

**RECORD OF PROCEEDINGS
REGULAR COUNCIL MEETING
THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 5, 2026– 7:00 P.M.
MAYOR WILLIAM G. KOONS PRESIDING**

MEMBERS PRESENT: Berger, Canton, Rensel, and Bell

MEMBERS ABSENT: Cavanagh

OFFICIALS PRESENT: Fiscal Officer Romanowski, Police Chief Rizzo, Solicitor Matheney, Street Commissioner Young, Engineer Haibach, Building Inspector Hocevar, Building Department Administrative Assistant Griswold

VISITORS: Leslie Satchell, Dennis Galicki, Westover Dr.; Ben Stewart, Paw Paw Lake Dr.; Phyllis and Denis Marino, Southwyck Dr.; and Kristi Pinkley, Geauga Public Health

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 January 20, 2026, Regular Council Meeting, seconded by Berger. Voice vote – ayes, all. Motion carried.**

FORFEITURE HEARING:

The homeowner and contractor are before Council to appeal for forfeiture of a construction deposit in the amount of \$1,087.50 on Paw Paw Lake Drive. Stewart was sworn in. Stewart resides at 88 Paw Paw Drive. He hired Satchel as the general contractor to do work at his home in the basement and a master bathroom transition in the amount of approximately \$75,000. He claims Satchel walked off the job after three months and eighty to ninety percent of the job was completed. Satchel bought \$1,300 worth of drywall, which ended up sitting in the basement waiting to be completed. Stewart reported that the electrical was mostly done and plumbing was eighty percent completed. Stewart and Satchel are in a disagreement with the job, and the homeowners indicate being very displeased at the slow rate of completion of the project. He said Satchell indicated he would be done in two months, and it was three months and not completed. The homeowners paid out of pocket for work that should have been covered under the original contract. He stated there were a lot of red flags. Stewart stated that the contractor worked five hours when he stated he would be working eight hours. He said Satchell reported to the homeowners that he was a licensed framer, and Stewart had to pay to have a lot of his work redone after he walked off the job. Stewart believes he wrote Satchell between \$30,000 to \$40,000 worth of checks. Finally, Stewart stated that he paid Satchell approximately \$10,000 for more materials in October 2024, and he believes Satchell only spent \$1,300 on the drywall and then a couple days later he walked off the job. Stewart asked Satchell to return \$8,700 of the balance and Satchell did not return it. Stewart has since been acting as the general contract to get his home livable again. Stewart was able to get the drywall and painting completed. Stewart feels that he is owed between \$20,000 to \$25,000 from Satchell and therefore is requesting the construction deposit. Stewart has provided receipts.

Satchell was sworn in. Satchell is the contractor that was hired by Stewart to do work at 88 Paw Paw Lake Dr. Satchell believes that what Stewart has said is not accurate. He indicated that he told the homeowners that the project would take 4-6 months. He claims that the Stewarts modified the contract by having him do extra work. His work was inspected by the Building Inspector. The project was insulated and ready for the drywall. He stated the homeowners had pressured him to have the job

completed by Thanksgiving. He reported that he wanted to have a meeting with the homeowners and they would not comply. He reported that the homeowners told him not to come back to the home and to stay away. The homeowners had asked for receipts and Satchell complied and provided receipts. He provided approximately \$10,000 in receipts. He feels the Stewarts did not want to pay him what they had originally agreed to. He believes Stewart wanted to dictate how much to pay based on what he thought the contractor was worth. He feels Stewart only wanted to pay \$10,000 for the job, which costs more than that. Satchell stated that he had to frame 5 rooms in the basement and do the demolition all by himself. Satchell believes that the pressure had come from Stewart's wife and was then passed to Satchell. Satchell feels that the job was completed and was ready for the drywall. Satchell stated the homeowner would not allow him to come back to the home to finish the job. He feels Stewart is coming up with these "fictitious numbers", indicating that Satchell owes him money. Satchell feels that he did \$10,000 of extra work and that Stewart wants to blame him. All Satchell wants is his deposit back because he is the one who paid the deposit and he feels he did a pretty good job for the homeowners. Satchell stated that the Building Inspector approved the rough-in and the drywall was ready to be hung but the homeowners would not let him back into the home to complete the job. Satchel stated he has receipts for the job. Satchel stated that the homeowners kept changing the contract, so they agreed that Stewart would pay for his own electrical work and plumbing. Satchel does not feel that Stewart should keep adding additional work and he not get paid for it. Satchel feels he did nothing wrong.

