

**RECORD OF PROCEEDINGS  
REGULAR COUNCIL MEETING  
MONDAY, MARCH 16, 2026– 7:00 P.M.  
MAYOR WILLIAM G. KOONS PRESIDING**

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

**OFFICIALS PRESENT:** Fiscal Officer Romanowski, Police Chief Rizzo, Solicitor Matheney, Engineer Haibach

**VISITORS:** Gary Dole, Maple Hill Dr.; Friends, families, and colleagues of SRPD Officers Julie Aveni, Justin Kimery, and Nicholas DiMaria

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

Council considered the minutes of the March 2, 2026, Regular Council Meeting. Hearing no corrections, **Porter made a motion to approve, seconded by Canton. Voice vote – ayes, all. Motion carried.**

**VISITORS:** The Mayor announced that the evening would include multiple personnel actions within the Police Department, including a promotion and several appointments, and welcomed the families and guests in attendance. The Chief first presented the promotion of Officer Julie Aveni to the rank of Sergeant. He spoke in detail regarding her qualifications, years of service, leadership within the department, and consistent demonstration of professionalism and initiative. He noted her ability to mentor newer officers, manage complex situations, and contribute to the overall effectiveness of the department. The Chief expressed full confidence in her ability to serve in a supervisory role.

**Canton made a motion to confirm the Mayor’s appointment of Julie Aveni to the rank of Sergeant, seconded by Cavanagh. Voice vote – ayes, all. Motion carried.**

The Mayor then administered the oath of office to Sergeant Aveni. She was formally sworn in before Council, family, and attendees, followed by acknowledgment and congratulations from Council members.

The Chief then introduced Justin Kimery for appointment as a full-time patrol officer. He reviewed Kimery’s background, including his service in the United States Army from 2010 to 2018 and his transition into law enforcement following his military career. After graduating from the Police Academy in 2024, he joined the Timberlake Police Department where he gained practical experience in patrol operations.

**Canton made a motion to confirm the Mayor’s appointment of Justin Kimery as a full-time police officer to the South Russell Police Department, seconded by Cavanagh. Voice vote – ayes, all. Motion carried.**

The Mayor administered the oath of office to Kimery, formally swearing him in as a patrol officer.

The Chief next introduced Nicholas DiMaria, outlining his completion of the Police Academy in 2023, his service as an auxiliary officer with the Lakewood Police Department, and his subsequent experience with the Southwest General Police Department. The Chief noted his strong performance and readiness to serve the Village.

**Canton made a motion to confirm the Mayor’s appointment, seconded by Cavanagh. Voice vote – ayes, all. Motion carried.**

The Mayor administered the oath of office to DiMaria, officially swearing him in.

**MAYOR’S REPORT:** In his report, the Mayor addressed several matters of importance to the community. He began by discussing a recent storm event that caused damage in the Lake Louise area, including a fire resulting from downed power lines. He noted that the emergency response required extended efforts from both police and fire personnel but that the situation was ultimately managed effectively.

Looking ahead, the Mayor informed Council that a representative from the United States Geological Survey (USGS) would attend the April 6th meeting to provide a presentation on water-related issues. He also reported on the recent selection process for a member of the Geauga County Board of Health. The Mayor further referenced a contract received for the Hillcrest Concert Band, including provisions for hospitality. He introduced the idea of purchasing approximately 2,000 reflective bands for distribution as part of America 250 celebration events, but discussion among Council members raised concerns about cost, and no motion was ultimately made.

**FISCAL OFFICER’S REPORT:** The Fiscal Officer presented a detailed report covering financial performance and administrative matters. She reported that income tax collections for 2025 totaled approximately \$2.975 million, reflecting an increase of about \$310,000 over the prior year. She also advised Council that certification had been received for a potential trail levy, which would equate to approximately \$28 per \$100,000 of property valuation over a five-year period.

She discussed operational changes resulting from the upcoming retirement of the Building Department Administrative Assistant, noting that office functions would need to be reorganized and that improvements to the filing system, including the possible purchase of new cabinets, would be necessary.

