

**RECORD OF PROCEEDINGS
REGULAR COUNCIL MEETING
MONDAY, MAY 4, 2026– 7:00 P.M.
MAYOR WILLIAM G. KOONS PRESIDING**

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

MEMBERS ABSENT: Porter

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

OFFICIALS ABSENT: Engineer Haibach

VISITORS: Patrick Gibney, Ashleigh Dr.; Jennifer and Brennan Donnellan, Waverly Ln., Joe Piannecki, 71 Paw Paw Lake Dr.

The Mayor called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. and led the Pledge of Allegiance. The Fiscal Officer read the roll. Porter was absent. **Cavanaugh made a motion to approve the minutes of the April 27, 2026, Regular Council meeting, seconded by Canton. Voice vote – ayes, all. Motion carried.**

VISITORS: Cavanagh introduced Patrick Gibney, an Eagle Scout candidate, who presented a proposed beautification project for the southern section of South Russell Village Park near the Washington Street entrance. Gibney described his plan to install three landscaped planting beds around the park flagpole, separated by brick pathways to maintain accessibility. The design includes nine native plants, primarily yellow coneflowers and bee balm, selected for their color, sustainability, and compatibility. He explained that the plants will remain modest in height and width to preserve visibility while enhancing aesthetics. The total project cost was presented as approximately \$272.35, funded through a Rotary grant, with contingency remaining in the budget. Materials such as brick, mulch, and soil amendments will be provided by the Village. Volunteer labor will be supplied by Gibney’s Scout troop, who will also provide ongoing annual maintenance. Council engaged in discussion regarding plant selection, with a request to incorporate purple flowering plants if feasible. Gibney agreed to adjust accordingly. **Cavanagh made a motion to approve Patrick Gibney's Eagle Scout project, which is funded. He has the workers set up and is ready to go, seconded by Canton. Voice vote – ayes, all. Motion carried.** The Mayor and Council commended Gibney for his initiative and contribution to the community.

MAYOR’S REPORT: The Mayor recognized the Mariola family for their longstanding contributions to the park through prior Eagle Scout projects, including installation of planters and a kiosk. He noted their continued maintenance efforts and expressed appreciation on behalf of the Village.

FISCAL OFFICER REPORT: The Fiscal Officer reported that additional legislation had been distributed to Council shortly before the meeting, originating from the Engineer. She explained that the legislation pertained to a proposed \$57,000 work order for engineering services associated with preparing plans, specifications, design work, preparation for bidding, and administrative oversight during construction in relation to the Waverly Lane portion of the 2026 Road program.

FINANCE COMMITTEE REPORT: A meeting was scheduled for May 7, 2026, at 3:15 p.m.

SOLICITOR REPORT: The Solicitor reported no new matters.

STREET COMMISSIONER'S REPORT: The Street Commissioner reported that, although he was briefly absent recently, the Service Department remained productive with preassigned work. Crews completed ditching work on Bell, Forest, and Fairview Roads, as well as cemetery-related tasks including burials and foundation installations. The department made temporary adjustments to straighten the stacks on the park restroom facility while awaiting vendor response. According to the Street Commissioner, he has emailed the manufacturer about the issue and has been told that the Village is on their list. Cavanagh expressed disappointment in the company's response.

He noted that monthly playground inspections are ongoing using a standardized checklist, and previously identified maintenance issues have been addressed. A berm box was installed on a plow truck and is currently being used for roadside topsoil repairs following winter damage.

The recent community Trash Day was described as highly successful, with over 300 vehicles participating, 110 tires collected, and ten dumpsters filled. The department also completed 93 senior pickups over two days.

Regarding capital projects, the Street Commissioner provided an update on the salt storage building, noting that site work and foundation installation have been completed, materials have been delivered, and construction is expected to proceed shortly, with a target completion in mid-June. He addressed minor concerns about foundation materials, confirming they were properly installed.

He also reported that the settling on the Walters Road patch was due to seasonal ground conditions and will be corrected by the contractor. Remaining work includes pipe grouting and landscaping. Lastly, drainage work in the Sugarbush area has been deferred until drier conditions later in the summer.

