

**RECORD OF PROCEEDINGS
REGULAR COUNCIL MEETING
MONDAY, MARCH 2, 2026– 7:00 P.M.
MAYOR WILLIAM G. KOONS PRESIDING**

MEMBERS PRESENT: Bell, Berger, Canton, Rensel, Porter

OFFICIALS PRESENT: Fiscal Officer Romanowski, Police Chief Rizzo, Street Commissioner Young, Solicitor Matheney

OFFICIALS ABSENT: Cavanagh, Engineer Haibach

VISITORS: Mike Roberto, Overlook Dr., Kent; Dave Carlson and Don Rice, GCBDD; Lynn Turchan, Hazelwood Dr.; Gary Dole, Maple Hill Dr.; Family of Patrol Officer Stephen Nadaud

The Mayor called the Regular Council meeting to order and led the Pledge of Allegiance. The Fiscal Officer read the roll. Cavanagh was absent.

Council first considered the minutes of the February 14, 2026, Special Council Meeting. Hearing no changes or corrections, Canton made a motion to approve, seconded by Rensel. Voice vote – ayes, all. Motion carried. Council reviewed the minutes of the February 16, 2026, Special Council Meeting. Hearing no changes or corrections, Bell made a motion to approve, seconded by Berger. Voice vote – ayes, all. Motion carried. The minutes of the February 17, 2026, Regular Council Meeting were then presented. Hearing no changes or corrections, Canton made a motion to approve, seconded by Porter. Voice vote – ayes, all. Motion carried.

VISITORS: Mike Roberto, 131 Overlook Drive, Kent, introduced himself as a candidate for State Senate District 27, which includes all of Portage County and portions of Summit and Geauga Counties, including South Russell. Mr. Roberto shared his 34-year career in education as a teacher, coach, administrator, and most recently superintendent of the Morris City Schools. He explained that he is seeking to continue public service and expressed concerns regarding public education funding, affordability, property taxes, housing costs, food and energy prices, and potential cuts to Medicare and Medicaid. He stated he attended to listen, learn, and introduce himself to Council.

The Mayor introduced Stephen Nadaud for appointment as a full-time patrol officer. Chief Rizzo outlined Mr. Nadaud’s qualifications, noting he graduated from the Police Academy in 2010, served 13 years with the Middlefield Police Department, and works part-time with Mercy Health System. His credentials include crisis intervention training, firearms instructor certification, certified armorer, SWAT operator, and field training officer experience. **Porter made a motion to confirm the Mayor's appointment, seconded by Canton. Voice vote – ayes, all. Motion carried.** Mr. Nadaud was sworn in.

Lynn Turchan, Treasurer of the Chagrin Falls Booster Club, requested permission to place a banner at South Russell Park from April 25 through May 2, 2026, to promote a Kentucky Derby fundraiser. After discussion regarding placement coordination with the Street Department, **a motion was made by Rensel to approve the banner placement, seconded by Porter. Voice vote – ayes, all. Motion carried.**

Dave Carlson addressed Council on behalf of the Geauga County Board of Developmental Disabilities (GCBDD) (Metzenbaum Center). He reported the agency serves over 1,200 Geauga County residents ranging from infancy through age 86. He described early intervention services, school-age support, transition planning for students approaching graduation, competitive employment placements, residential support, and partnerships with 159 area businesses. Council expressed appreciation for the organization's work.

Gary Dole, 63 Maple Drive, thanked the Police Department for the residential watch program and commended the Street Department for snow removal efforts during the winter season.

MAYOR'S REPORT: The Mayor reported on continued participation with the Chagrin River Watershed Partners (CRWP) and announced an upcoming 30th anniversary event. He then addressed letters of support requested by the Village of Chagrin Falls for water and sewer infrastructure grant funding. After discussion regarding minor wording clarifications, **a motion was made by Berger to authorize the Mayor to submit three different letters to Senator Moreno, Representative Joyce, and Senator Husted supporting on behalf of Chagrin Falls Village and their water and sewer system in the hopes of getting grant money, seconded by Rensel. Voice vote – ayes, all. Motion carried.**

The Mayor announced upcoming presentations, including information on Meeder Investments on March 16th, the United States Geological Survey on April 6th regarding water quantity and quality, and the Valley Enforcement Group on April 20th.