The Fiscal Officer also reviewed the Village’s investment strategy, explaining the statutory requirements to prioritize safety, liquidity, and yield, and noting that the absence of a finalized five-year capital plan currently necessitates a more conservative, short-term investment approach. She reported that \$625,000 had recently been transferred to STAR Ohio to take advantage of higher interest rates. Additionally, she discussed the use of artificial intelligence tools to assist in preparing meeting minutes, emphasizing that all outputs would need to be reviewed by staff and committees prior to approval. The suggestion was made to put the draft minutes in the upcoming Council packet and to have the committees approved the draft minutes at the next meeting of that committee. Once approved, the final minutes would be put online for the public and could go back into the Council packet as the final. A suggested motion for ratifying the minutes was distributed and Berger recommended it be discussed and approve it at the April Council meeting.

**FINANCE COMMITTEE REPORT:** The Finance Committee reviewed potential changes to property tax structures and the possible impacts on Village funding. They also discussed the timing shift for the Bell Road East project, which is now anticipated for calendar year 2027, requiring adjustments to financial forecasts and a review of the Road Program. The committee further considered the future of the Treasury Investment Board, with discussion leaning toward a more integrated approach involving the Finance Committee, Mayor, and Solicitor rather than maintaining a separate board. No formal motions were made.

**SOLICITOR'S REPORT:** The Solicitor had nothing to report.

**ENGINEER'S REPORT:** The Engineer reported that the Hemlock Road culvert replacement project is substantially complete. All major construction work has been finalized, including installation of the culvert and roadway restoration. Remaining work includes final grading, seeding, and stabilization, which will be completed when weather permits.

He then discussed Municipal Road Fund (MRF) funding associated with the Bell Road East project. He explained that approximately \$40,000 in permissive funding is available but can only be used on specific roads within the Village. He emphasized the importance of applying for these funds when eligible projects arise, given the infrequency of qualifying work. He noted that submission of the ODOT Stage 3 plans is required and that he had received the draft plans and would submit the funding request.

The Engineer also addressed a significant issue identified in the Village's Road Program estimates. While reviewing pavement condition data and cost projections, he discovered an error related to Lakeview Ln., where only a portion of the roadway had been included in the estimate due to historical data segmentation. This resulted in a substantial understatement of projected costs, increasing from approximately \$170,000 to over \$600,000. He explained the origin of the error and advised that the corrected estimate significantly exceeds prior expectations, requiring reevaluation of project priorities.

The Engineer also discussed drainage concerns, including maintenance needs for the Family Life Center silt pond and the potential for shared-cost solutions. From a Streets Committee perspective, Bell noted that it had only been about three years since the last time this was done and expressed surprise that it was already needed. The Engineer commented that it may not be, but he would take a look at it.

**STREET COMMITTEE REPORT:** The Street Committee provided updates on the Village's annual Road Program and the impact of newly identified cost adjustments. The Engineer's revised estimate for Lakeview Ln. was discussed at length. Committee members expressed concern that the corrected cost, which now reflects the full length of the roadway rather than a partial segment, substantially exceeds prior expectations. This prompted discussion regarding whether the project should be deferred, scaled back, or replaced with alternative priorities. Members acknowledged that the error originated from legacy data segmentation and emphasized the importance of verifying all future project assumptions. The Committee agreed that further evaluation is necessary and that a revised recommendation will be brought forward after additional analysis.

Attention then shifted to Bell Road East and the importance of coordinating Village work with the anticipated ODOT project. The Committee discussed proactively addressing culvert replacements ahead of ODOT's paving schedule to avoid future disruption and duplicative construction. It was noted

that ODOT's project scope will not include replacement of driveway aprons, which led to discussion regarding the Village's historical practice of assisting residents with these improvements. Prior residential driveway culvert replacements have included apron restoration as part of Village-funded work. The Committee discussed a funding structure whereby residents would be responsible for the cost of the culvert pipe itself, while the Village would fund installation, backfill, and pavement restoration, including aprons. An estimated allocation of approximately \$100,000 within the 2026 road program was discussed to support this effort.

The Committee also addressed timing and bidding considerations. The Engineer advised that contractors are currently reluctant to commit to firm pricing due to volatility in asphalt and petroleum-based materials. Members discussed the risk of delaying bidding, noting that postponement into mid-to-late summer could result in higher costs and reduced contractor availability. The Committee generally agreed that proceeding earlier in the season, despite uncertainty, may ultimately be more cost-effective.

