

**RECORD OF PROCEEDINGS  
SPECIAL COUNCIL MEETING  
JOINT SAFE BICYCLE AND PEDESTRIAN TRANSPORT/  
FINANCE COMMITTEE MEETING  
FRIDAY, MAY 1, 2026– 7:30 A.M.  
MAYOR WILLIAM G. KOONS PRESIDING**

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

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

**VISITORS:** John Buda and Phyllis Marino, SBPT Committee members;  
Suzanne Moloney, Waverly Ln.; Phyllis Marino, Southwyck  
Dr.; Jennifer Donnellan, Waverly Ln.

The Mayor called the meeting to order and Fiscal Officer read the roll. The Mayor advised that the sole purpose of the Special Council meeting was to discuss the potential development of a multi-use trail within the Village. The Trails Committee initiated the discussion, explaining that the meeting had originally been scheduled as a Safe Bicycle and Pedestrian Transport discussion but had expanded to include the Finance Committee and full Council due to the financial implications associated with the proposed trail project. The committee expressed its intention to gather feedback prior to advancing the matter to a full Council decision, particularly with respect to whether a tax levy should be pursued and what alternative funding mechanisms might be available to reduce reliance on taxpayer contributions.

**Cavanagh made a motion to approve the previous minutes of the Special Bicycle and Pedestrian Transport Committee, seconded by Rensel. Voice vote – ayes, all. Motion carried.**

Finance Committee Chairman Berger explained that the projected cost of the trail, even under the most conservative estimate presented by consultants, significantly exceeded the Village's current financial capacity. While approximately \$800,000 in grant funding might be available, the Village would still be responsible for roughly \$1 million. This shortfall prompted the Finance Committee to explore the feasibility of a tax levy as a funding mechanism. It was noted that a levy structured to raise \$1 million over five years would result in an estimated cost of approximately \$28 per \$100,000 of property value, or roughly \$100 annually for the average homeowner. The Finance Committee emphasized that it had not developed a comprehensive plan but had instead focused on identifying the financial gap and initiating discussion about how it might be addressed. The committee expressed openness to alternative funding strategies but underscored that, without such alternatives, a levy would likely be necessary.

Members of the Safe Bicycle and Pedestrian Transport Committee then provided historical context, noting that the idea of a trail had been under consideration for many years, with documented discussions dating back to at least 2010. At that time, a detailed study had been conducted involving regional stakeholders and consultants to assess bike compatibility and pedestrian safety. Committee members emphasized that significant groundwork had already been completed and that the current effort was building upon prior analysis rather than starting from scratch. They also observed that community interest in trails had persisted over time, with renewed attention in recent months evidenced by increased public inquiries and engagement.

The discussion shifted to the broader purpose of the project, with committee members highlighting safety as a primary objective. Observations were shared regarding pedestrians walking in roadways due to a lack of designated paths, including anecdotal accounts from visitors who found such conditions unusual. The committee considered whether incremental improvements, such as road striping adjustments or pilot trail installations, might enhance safety while building community support for a larger project. Efforts already undertaken, including the installation of a mock trail segment in the park setting, were described as ways to help residents visualize potential outcomes.

Considerable attention was given to alternative funding opportunities. One committee member reported preliminary discussions with the Geauga Park Foundation, which has **past experience** in partnering on trail-related projects and potentially assisting with fundraising efforts. The Foundation's ability to solicit private donations was noted as a possible avenue for supplementing public funding. Additional possibilities included leveraging grant-writing resources from regional organizations and exploring national funding programs. However, it was acknowledged that such sources were unlikely to fully cover project costs, reinforcing the need to consider a combined funding strategy.

Concerns were raised regarding the timing of any proposed levy, particularly in light of other financial obligations facing the Village. Upcoming or anticipated levies for road and bridge maintenance, police services, and fire and emergency medical services were discussed, and several participants cautioned that adding another levy could strain public support. The Finance Committee explained that the Road and Bridge levy was scheduled for renewal and that the Village had intentionally limited the number of levies planned for the upcoming ballot to avoid overwhelming voters. Nonetheless, the possibility of placing the trail levy on the November 2026 ballot remained under consideration, with a filing deadline in early August requiring prompt action if Council wished to proceed.

Questions were raised about the cumulative financial impact of multiple levies on residents, and Finance Committee representatives provided clarification regarding which levies were renewals and which would constitute new taxes. Additional uncertainty was noted regarding potential statewide initiatives that could affect property tax structures, further complicating long-term planning.

The Safe Bicycle and Pedestrian Transport Committee considered whether to formally recommend that Council move forward with placing the levy on the ballot. After deliberation regarding the appropriate wording, a motion was made.

**Bell made a motion that the Bicycle and Pedestrian Transport Committee is in favor of Council moving forward with the 0.81 mills for each dollar taxable value for the November 2026 ballot, seconded by Rensel. Ayes, Bell, Cavanagh, Rensel, and Marino. Buda abstained. Motion carried.**

With this recommendation established, attention turned to the question of how best to inform and engage the community in advance of the election. It was recognized that approximately five months remained before the November ballot, providing sufficient time for outreach efforts. However, the Solicitor advised that elected officials were strictly prohibited from advocating for or against the levy using public resources. While factual information could be shared, any messaging perceived as promotional would violate statutory restrictions. As a result, it was suggested that all communications be carefully reviewed to ensure compliance, and that any advocacy efforts be conducted independently by private individuals or organizations rather than the Village itself.

Participants discussed various methods of public engagement, including informational meetings, surveys, and visual materials to help residents understand the proposed trail. The importance of clear and accurate communication was emphasized, particularly in light of experiences in other communities where misinformation had influenced public perception. It was suggested that committee members consult with officials from neighboring municipalities that had undertaken similar projects in order to learn from both successful and unsuccessful efforts.

Additional discussion addressed potential design considerations, including the proposed alignment of the trail along one side of the roadway to minimize pedestrian crossings, as well as the possibility of extending pathways through alternative corridors such as utility easements. The need to engage property owners affected by the proposed route was also acknowledged, with suggestions to initiate outreach similar to previous efforts conducted in other areas of the Village.

**ADJOURNMENT:** Being that there was no further business before Council, Cavanagh made a motion to adjourn at 8:22 a.m., seconded by Rensel. Voice vote – ayes, all. Motion carried.



William G. Koons, Mayor



Danielle Romanowski, Fiscal Officer

Prepared by: Leslie Galicki