Bell asked Building Inspector Hocevar some questions and his background on this project. Hocevar stated that he did do the rough-in inspection to have it ready for the drywall. The electrical and plumbing also passed. The only inspection left would have been the final inspection.

Canton asked the homeowner what work had to be redone. Stewart stated the window frames had to be redone. Stewart indicated that he had several contractors come in to see if they would take over. He stated there were loose studs and installation was not installed properly. He stated the carpenters worked a day and a half redoing the original project. Stewart stated he bought the lumber for the window frames. Hocevar indicated he only inspects the structural framing and nothing cosmetic around the window frames.

Bell stated he felt these issues would be better addressed in a court of law, not with Council. He felt it's Council's job to determine whether to return the construction deposit back to the contractor. He feels like 70% of the job was completed.

Rensel made mention that the quote given to Council mentioned that the work would be completed according to applicable code, so it would be determined that 70% of the job was done.

Hocevar indicated that if 100% of the job was completed, the construction deposit would be released to the contractor. Griswold stated that if Satchel had gotten the final inspection for his work and it passed, the deposit would have been released to him, although he was not allowed back into the home. Bell asked Hocevar if another contractor came in after the first deposit, would they have to file permits as well. Hocevar stated that yes, they would have to file their own permits. Hocevar stated that no contractors came in after the first deposit to obtain permits to finish the job.

The conclusion is there is a \$1,087.50 construction deposit on hold. 70% of the work was completed and passed inspection. **Bell made a motion to table the forfeiture hearing, seconded by Berger.**

Voice vote – ayes, all. Motion carried. This forfeiture hearing is tabled until the next regular council meeting on February 17, 2026, at 7:00 p.m.

VISITORS:

Kristi Pinkly, from the Geauga County Public Health Department (GCPHD), appeared before Council to give a presentation on the Septic Operation and Maintenance Program. She wanted to give an update on the state mandated operation maintenance program that's going to affect the remainder of any of the residents who are on septic. The program was put in place in 2015 by the Ohio Department of Health. They are the ones that set the rules for wells, septic systems, pools, etc., that the health department does inspections for and enforces on a local level. In 2015, a rule change said all local Health Departments throughout Ohio must start issuing ongoing operation permits to anyone with a residential septic system. They want it to be tracked and make sure people are maintaining their septic systems to a minimum standard and not polluting the environment and making people sick or creating nuisances.

There are some counties that have been running this program since 2015. Geauga County held off as long as possible to see if the rule would stick. Now it must comply with the mandate. South Russell is the only political subdivision in Geauga County that already had some kind of maintenance tracking in place for septic systems. The Health Department started running the program at the end of 2023.

The GCPHD started with systems that are considered the highest risk, which included the NPDES discharging systems. They are the ones that have an EPA permit to discharge off the property, which is like a mini sewage treatment plant right in the yard. It treats all the wastewater, and then it puts it right into the road ditch, a stream, storm sewer, etc. GCPHD wants to make sure that those are working properly, because it is going right into the environment. Those require a sample every year that is completed by the health department, and then they also require two services every year under a contract for the lifetime of the system. There are some systems called spray irrigation that are very similar. They treat all the wastewater, disinfect it, and then they spray it on the lawn in the early morning hours. Those require annual sampling and two services every year. Residents with an aeration system need service once every year.