Administrative matters were also addressed. **Bell made a motion to appoint Todd Kruse as a citizen member of the Street Committee, seconded by Berger. Voice vote – ayes, all. Motion carried.**

Operational updates included information gleaned from the Street Commissioner regarding winter salt usage by Chagrin Falls Schools. The committee noted that salt consumption amounted to 146 tons of salt, which would mean a \$7,013.84 reimbursement to the Village. Bell asked the Fiscal Officer if she had been provided with this information for billing the school district, and she responded that she had not.

Bell asked the Fiscal Officer if the Street Commissioner had provided her with any information about the purchase of the swap loader because the committee hoped to get approval for the purchase. The Fiscal Officer indicated she had not been given the information and explained that this would require legislation. She reviewed procurement requirements. It was determined that additional information, including state bid compliance documentation, was needed before moving forward. The item will be revisited at the April meeting.

Finally, the Committee reviewed upcoming seasonal service programs. Plans are in place for the annual Village-wide Trash Day, as well as the senior pickup program. The importance of clear communication to residents was emphasized regarding registration deadlines and participation requirements.

**BUILDING COMMITTEE REPORT:** The Building Committee discussed the need for a comprehensive overhaul of the Building Department's file system, including purging outdated records and reorganizing storage. They also noted that current fee structures do not adequately cover costs and will need to be reviewed and revised. Additionally, the committee discussed a continuing zoning enforcement issue involving inoperable vehicles on a residential property, acknowledging that previous legal efforts had not resulted in compliance.

**POLICE CHIEF REPORT:** The Chief first discussed the legislation pertaining to GovDeals and asked whether the 2001 International dump truck should be included and whether this could be done before approving the legislation. The Solicitor confirmed it could.

He then addressed the recent upgrade for the Police Department to fiber and suggested doing the same for Village Hall and the Service and Building Departments prior to the installation of the new phone system. He explained that three quotes were previously obtained for the Police Department's upgrade. Berger asked that the Chief get a quote and provide it to the Admin/Tech Committee.

The Chief also asked Council for direction on the traffic study that was previously approved and budgeted in the amount of \$12,000. The survey was originally to consider speed reduction on Chillicothe Rd., but with discussions of a path on Bell Rd., he wondered whether Council would prefer to conduct the study on Bell Rd. The Engineer advised that even with a traffic study of Chillicothe Road, the Ohio Department of Transportation (ODOT) might not agree to lower the speed limit through the Village. Through further discussion, Berger suggested that the focus of the traffic study remains on Chillicothe Rd. and that if warranted, a study of Bell Rd. could be conducted at a later time. Cavanagh concurred.

Regarding the radio interference the Police Department had been experiencing due to the solar panels, the Chief investigated the matter and found that the radio equipment would need to be relocated to the utility pole that houses the tornado siren. The cost to do this is approximately \$1,500.

**SAFETY COMMITTEE REPORT:** Canton reported that the next Safety Committee meeting would be on March 19<sup>th</sup> at 3:15 p.m. **Canton made a motion to hold Cops and Kids Fishing on May 31<sup>st</sup> at Lake Louise from 9:00 a.m. until noon, seconded by Cavanagh. Voice vote – ayes, all. Motion carried**

**HUMAN RESOURCES COMMITTEE REPORT:** Berger reported that the HR Committee met on March 9<sup>th</sup> and discussed the updating of job descriptions for all positions in the Village. The committee also addressed the need to secure a cleaning service since the current one is unavailable. A list exists of the duties of the current service, but the Fiscal Officer did not think there was an actual agreement. The Solicitor suggested having one. Council further discussed obtaining proposals for a new service. Porter suggested putting an ad on the Village website.

**PROPERTIES COMMITTEE REPORT:** The Properties Committee discussed conceptual planning for Village-owned properties, including the use of artificial intelligence tools to generate design ideas. Members expressed interest in gathering community input through both printed materials and online surveys. The Engineer offered to reach out to Rich Washington for suggestions as well. They also noted positive feedback regarding recent improvements in the Service Department, particularly the installation of new garage doors.