STREET COMMITTEE REPORT: Bell addressed the scheduling of the 2026 Shredding Day. He explained that there had been some uncertainty at the prior Council meeting regarding whether the event had been formally scheduled. After reviewing documentation provided by the Street Commissioner, it was confirmed that the event had previously been set for October 17, 2026, at 9:00 a.m. **Bell made a motion to officially hold the 2026 Shredding Day on October 17th from 9 a.m. to noon, seconded by Berger. Voice vote – ayes, all. Motion carried.**

There was discussion of the Village's ongoing arrangement with the Chagrin Falls Exempted Village School District regarding the access to the Village's road salt. Bell explained that the committee had carefully considered liability concerns associated with granting school district personnel access to Village facilities and equipment. Based on those concerns, the committee recommended that Village employees remain responsible for loading salt into school district vehicles, rather than allowing outside personnel access to the salt storage building or equipment. The Solicitor provided additional clarification, noting that because Village personnel would control access and operations, a formal liability waiver from the school district would likely be unnecessary. Council discussed whether the policy should be codified or handled through an informal agreement or memorandum of understanding. **Bell made a motion that the policy of the Village moving forward as far as our relationship with street salt, and the Chagrin Falls Exempted Village School District is that we will have our employees on site to load the salt into their vehicles, seconded by Rensel.** During

discussion, it was clarified that the Village would continue its longstanding practice of charging the school district only for the cost of the salt itself, without additional charges for labor or equipment use, and that pricing would be determined once the state provides updated salt costs. **Voice vote – ayes, all. Motion carried.**

Bell provided an update on planning for the 2026 Road Program. He explained that the Ohio Department of Transportation (ODOT) had delayed its planned work on Bell Road East until early 2027, which required the Village to adjust its own paving schedule. In response, the Streets Committee recommended proceeding with a Village Road Program for 2026, identifying Waverly Lane as the priority roadway. He further explained that, in addition to resurfacing, the Village intends to include base repairs and culvert pipe work where needed. Because the state will not perform driveway culvert apron paving as part of its projects, the Village will incorporate those repairs separately to maintain consistency with past road programs. He estimated the total cost of the proposed Waverly Lane project, including associated repairs, at approximately \$375,000, with additional engineering costs to be addressed separately. Council discussed how the engineering work would be handled under a separate ordinance tied to the Village's Master Services Agreement with Verdantas.

Bell made a motion to go out to bid for the 2026 Road Program for Waverly Lane, including miscellaneous base repairs and culvert repairs on Bell Road East, seconded by Berger. During discussion, clarification was provided that the estimated \$57,000 engineering cost would be addressed through separate legislation, distinct from the construction bid authorization. **Voice vote – ayes, all. Motion carried.**

Council members expressed appreciation for the efficiency and organization of recent service department operations, particularly noting improvements observed during the trash collection event despite challenging weather conditions.

BUILDING COMMITTEE REPORT: Cavanagh reported that the Building Committee had little new business to discuss since its previous meeting had been held recently. She announced that the next Building Committee meeting would take place on May 11, 2026, at 8:00 a.m. in the Building Department offices. Cavanagh noted that several ongoing projects and planning discussions remain active before the committee to include the salt storage building and evaluation of future facility-related needs involving the Police Department.

POLICE CHIEF REPORT: The Chief reported that training on the Village's new phone system was scheduled for the following morning at Village Hall. He further reported that the new phone system was expected to go live on Wednesday morning. The Chief noted that the phone system project was one of the final major information technology projects undertaken by the Village during the past year.

Council members thanked the Police Department for its assistance during Trash Day and commented positively on the organization and efficiency of the operation.

SAFETY COMMITTEE REPORT: Canton reported that the next committee meeting will be held on May 13, 2026, at 9:00 a.m.

HUMAN RESOURCES COMMITTEE REPORT: Berger reported that the Human Resources Committee was scheduled to meet on May 18, 2026, at 8:00 a.m.