The vast majority of systems in the county are traditional septic systems. In April they plan to get to South Russell residents with any traditional septic systems. They will be given a five-year permit. The cost is \$100 for the 5-year permit to cover administrative costs as the state did not provide additional funding to comply with the mandates. The \$100 does not cover the inspection of the system. The department does not want to take the work away from the service providers and pumpers. GCPHD only wants to make sure that residents are complying with the mandates. They are asking that residents have their tanks pumped, serviced, or inspected at least once every five years, which is less than the requirements the Village already has in place, which is every 3 years.

All septic systems fall into one of two categories. They are either an on-lot system, meaning it treats all the wastewater on your own property allowing it to soak into the soil, which acts like a filter. It really has some good bacteria in there doing some final polishing, treatment of the wastewater, and then you sure want it to be properly treated because it is going down to the groundwater and then your well is pulling it right back up for your drinking water. That would be the ideal situation. All septic systems do have a lifetime expectancy which is- between 35 to 50 years, or longer. The soil will reach a point where it cannot take the wastewater anymore, and that's the whole reason tanks are pumped to try lengthening the lifetime of the systems.

There are older systems out there that discharge and do not have all those bells and whistles. So, they are probably not receiving sufficient treatment before it is discharged into our road ditches, streams, and storm sewers. Over time, the department needs to address these systems. In those cases, GCPHD is still issuing the 5-year permit, but also giving a 10-year notice that they will be conducting a dye test and possibly a sample of the system in 10 years to determine if it is putting out bacteria at such a high level that it is considered a health hazard; a nuisance as defined in code. The reason they want to maintain them is the cost of replacing the system is approximately \$20,000. The department will base the system on performance, not on age.

The Mayor wanted to find a way to get the information to the septic tank owners and to the public. The Health Department will send out a postcard in early March inviting residents to informational meetings on two separate dates. They will have approximately 30 days to pay for their operation permit through the Health Department. That fee will be due in the last week of April. If a late fee is applied, you will not be allowed to waive the late fee. She provided Council with different versions of the letters that would be going out to the residents. The Village does not charge for permits; it just tracks the 3-year cleaning.

Berger asked the Solicitor whether the Village would have to change its ordinance and she indicated they would not, but she would investigate it.

The Building Department indicated they would send letters to make sure residents were complying with the 3-year cleaning. If residents did not comply, the worst-case scenario would be court. If residents don't comply with the Health Department, they will send warning letters several times and then a certified letter and eventually conduct a noncompliance inspection at their property to determine if the system is creating a public health nuisance. A non-compliance inspection will result in a \$300 fee. If a non-compliance inspection shows a health nuisance, the Health Department has the authority to forward it to the prosecutor's office to follow up. Engineer Haibach questioned the 10-year notice of the dye test. The Health Department will review its file on said property to determine what is on the property. Haibach felt there were older properties that the Health Department would not have a record to show on-lot systems versus off-lot discharge. If the GCPHD does have a drawing, they are willing to have the service provider inspect the system. Ms. Pinkley indicated if they conducted a dye test and it was inconclusive; it would mean "pass". Engineer Haibach is merely concerned for homeowners with older systems if they were told they needed to spend \$25,000 without advance notice. She indicated the department also wants to be proactive and prepare residents as early as possible to address the systems. Rensel inquired regarding an approved list of pumpers or service providers and Ms. Pinkley indicated that there is a list on their website.

MAYOR'S REPORT:

The Mayor complimented the Streets Department employees on the snow removal throughout the Village.

Chargin River Watershed Partners is hosting a stormwater conference on Monday, February 9th, dealing with modernizing stormwater basins and retrofits for stormwater controls.

The janitor for the Village will be away on medical leave. The Village will assume his work internally for the time being until he returns.

The Chief will do a presentation on Hazmat on February 17th regarding the Valley Enforcement Group (VEG). The Mayor will do a presentation on Chagrin River Watershed Partners (CRWP) on March 2nd, and the Fiscal Officer will do a presentation on March 16th. On April 6th the United States Geological Survey (USGS) will be at the Village to discuss water quantity which the Village tests and water quality. Dues for the Hazmat Team are \$3,500. It involves 34 communities. This was formed in 1990. Half are in Solon and Chagrin, and the other half are in the Southeast. The Village recently had an employee at training for a confined space training. The team goes to 25 incidents a year.

