The Street Commissioner said he would check.

PARKS COMMITTEE: Berger had nothing to report.

PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMITTEE: Porter stated that the Public Utilities Committee will be meeting on December 11th at 4:15 p.m. Discussions will include the Sugar Bush dredging project, Hazelwood project, and Hemlock Culvert Replacement project. The Engineer and representatives from CMG and Sugar Bush will attend for planning of the dredging project. Porter expressed concern about completion of the Hemlock Culvert Replacement which must be done by December 31st. The Engineer did not have a start date from CMG but explained that they were unable to do anything right now. They are waiting on the precast components for the end walls. The Engineer assured Council that he remained in regular communication with the contractor and expected work to begin immediately once materials arrived.

The Fiscal Officer explained that part of the paperwork the Engineer needs for the Hazelwood project involves the certification that the Village will put \$350,000 from the General Fund into the Hazelwood Storm fund as well as a \$50,000 20-year 0% loan. She asked for a motion from Council to authorize her to sign the documents. Porter asked if this amount included paving, and the Engineer said that the paving portion was about \$230,000 and the sewer replacement portion would be between \$570,000 and \$600,000.

Porter made a motion that the Fiscal Officer, Mayor, and if needed anything else, execute the documents for \$350,000 to be encumbered by the Village along with the loan for \$50,000 for the purposes of the Hazelwood Project for next year, seconded by Canton. Voice vote – ayes, all.

PAYMENT

LIST

Canton made a motion to ratify the Payment List of 11-28-2025 and 11-29-2025 in the amount of \$47,320.38, seconded by Porter. Voice vote – ayes all. Motion carried.

NEW/OTHER: Porter had no new business.

Galicki stated that since this was the last Regular Council meeting he would be attending, he provided the following statement:

“I’d like to begin by thanking the people of the Village of South Russell for the opportunity to serve them for the past eight years. My campaign largely for the time that I have served or attempted to continue my service on Council have highlighted two words, good government. Over the years I’ve served on Council, I’ve strived for transparency and integrity in local government and the adherence to our directives and policies and procedures established by the Village. Over time, sometimes I have experienced great resistance to these principles, but I would offer that one of the reasons I’ve been very big on good government is because as we speak, young men and women in all different colors of uniforms are standing the watch in the air, at sea, and on land, trying to preserve our form of government from evil men with bad intent. A lot of those folks not only won’t go home to their families tonight, they won’t be home for the holidays, and some of them may never come home at all because of their service. I would offer that we, as public servants, remember that those sacrifices that they make deserve our best efforts as public servants. I want to extend my best wishes to the newly elected Council members. I hope that they will spend more time being public servants than politicians. I hope that they will serve

the people with integrity, honor, and transparency. I hope that they will remember that they serve all the people of the Village and not an individual, an office, a select few, a party, or a special interest. As a professional mariner, I leave you with wishing you fair winds and following seas.”

Bell thanked Galicki for his service and appreciated his sticking to his core beliefs. He enjoyed working with Galicki on the Safety Committee this year and wished there had been opportunities to serve together on other committees. He thanked Porter for his 20 years of service to the community. Bell thought that he and Porter accomplished a lot on the Streets Committee and said he appreciated what Porter had done for the community and the guidance he provided Bell. Bell concluded that for both Galicki and Porter, his words did not express his gratitude enough. Porter noted it had been a pleasure.

Berger provided the following statement:

“It comes time now for well wishes and thoughts of appreciation. As he leaves this Council, I am grateful for Dennis Galicki. I spent the better part of six years arguing with him over countless issues, some big and some small. As one of two hardheads battering each other, I've come to appreciate that though our methods may differ, our goals have been very much the same. I appreciate his willingness to stand on principle and make his case, often on lonely ground. I regret that I did not come to appreciate his efforts earlier and that I did not stand with him as often as I should have. Thank you for all you've done on behalf of the Village.

For Mark Porter, Mark has given generously of his time and wisdom in teaching me the process by which this Village operates for the benefit of its residents. Mark always had time for my repeated phone calls. He told me more than once not to get frustrated when a particular piece of legislation didn't go the way I wanted it to. If Council didn't agree with me, then I needed to go back and create a better plan that Council could support. The failure was mine, not Council's. I'm a better councilman because Mark took the time for me. This Council going forward will be better because of the work Mark has done these past many years. Mark taught us all that we address all the issues, not just the easy ones, and that especially we address the hard ones because they are necessary to improving our Village, that we step up boldly where needed to make future altering changes. For example, Mark's work on stormwater issues stands out to me. He took a committee with little activity, Public Utilities, and agreed to take on the monumental task of stormwater problems in the Village. The work that has been done to date and the work that will continue to be done to ameliorate decades-old stormwater issues in this Village is a credit largely due to Mark Porter. In addition, Mark has served on every Council committee and shepherded this Village through both times of plenty and times of want. He has served as President pro tem on Council, offering a calming influence when discussions got heated and navigating a way forward when agreements seemed impossible. And he never sought credit for what he had accomplished. He simply said that one's done, let's move on to the next challenge. I respect and appreciate Mark Porter for all he has done for this body and for this Village. We have big shoes to fill in his absence. Thank you.”

Canton expressed his thanks to Porter and Galicki for their service and for wearing the uniform of the United States Navy. He thanked them for their service for the country.

Cavanagh thanked Galicki for his support for her son. She argued a lot with Galicki but wished him well. Cavanagh praised Porter as her mentor and said she would miss him dearly. She thanked him for his work on Public Utilities.

The Mayor stated that Porter and Galicki could walk through this Village for years to come and think of the little things they did and the huge things they did. The Village is better since they had been there.

For the holiday season, the Mayor wished everyone health, wealth, and time to enjoy them.

ADJOURNMENT: Being that there was no further business before Council, Cavanagh made a motion to adjourn at 8:10 p.m., seconded by Canton. Voice vote – ayes, all. Motion carried.



William G. Koons, Mayor



Danielle Romanowski, Fiscal Officer

Prepared by Leslie Galicki