FISCAL OFFICER REPORT: Fiscal Officer Romanowski reported that the annual financial report was filed and the January financial statements were forwarded to Council. She summarized attending a property tax forum addressing a statewide proposal to eliminate property taxes and she expressed concern regarding the lack of a plan for replacement revenue. Council discussed the importance of monitoring the issue and preparing contingency plans.

FINANCE COMMITTEE REPORT: The Finance Committee will meet March 12th at 3:15 p.m. Upcoming discussion topics include revenue forecasting, potential impacts of statewide tax proposals, and review of ongoing infrastructure expenditures.

SOLICITOR REPORT: The Solicitor reported no additional matters but advised Council to ensure quorum availability for upcoming legislation.

ENGINEER REPORT: The Engineer was not present.

STREET COMMITTEE REPORT: The Street Committee reported that approximately 700 tons of salt remain in the salt dome following the final state contract delivery. Based on usage trends, this supply is expected to carry the Village through the remainder of the winter season.

Discussion focused extensively on the ODOT Bell Road East project. Based on current communication with ODOT, the project is likely to occur in calendar year 2027 rather than 2026. The committee discussed timing of culvert replacements to coordinate with the ODOT schedule and avoid redundant pavement work. Members emphasized the importance of addressing driveway apron restoration for affected residents, as ODOT does not typically cover apron paving, so this may be an expense for the Village.

The committee also reviewed a potential restriping option for Bell Road West. The Engineer previously suggested that lane adjustments, commonly referred to as a “road diet,” could create a designated pedestrian lane utilizing existing pavement width without full sidewalk construction. Initial field markings indicate approximately eight feet of usable space from curb to travel lane after adjustment. The committee will continue evaluating safety considerations, buffering requirements, and cost comparisons.

Survey work related to a proposed gas line installation on Bell Road was noted. The Street Commissioner reported that survey crews have been assessing roadway and utility depths. Council directed continued monitoring to ensure roadway integrity is protected.

POLICE CHIEF REPORT: Chief Rizzo reported ongoing departmental projects, including equipment inventory updates and capital asset review. He indicated body cameras and in-car camera systems from the original purchase cycle are nearing replacement consideration. Coordination with the Street Department regarding asset disposal procedures will occur. The Chief also reported continued progress on administrative and technology upgrades.

SAFETY COMMITTEE REPORT: The Safety Committee will meet March 19th at 3:15 p.m. at the Police Department. The committee also acknowledged a proposal from Russell Township to begin investigation into a potential joint fire district. While no action was required at this time, future discussions are anticipated.

HUMAN RESOURCES COMMITTEE REPORT: A motion was made by Berger to acknowledge the resignation of the Building Department Administrative Assistant effective July 31, 2026, seconded by Porter. Voice vote – ayes, all. Motion carried.

Beger made a motion to adopt a revised Village hiring process establishing a structured step-by-step procedure for recruitment, review, background checks, and appointment, seconded by Bell. After amendment clarifying pre-employment testing would be at the discretion of the department head, voice vote – ayes, all. Motion carried. The committee emphasized consistency and transparency in future hiring.

The HR Committee will meet March 9 at 8:00 a.m.

PROPERTIES COMMITTEE REPORT: The Properties Committee reported that replacement of six front service garage doors is scheduled to begin this week. The contractor expects the installation to take approximately two days.

The contractor for the new salt storage building will conduct survey and benchmark work in preparation for foundation and vertical construction phases. Timing depends on weather conditions and ground stability.

Seasonal maintenance activities continue, including removal and storage of holiday decorations once weather permits safe lift operation. Interior garage reorganization efforts are ongoing to improve workflow efficiency and equipment access.

PARK COMMITTEE: There was no report.

PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMITTEE REPORT: The committee reviewed MS4 (Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System) reporting requirements due April 1. Discussions have occurred with Geauga Soil and Water Conservation District regarding assistance in preparing and submitting the report. Cost estimates range from \$500–\$1,000 for advisory assistance and up to \$5,000 for full report preparation in future cycles. The committee will obtain a formal agreement for Council consideration prior to the filing deadline.

Historical costs and projected 2027 expenses were reviewed, noting potential fluctuations based on scope of services required.

SAFE BICYCLE AND PEDESTRIAN TRANSPORT COMMITTEE REPORT:

The committee will be meeting March 6th at 7:30 a.m. Topics will include pedestrian safety initiatives, coordination with the Street Committee on Bell Road concepts, and encouraging resident participation. Two voting member positions remain available for interested residents.

ADMINISTRATIVE TECHNOLOGY COMMITTEE: The committee will meet March 9 at 7:00 a.m. Discussion centered on improving transparency through recording and AI-assisted minute preparation for committee meetings. Council reviewed a draft policy memorializing the procedure and agreed to further review language related to AI usage terms and compliance considerations.

ORDINANCES AND RESOLUTIONS:

Berger provided a second reading of an ordinance requesting the County Auditor to certify to the taxing authority the total tax valuation of the subdivision and the dollar amount of revenue that would be generated by a specific number of mills and declaring an emergency. (Road and Bridge)

Berger introduced an ordinance amending Section 220.02 (g) of the Village of South Russell's Codified Ordinances as to addressing Council through oral communications and declaring an emergency. Berger made a motion to waive readings, seconded by Porter. Roll call – ayes, all. Motion carried. Berger made a motion to adopt, seconded by Porter. Roll call – ayes, all. Motion carried. **ORD 2026-18**

Porter introduced an ordinance approving Work Order 2A to the Master Services Agreement for professional consulting services with Verdantas for additional project management work performed by Verdantas relating to the Hemlock Road Culvert Replacement Project in an

amount not to exceed \$5,500, authorizing the Mayor to execute Work Order 2A on behalf of the Village, and declaring an emergency. Porter made a motion to waive readings, seconded by Berger. Roll call – ayes, all. Motion carried. Porter made a motion to adopt, seconded by Berger. Roll call – ayes, all. Motion carried. **ORD 2026-19**

Berger introduced an ordinance enacting new Subsection (d) to Section 220.04 of the Village of South Russell’s Codified Ordinances to establish the procedure for the approved agenda for Council meetings and declaring an emergency. Berger made a motion to waive readings, seconded by Bell. Roll call – ayes, all. Motion carried. Berger made a motion to adopt, seconded by Bell. Roll call – ayes, all. Motion carried. **ORD 2026-20**

PAYMENTS REGISTER: Berger made a motion to ratify the payment register of 2-27-2026 in the amount of \$68,496.27, seconded by Porter. Voice vote – ayes, all. Motion carried.

NEW & OTHER BUSINESS:

Porter made a motion to approve the following committee assignments with the Chair being listed first, seconded by Berger. Voice vote – ayes, all. Motion carried.

- Properties – Cavanagh, Canton, Rensel
- Human Resources – Berger, Bell, Rensel
- Finance – Berger, Canton, Porter
- Streets – Bell, Rensel, Berger
- Safety – Canton, Cavanagh, Porter
- Public Utilities – Porter, Berger, Rensel
- Building, Cavanagh, Canton, Porter
- Bike/Pedestrian Safety – Bell, Rensel, Cavanagh
- Admin/Technology – Berger, Porter, Bell

Porter made a motion that Councilman Canton be excused from the March 16, 2026, meeting and Councilman Berger be excused from the April 6th & 20th meetings, seconded by Rensel. Voice vote – ayes, all. Motion carried.

ADJOURNMENT: Being that there was no further business before Council, Bell made a motion to adjourn at 8:02p.m., seconded by Porter. Voice vote – ayes, all. Motion carried.



William G. Koons, Mayor



Danielle Romanowski, Fiscal Officer

Prepared by: Leslie Galicki