On January 5th, the Mayor forwarded presentations on two companies on setting goals and becoming better organized. Mayor made a comment regarding Council coming in at 8:00 a.m. on a Saturday morning to pass eight or nine pieces of legislation. He stated it was unfair to Council and to the residents. Councilman Bell questioned Mayor why he thought it was not fair. Mayor responded that he did not think it was good for the community and they expect members there on weeknights, not Saturday mornings. Bell asked the Mayor why they were meeting on Saturday morning. Bell said it was because there were only enough members to conduct one reading. Bell indicated therefore they were meeting on Saturday morning to expedite ordinances. Bell questioned why that would be a bad thing for the Village. Mayor stated it was not bad, but if they planned better, it would not happen again. Bell asked the Mayor if Council members should not have work trips and, in the future, hopes the Mayor makes every meeting moving forward. Bell indicated sometimes members have other things that need to be handled and that the Mayor was providing a false narrative by stating that Council was disorganized because they must meet on Saturday morning. Bell indicated that in fact they are organized because they knew they had to do three readings because not enough members were available. Mayor stated he was not saying anyone was disorganized and thought they could do better. Bell asked the Mayor to clarify and provide examples, and the Mayor could not provide any. Mayor indicated he would not go back and forth on the matter. Bell indicated its Council's job to ask questions of the Mayor and felt he was avoiding his question.

FISCAL OFFICER REPORT:

The Fiscal Officer wanted to remind Council members that the packet deadlines are Wednesdays at noon. If members have something to include in the packet it needs to be submitted by Wednesday at noon for the Council meeting. The Fiscal Officer stated that this has not been happening and causes stress in the department and a lot of organizational problems by trying to add items to the agenda at the last minute.

The Fiscal Officer stated that she came in for a Finance Committee Meeting tonight at 5:00 pm and still had to amend items on the agenda. She knows in other communities, you have a deadline and a deadline is the deadline and if it doesn't make it on the agenda, it gets pushed off to the next meeting. Other communities also have someone that approves the agenda and did not know if that was something Council wanted to consider. She feels something must be done to address this issue.

FINANCE COMMITTEE REPORT:

Berger reported that the committee met on February 5th at 5:30 pm and a report will be forthcoming. The Fiscal Officer heard from the County Budget Commission and the year-end cash balances were certified. The Village can now start making amendments as necessary. The next meeting will be on March 12th at 3:15 pm at Village Hall. Canton had nothing to report.

SOLICITOR REPORT:

The Solicitor had nothing to report.

ENGINEER REPORT:

Engineer Haibach reported they were successful in getting the Hemlock Culvert Replacement Project completed and the road open. He thanked the Street Commissioner and his department for helping facilitate that project and the extra set of eyes, making sure everything went well. There is not a final patch on Hemlock Road yet because the weather was not conducive to pouring concrete. There is stone there temporarily and in the next couple of weeks, hopefully they can pour the concrete with no issue. There are a couple of things that CMG Contracting needs to address in the spring, like the final grading, seeding and mulching. The Engineer is confident they can complete the final work, and their maintenance bond will be held until it is completed.

The Engineer stated they did run into a couple of issues during the Hemlock Culvert construction phase and CMG was very attentive and willing to work with the Engineer to solve the issue. They were able to get everything resolved and still bring the project in at \$1,900 under the contract award amount. The Engineer provided a schedule regarding the paving of Bell Road east. Stage 2 submittal plans are 75-80% complete. There is a due date on the Stage 2 submittal for February 6, 2026, which was sent to the ODOT consultant for review on Monday. He indicated the schedule that ODOT put together is very conservative and a worst-case scenario. ODOT has Stage 3 submittal which is the 95% complete plans slotted for April 17th. He feels they are going to be ahead of the game quite a bit. Moving on and picking up the final tracing of the plans and having the bid documents ready, they got July 15th, 2026. The Engineer does not see it taking that long. He is looking for approval from Council or acknowledgment that they are okay with sticking with ODOT's schedule, bearing in mind that it's a very worse-case scenario schedule. ODOT has asked the Village for acknowledgment that this schedule is acceptable. The Fiscal Officer questioned once ODOT puts it on its schedule, for budgeting purposes should it be budgeted FY 2026 or 2027. Engineer indicated there will be design costs for FY 2026, and ODOT review costs and the third-party review agency costs in FY 2026. He was not sure how to answer the Fiscal Officer's question about when the construction would occur.