**PARK COMMITTEE:** The date of the next Parks Committee meeting was still being determined. **Cavanagh made a motion to accept the bike rack and clean it up and place it at the park, seconded by Porter. Voice vote – ayes, all. Motion carried.**

The committee also discussed upcoming events, including concerts and America 250 activities, and revisited the earlier proposal regarding reflective bands, ultimately agreeing not to move forward due to cost concerns. The Fiscal Officer noted that legislation would be required to enter into an agreement for the Hillcrest Concert Band. The agreement provided by the Mayor required a \$400 honorarium as well as the Village to provide the band with dinner and non-alcoholic beverages. The Mayor confirmed that this performance would be in conjunction with the 250<sup>th</sup> celebration and Porter concluded that the cost would come from the \$15,000 budgeted for the 250<sup>th</sup>. Council reviewed the list

of proposed 250<sup>th</sup> events, and the consensus of Council was that careful planning was needed as well as utilization of the new event form. The Mayor expressed concern about locking in the date for the band, and Berger asked him to fill out the form to explain the parameters and logistics of the event, and it would be discussed at the next meeting.

**PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMITTEE REPORT:** The Public Utilities Committee discussed the completion of the Hemlock Rd. Culvert Project and the committee's desire to approach Russell Township to ask for half the cost of the project. The Fiscal Officer was asked to forward the final cost to Porter.

The committee also addressed compliance with MS4 stormwater requirements and recommended continuing engagement with Chagrin River Watershed Partners.

Porter reported that the Street Commissioner advised that the cost of materials to mitigate the flooding issues at 500 Manor Brook Dr. would be \$9,500.00. He added that the neighbors on either side of this residence are also impacted by the flooding. The work would be done in-house and would help resolve an issue on Alderwood Dr. **Porter made a motion that the Street Commissioner be authorized to expend not more than \$9,500 for the purposes of stormwater mitigation in the neighborhood of 500 Manor Brook Drive, which also affects 260 Alderwood Dr. with it being well within the stormwater budget as the source of funding, seconded by Berger. Voice vote – ayes, all. Motion carried.**

The renewal of the Chagrin River Watershed Partners' membership was discussed, and **Porter made a motion that the Village renew its membership in the amount of \$2,976 from the stormwater budget, seconded by Rensel. Voice vote – ayes, all. Motion carried.**

Regarding committee membership, **Porter made a motion to add Todd Kruse and John Buda as citizen representatives to the Public Utilities Committee, seconded by Berger. Voice vote – ayes, all. Motion carried.**

The next Public Utilities Committee meeting will be on April 16, 2026, at 6:30 p.m.

**SAFE BICYCLE AND PEDESTRIAN TRANSPORT COMMITTEE REPORT:** The discussion of the Safe Bicycle and Pedestrian Transport Committee focused on both membership updates and ongoing efforts to improve pedestrian and traffic safety within the community. At the outset, the committee noted that two residents had expressed interest in becoming citizen voting members. **Bell made a motion to appoint Phyllis Marino and John Buda as citizen voting members of the Safe Bicycle and Pedestrian Transport Committee, seconded by Rensel. Voice vote – ayes, all. Motion carried.**

The committee then moved into a broader discussion of safety concerns relative to the development of a trail, particularly focusing on speeding along Bell Road. Members highlighted the effectiveness of a police department speed-monitoring sign currently placed on the westbound side of the road. This device not only alerts drivers to their speed but also gathers data, which indicated an average speed in the upper 30 mph range—higher than desired for the area. In response, the Chief offered to install an additional sign on the eastbound side near the park, creating a two-directional traffic calming effort. The committee expressed appreciation for this proactive approach and agreed that the dual signage would likely further reduce speeding.

Other discussion involved the committee agreeing to a temporary, visual demonstration of the proposed path. This would involve marking the pathway using turf paint and wooden stakes, allowing residents to better understand its layout and impact before any permanent work begins. While the initial thought was to coordinate this demonstration with the Fall Festival, members discussed the possibility of moving the timeline earlier to align with other upcoming community events, such as celebrations tied to a 250th anniversary. One committee member volunteered to donate paint and assist with labor, underscoring community support for the initiative.