He explained that the committee had been reviewing supervisory responsibilities associated with the anticipated hiring of a new Building Department Administrative Assistant position. As part of that review, it was determined that the Fiscal Officer would assume responsibility for supervising the position and overseeing the administrative duties associated with the role. Because the current employee handbook did not reflect those supervisory responsibilities, the committee recommended amending the Fiscal Officer's job description accordingly.

Council Member Berger stated that the proposed amendment would revise Appendix D of the employee handbook to formally update the section relating to positions supervised by the Fiscal Officer. **Berger made a motion to amend Appendix D of the Employee Handbook job descriptions for amending the Fiscal Officer's job description for positions supervised, seconded by Cavanagh. Voice vote – ayes, all. Motion carried.**

PROPERTIES COMMITTEE REPORT: Cavanagh reported that the Properties Committee would meet on May 11, 2026, at 9:00 a.m., immediately following the Building Committee meeting. She noted that there could be some overlap between the two meetings due to ongoing budget-related discussions connected to building and facility matters.

The committee first addressed a request for placement of a community banner promoting the “Bike to School” event. **Cavanagh made a motion to approve the placement from May 14th to the 21st of a banner in the Park promoting bike to school on Thursday, May 21st, seconded by Canton.** Cavanagh clarified that the event was being sponsored by the Safe Routes to School initiative. **Voice vote – ayes, all. Motion carried.**

During discussion, the Mayor addressed a previously displayed Booster organization banner, with concerns raised regarding readability, overall appearance, and excessive sponsor advertising, making it difficult to read and potentially reflecting poorly on the Village. Although no formal standards were proposed, Council acknowledged that future consideration may need to be given to the design and readability of banners displayed on Village property.

Additional discussion followed concerning the upcoming “Bike to School” event itself, scheduled for Wednesday morning. The Chief explained that participants would gather at the Cleveland Clinic location and travel along East Washington Street to the Intermediate School with police escort assistance from Chagrin Falls. It was noted that the event typically attracts a significant number of participants, including students and adults. **Voice vote – ayes, all. Motion carried.**

The committee next discussed the lower level of Village Hall and broader facility planning considerations. The Fiscal Officer explained that she and the Police Chief had been working with contractors to obtain pricing and evaluate possible renovation options if Village administrative offices were to be consolidated into a single building. She stated that the process required significant contractor time and effort and asked Council whether there remained sufficient interest in pursuing the concept before continuing further planning discussions.

Council members discussed the condition and future use of the basement area. Cavanagh stated that renovation and modernization of the space would be beneficial regardless of whether additional employees are relocated there, particularly if increased digitization efforts reduce the need for paper storage. Cavanagh noted that the Building Department had expressed a preference to remain in its current location. The Fiscal Officer clarified that it was the contracted Building Inspector who

preferred to remain in the existing offices. The Mayor proposed using a portion of the new salt structure for administrative offices. Council agreed that the matter required additional discussion and review. It was determined that the committee would continue evaluating options and revisit the discussion at a future meeting.

Before concluding the report, Council Member Rensel referenced prior discussion regarding the Miller-Dodson reserve study and indicated that additional review would occur at the upcoming Property committee meeting.

PARKS COMMITTEE: Cavanagh reported that the committee had not met since the prior week's meeting. However, she stated that with the arrival of spring weather and increased park activity, it would likely be necessary to schedule another Parks Committee meeting in the near future.

Discussion then turned to planning for the Village's annual Fall Festival. Council members acknowledged that preparations should begin soon in order to organize the event effectively. The Mayor suggested that the Village's participation in the nation's upcoming 250th anniversary celebration could potentially serve as a theme for this year's Fall Festival activities.

PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMITTEE REPORT: Berger stated that the Public Utilities Committee met the previous Thursday and discussed the Village's long-term stormwater management planning. He explained that the Village's original stormwater study was completed many years ago and that most of the projects identified in that report have since been addressed. The committee discussed the need for an updated stormwater study to identify any new drainage concerns, remaining problem areas, and future maintenance needs throughout the Village. Council members noted that the Village has made significant progress on stormwater improvements over the years and that this would represent the third major review of the Village's stormwater planning efforts. It was also noted that the Engineer supported updating the study and agreed it would be beneficial to reassess current conditions and priorities. Berger stated that the committee wanted Council to be aware that this would likely become one of the Public Utilities Committee's next major projects moving forward.