The Solicitor asked the Engineer if the award date of 12-14-2027 was correct. The Engineer stated based on all the information he has received it is but that could not be right and it should be 2026. He will contact ODOT to correct that.

Rensel made a motion to approve Page 12 of 12 of the LPA scope of services form, with the change of the award date to be 12-14-2026, seconded by Bell. Voice vote – ayes, all. Motion carried.

Chief Rizzo reported they had to reroute the detour for the first couple of days and there were no complaints from residents.

STREETS COMMISSIONER REPORT:

The Street Commissioner reported on snow removal. For the month of January, they went through 107 tons of salt. The school went through an additional 33 tons that the Village supplied them for January. They ordered 750 tons which fulfills the rest of the salt contract. As of today, they were at 696 tons that had been replenished.

The Street Commissioner reported that the Village is eligible for a \$75,000 sodium reduction grant. It is a reimbursement grant which is due February 6th and was looking for any thoughts by Council. Bell inquired if the Street Commissioner had the Solicitor review it, which the Street Commissioner indicated he did not. The Solicitor asked if it was just the application being submitted and that they had not been awarded the grant. **Bell made a motion to allow the Street Commissioner to apply for the grant, if**

the Solicitor has reviewed it and doesn't have any issues with the application, seconded by Berger. Voice vote – ayes, all. Motion carried.

The Street Commissioner stated that he has not had to borrow salt or loan salt to anyone.

STREET COMMITTEE REPORT:

Bell reported that he would like to schedule a time with Public Utilities Committee on a regular schedule to make sure Engineer Haibach can be present at the same time and day. It would be contingent on the Engineer's schedule.

Bell Made a motion to approve the Change Order No. 1-Final for the Hemlock Road Culvert Replacement in the amount of (\$1,908.57), seconded by Berger. Voice vote – ayes, all. Motion carried.

Bell made a motion to approve Construction Progress Payment Application No.1-Final for the Hemlock Road Culvert Replacement in the amount of \$95,741.43, seconded by Berger. Voice vote – ayes, all. Motion carried.

BUILDING COMMITTEE REPORT:

The Chair was not present and Bell had nothing to report.

POLICE CHIEF REPORT:

The Chief had nothing to report.

SAFETY COMMITTEE REPORT:

Canton reported that the next Safety Committee meeting is February 17, 2026, at 5:30 pm at the Police Department. On Tuesday, February 10, 2026, at 3:30 pm there will be a joint meeting with the Human Resource Committee to interview candidates for the Police Department.

HUMAN RESOURCES COMMITTEE REPORT:

Berger reported that they will meet on Monday, February 9, 2026, at 7:30 am.

PROPERTIES COMMITTEE REPORT:

Canton made a motion to approve Change Order No. 1 for the Salt Storage Facility Design-Build Project for engineering costs for redesign for additional and change items for final plans in the amount of \$4,500 by CMG Contracting, seconded by Rensel. Voice vote – ayes, all. Motion carried. Berger asked what the \$4,500 was for and the Engineer stated it was for their third review for the client set. The Engineer stated that CMG had incurred some engineering and design time based on specific site conditions related to foundation size.

Canton made a motion to approve Progress Payment Application No. 2 to CMG Contracting, LLC, in the amount of \$38,640 for the Salt Storage Facility – Design-Build Project, seconded by Berger. Voice vote – ayes, all. Motion carried.

Engineer indicated that the acceptance or approval of the final set of plans from the Building Department had been approved and he let Nick from CMG know. CMG is interested in starting excavation and getting the below-grade concrete poured as soon as the weather permits.