The committee also briefly noted additional safety measures being implemented, including new signage near a crosswalk indicating its presence 250 feet in advance. These fluorescent signs are intended to improve driver awareness and enhance pedestrian safety in that area.

The next committee meeting will be held on April 3<sup>rd</sup> in Village Hall.

**ADMINISTRATION/ TECHNOLOGY COMMITTEE:** The committee reported that it had met on March 9<sup>th</sup> and included participation from a resident, Phyllis Marino, who attended and expressed a strong interest in the committee's work. Although she had not yet been formally appointed, her involvement was noted as valuable. She contributed ideas particularly focused on improving communication between the Village and residents, and her input was described as thoughtful and productive.

A key outcome of that discussion was progress on improving how information is shared with residents. The committee indicated that some of these improvements were already visible, specifically referencing enhancements to the new resident packet, which is intended to better orient new community members with Village services, processes, and contacts.

#### **ORDINANCES AND RESOLUTIONS:**

Berger provided a third 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 made a motion to adopt, seconded by Porter. Roll call – ayes, all. Motion carried. **ORD 2026-21**

Berger introduced a Resolution of Appreciation for Dennis M. Galicki.

Bell introduced a resolution authorizing the sale of personal property not needed by the Village and declaring an emergency. Bell made a motion to waive readings, seconded by Cavanagh. Roll call – ayes, all. Motion carried. Bell made a motion to adopt, seconded by Porter. Roll call – ayes, all. Motion carried. **RES 2026-22**

Porter introduced an ordinance approving the Technical Services Proposal from Chagrin River Watershed Partners, Inc. to perform the additional services to the Village of South Russell assisting, preparing and submitting the Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System (MS4) Phase II annual reporting to the Ohio Environmental Protection Agency for the 2025 filing year in an amount not to exceed \$6,172, and authorizing the Mayor to execute the proposal for such additional services, 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 2026-23**

**PAYMENTS REGISTER:** Berger made a motion to ratify the Payment Register of 3/16/2026 in the amount of \$161,643.09, seconded by Porter. Voice vote – ayes, all. Motion carried.

**NEW & OTHER BUSINESS:** Rensel, Bell, Berger, Canton, Cavanagh, and Porter had no new business.

**Cavanagh made a motion to move the 4-20-2026 regular scheduled council meeting to 4-27-2026, seconded by Rensel. Voice vote – ayes, all. Motion passed.**

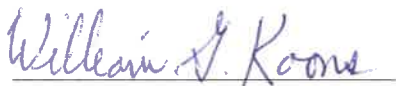
Council also considered a request to provide a letter of support for Chagrin Valley Dispatch. **Porter made a motion to ratify the letter of support for Chagrin Valley Dispatch, seconded by Bell. Voice vote – ayes, all. Motion carried.**

**EXECUTIVE SESSION:** At 8:40 p.m., Cavanagh made a motion to go into executive session to section 121.22G3 of the Ohio Revised Code for the purposes conferring with the Solicitor regarding imminent litigation involving the Village and inviting in the Fiscal Officer, Mayor, and Solicitor, seconded by Berger. Roll call vote – ayes, all.

**Council reconvened at 9:00 p.m.**

Cavanagh introduced an ordinance approving the agreement with GovWell Technologies Inc., which included the order form, scope of work, and terms of service, in an amount not to exceed \$58,000 for software modules and related services for the Village’s Building Department for a term of 3 years, authorizing the Mayor and Fiscal Officer to execute the agreement on behalf of the Village, and declaring an emergency. Cavanagh made a motion to waive readings, seconded by Porter. Roll call – ayes, all. Motion carried. Cavanagh made a motion to adopt, seconded by Porter. Roll call – ayes, all. Motion carried. **ORD 2026-24**

**ADJOURNMENT:** Being that there was no further business before Council, Porter made a motion to adjourn at 9:01 p.m., seconded by Cavanagh. Voice vote – ayes, all. Motion carried.



William G. Koons, Mayor



Danielle Romanowski, Fiscal Officer

Prepared by: Leslie Galicki