SAFE BICYCLE AND PEDESTRIAN TRANSPORT COMMITTEE REPORT: Bell reported that a joint meeting of the Finance Committee and the Bicycle and Pedestrian Transport Committee had recently been held as a Special Council meeting to discuss potential funding options for the proposed bike path project. He explained that the Finance Committee had recommended moving forward with placing a levy before voters in the fall election. He stated that the proposed levy would be for five years at a rate of 0.81 mills, which was discussed during the meeting as approximately \$28 annually per \$100,000 of fair market home value. Council members clarified during discussion that the figure referenced fair market value rather than taxable value.

Although supportive of pedestrian safety improvements and expansion of the path system, Bell expressed reservations about proceeding immediately with the levy. He stated that he continued to struggle with balancing the timing of the proposal against other anticipated financial priorities facing the Village, including future police funding needs and the possibility of a future Fire and EMS levy. He also commented that he was not yet fully convinced the Village had exhausted all possible grant opportunities before asking residents for additional tax support.

Discussion also included the potential benefits of the path project. Council members noted that the proposed path would improve pedestrian safety by separating bicyclists and walkers from road traffic

and would connect approximately half of the Village. It was further discussed that the route could improve access to Chagrin Falls by allowing pedestrians and cyclists to utilize existing neighborhood roads and sidewalks once reaching Spring Drive.

During the public comment portion of the discussion, resident Joe Pianeck, 71 Paw Paw Lake Rd., addressed Council regarding the proposed project. He stated that, from his perspective, the project had evolved significantly from its original presentation. He commented that the project initially appeared to involve substantial outside grant funding with limited local financial contribution, but had since grown into a much larger project estimated at approximately \$1.8 million, with local taxpayers potentially responsible for roughly \$1 million of the total cost. Pianeck questioned the overall practicality and usefulness of the proposed path, stating that in his opinion it did not provide meaningful connectivity because it would begin near State Route 306 and end near the park area without broader integration into the community. He expressed concern that many residents would still need to travel on roads such as Bell Road to access the path itself.

He further stated that he believed the Village had other infrastructure priorities that would provide greater value to residents, including police equipment, service vehicles, and stormwater-related projects. He referenced prior drainage and pond-related concerns within the Village and questioned whether the proposed bike path represented the best use of taxpayer funds.

Council members responded that no final decision had been made and emphasized that placing the issue on the ballot would ultimately allow residents to decide whether to support the levy. It was also noted that additional opportunities for public discussion and explanation of the project would occur before any election.

ADMINISTRATIVE TECHNOLOGY COMMITTEE: Berger reported that the Administration and Technology Committee would meet on May 18, 2026, at 7:00 a.m.

ORDINANCES AND RESOLUTIONS:

Bell provided a third reading of an ordinance declaring it necessary to levy a tax in excess of the ten-mill limitation and declaring an emergency (Road and Bridge renewal). Bell made a motion to adopt, seconded by Berger. Roll call – ayes, all. Motion carried. **ORD 2026-37**

Berger provided a second reading of an ordinance amending Section 235.02 of the Village of South Russell's Codified Ordinances to eliminate the Treasury Investment Board, adopt investment procedures in accordance with the Ohio Revised Code, and declaring an emergency.

Cavanagh introduced a resolution authorizing the discard or salvage of personal property not needed by the Village and declaring an emergency. Cavanagh made a motion to waive readings, seconded by Berger. Roll call – ayes, all. Motion carried. Cavanagh made a motion to adopt, seconded by Berger. Roll call – ayes, all. Motion carried. **ORD 2026-38**

Berger introduced an ordinance approving Work Order #1 to the Master Services Agreement for Professional Consulting Services with Verdantas for work for the Hazelwood Storm Sewer and Pavement Replacement Project in an amount not to exceed \$181,000, authorizing the Mayor to execute Work Order #1 on behalf of the Village, and declaring an emergency. Berger made a motion to waive readings, seconded by Cavanagh. Roll call – ayes, all. Motion carried. Berger made a motion to

adopt, seconded by Cavanagh. Roll call – ayes, all. Motion carried. **ORD 2026-39**

Bell introduced an ordinance declaring it necessary to levy a tax in excess of the ten mill limitation and declaring an emergency.