Mayor indicated his concern that the salt building project would normally fall under the jurisdiction of the Street Commissioner and Street Department and was moved to the Properties Committee.

PARKS COMMITTEE:

Canton had nothing to report.

PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMITTEE REPORT:

Berger had nothing to report other than they will determine a meeting time.

ORDINANCES AND RESOLUTIONS

- Berger provided a second reading of an ordinance amending the order of business on the agenda for Regular Council meetings in section 220.04(a) of the Village of South Russell's Codified Ordinances and declaring an emergency.
- Canton provided a second reading of an ordinance approving the purchase of a 2026 Ford Police Interceptor Utility Hybrid Vehicle from Montrose Ford for the total sum of \$44,730, authorizing the Mayor and Fiscal Officer to execute necessary documents for such purchase, and declaring an emergency.
- Canton provided a second reading of an ordinance approving the Service Agreement between the Village of South Russell and Uniti Solutions for upgrade to the internet service for the Village of South Russell Police Department in the amount of \$3,552, authorizing the Police Chief to execute the service agreement on behalf of the Village, and declaring an emergency.
- Canton provided a second reading of an ordinance approving the customer agreement between the Village of South Russell and Motorola Solutions, Inc. for in-car mobile videos and necessary software to operate such in-car mobile videos for the Village of South Russell Police Department in the amount of \$52,514.55, authorizing the Police Chief to execute the customer agreement on behalf of the Village, and declaring an emergency.
- Berger provided a second reading of an ordinance authorizing the Fiscal Officer to apply for and accept NOPEC grant funds for the 2026 Community Event Sponsorship Program on behalf of the Village of South Russell and declaring an emergency.
- Berger provided a second reading an ordinance approving the Master Authorization for Treasury Management Services Agreement Between the Village of South Russell and the Huntington National Bank for check deposit capture services for the Village of South Russell, authorizing the Fiscal Officer to execute the agreement on behalf of the Village, and declaring an emergency.
- Berger introduced an ordinance authorizing all actions necessary to accept Northeast Ohio Public Energy Council (NOPEC) 2026 Energized Community Grant and declaring an emergency.
- Bell introduced an ordinance approving Attachment A to the Master Services Agreement for professional services to allow Verdantas to prepare the plans on behalf of the Village for ODOT approval to resurface Bell Road from Chillicothe Road to the Village east corporation line in an amount not to exceed \$143,000, authorizing the Mayor and the Fiscal Officer to execute the attachment on behalf of the Village, and declaring an emergency.
- Berger introduced an ordinance authorizing the 2026 Property and Casualty Insurance with the Public Entities Pool of Ohio and declaring an emergency.
- Canton introduced an ordinance adopting a new moratorium on the reviewing, issuing and processing of any permits relating to retail dispensaries, cultivators, or processors of adult use cannabis within the Village of South Russell for a period of 12 months, and declaring an emergency.
- Berger introduced an ordinance transferring up to \$1,440,000 to the Safety Fund, up to \$375,000 to the Operating Fund, up to \$39,000 to the Street Maintenance Fund, up to \$170,000 to the

Special Land and Building Fund, up to \$460,000 to the General Fund, up to \$21,000 to the Parks & Recreation Fund, up to \$100,000 to the Large Equipment Fund, and up to \$360,000 to the Bell Road East fun, and declaring an emergency.

- Berger introduced an ordinance amending the 2026 Annual Appropriations increasing Income Tax Transfers \$235,000, Street Maintenance expenses \$50,000, Special Road Fund expenses \$135,000 and Special Land and Building expenses \$5,000 and declaring an emergency.
- Berger introduced an ordinance amending the 2026 Annual Appropriations increasing Income Tax Transfers \$235,000, Street Maintenance expenses \$50,000, Special Road Fund expenses \$135,000 and Special Land and Building expenses \$5,000 and declaring an emergency.
- Berger introduced an ordinance transferring up to \$50,000 to the Street Maintenance Fund, \$50,000 to the Special Land & Building Fun and \$135,000 to the Special Road Fund and declaring an emergency.

PAYMENTS REGISTER:

Berger made a motion to ratify the payment listing dated 1/30/2026 to 1/31/2026 in the amount of \$72,103.23, seconded by Canton. Voice vote – ayes all. Motion carried.

SAFE BICYCLE & PEDESTRIAN TRANSPORT COMMITTEE:

Bell reported that the committee will meet after the Special Council Meeting on Saturday, February 7th, at 8:30 am at Village Hall.

ADMINISTRATION/TECHNOLOGY COMMITTEE:

Berger reported the committee will meet on Monday, February 9th at 6:30 am.

Berger made a motion to approve Saturday, May 2nd, 2026, from 8 a.m. to 2 p.m. for Trash Day with April 29th and April 30th for Senior Trash Days, seconded by Canton. Voice vote – ayes all. Motion carried. The Mayor asked how this was moved from Streets and put into Administration and Technology. Berger stated he simply took it as one of the issues on the list where they could write the policy statement as to what Trash Day was going to be, what the rules are, and how to handle issues. The Administration/Tech took the task on, but if the Streets Committee wants it, he is happy to send it back to Streets and it can be addressed later.

Canton made a motion for a Letter of Support for Geauga County Planning Commission grant application from the Ohio Department of Agriculture to update the 2008 Geauga County Farmland Preservation Plan, seconded by Bell. Voice vote – ayes all. Motion carried.

Rensel made a motion to acknowledge the resignation of Council member Misha Alexander effective February 1, 2026, seconded by Berger. Voice vote – ayes all. Motion carried. Bell indicated he was sorry to see her resign but understood why. Mayor stated the Village was losing a good person.

Rensel made a motion to approve advertising to fill the vacant Council seat with an application deadline of February 10, 2026, seconded by Berger. Voice vote – ayes all. Motion carried.

Rensel made a motion to schedule a Special Council for February 14, 2026, at 8:00 am for the purpose of entering into Executive Session to consider the appointment of a public official pursuant to Section 121.22(G)(1) of the Ohio Revised Code, seconded by Bell. Voice vote – ayes all. Motion carried.

Rensel made a motion to schedule a Special Council meeting for Tuesday, February 17, 2026, at 6:30 pm to consider the appointment of a public official pursuant to ORC Section 121.22(G)(1), seconded by Bell. Voice vote – ayes all. Motion carried.

Rensel made a motion to approve the absence of Council Member Rensel from the April 20, 2026, Regular Council Meeting, seconded by Berger. Voice vote – ayes all. Motion carried.

NEW & OTHER BUSINESS:

Berger stated the Finance Committee discussed the desire to put a levy on the ballot in November for the proposed trail project. It would be for one million dollars over five years. Additionally, the Road and Bridge levy is set to expire this year, and they would like to include that on the ballot in November. To prepare for those items, the Village is required to do legislation requesting the County Auditor certify the millages to determine what would be necessary. They would need to make a request from the Solicitor to prepare legislation asking the county to give the millage amounts and what that would entail. They would like to have that ready for the February 17, 2026, Council meeting, and conduct three readings and send that to the county to get the numbers.

Rensel stated that the Safe Bicycle and Pedestrian Transport Committee found some grants, a rec trail program for \$1.6 million, which is a federal grant, and Ohio Trail Program, which has \$6.25 million in grants available. This is an Ohio grant through ONDR. The deadline for the grants is March 17th. Bell indicated that the Village introduced an ordinance for the moratorium again on recreational marijuana. 58.82% of South Russell voted yes. He wants Council to give consideration of what the voters wanted and not continue to avoid the issue. They need to make a decision.

ADJOURNMENT: Being that there was no further business before Council, Berger made a motion to adjourn at 8:40 p.m., seconded by Rensel. Voice vote – ayes, all. Motion carried.



William G. Koons, Mayor



Danielle Romanowski, Fiscal Officer

Prepared by: Christy Troyer