Bell introduced an ordinance approving Work Order #1 to the Master Services Agreement for Professional Consulting Services with Verdantas for design work, bidding, and construction administration for the Waverly Lane Paving project in an amount not to exceed \$57,000, authorizing the Mayor to execute Work Order #1 on behalf of the Village, and declaring an emergency. Bell made a motion to waive readings, seconded by Berger. Roll call – ayes, all. Motion carried. Bell made a motion to adopt, seconded by Berger. Roll call – ayes, all. Motion carried. **ORD 2026-40**

PAYMENTS REGISTER: Berger made a motion to ratify the Payment Listing of 4/30/2026 in the amount of \$35,216.84, seconded by Cavanagh. Voice vote – ayes, all. Motion carried.

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

Rensel raised a question regarding the Village’s contract with Chagrin Valley Dispatch (“CVD”), specifically asking whether Council needed to discuss the agreement prior to the July deadline for opting out of the contract. It was clarified that the agreement operates on a three-year cycle and that if the Village intended to withdraw, notice would need to be provided by July 1 in order to avoid financial obligation for the following year.

The Chief then discussed recent meetings with representatives from CVD, Chagrin Valley Fire Department (CVFD), and information technology personnel regarding compatibility between dispatch systems. He explained that while separate computer-aided dispatch systems could technically work together, doing so would require more than \$100,000 in additional equipment and upgrades. The Chief stated that the larger concern was operational effectiveness. He explained that separate systems could create communication delays and confusion between dispatch centers, including uncertainty about whether calls had already been dispatched. He expressed concern that this could negatively affect response times and overall coordination during emergencies. Council members also discussed the importance of maintaining coordination with CVFD, since fire dispatch services operate through CVD. The Chief emphasized that maintaining compatibility between agencies is important for efficient emergency response operations.

Council revisited determining a new date for the Council retreat. The Fiscal Officer would continue working to coordinate availability.

EXECUTIVE SESSION: Berger made a motion to enter into Executive Session at 7:57 p.m. in compliance with Ohio Revised Code Section 121.22(g)(1) for the employment of a public employee and inviting into Executive Session the Mayor, Fiscal Officer, Police Chief, and Solicitor, seconded by Cavanagh. Roll call – ayes, all. Motion carried.

Berger made a motion to reconvene at 8:51 p.m., seconded by Canton. Voice vote – ayes, all. Motion carried.

Berger made a motion to enter into Executive Session at 8:52 p.m. in compliance with Ohio Revised Code Section 121.22(g)(1) for the employment of a public employee and inviting into Executive Session the Mayor, Fiscal Officer, and Solicitor, seconded by Bell. Roll call – ayes, all. Motion carried.

Cavanagh made a motion to reconvene at 8:57 p.m., seconded by Berger. Voice vote – ayes, all. Motion carried.

Berger made a motion to authorize the Fiscal Officer to make an offer of employment to a public employee for the position of Building Department Administrative Assistant at Step 3 of the Pay Schedule 2026 in the amount of approximately \$56,430 annually, seconded by Cavanagh. Voice vote – ayes, all. Motion carried.

Berger made a motion to amend Council’s motion of April 27, 2026, to clarify that in the absence of the Street Commissioner, the Mayor will act as the interim Street Commissioner with all authority to make decisions for that department, seconded by Porter. Voice vote – ayes, all. Motion carried.

ADJOURNMENT: Being that there was no further business before Council, Berger made a motion to adjourn at 8:59 p.m., seconded by Bell. Voice vote – ayes, all. Motion carried.


William G. Koons, Mayor


Danielle Romanowski, Fiscal Officer

Prepared by: Leslie Galicki