

Properties Committee Meeting Minutes
June 29, 2026 – 9:00 a.m.
Village Hall

Present: Chairwoman Ruth Cavanagh; Committee Members Jerry Canton and Mary Rensel; Police Chief Rizzo; Street Commissioner Tim Young; Resident Charlotte Brett.

Chairwoman Cavanagh called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m. and welcomed those in attendance. Due to work schedules, the committee began with reports from Street Commissioner Tim Young and Police Chief Rizzo.

Playground Expansion

Street Commissioner Young presented a proposal from Parkvision for the installation of additional playground equipment intended primarily for toddlers and younger children. The initial proposal totaled approximately **\$112,000**, including equipment, installation, playground borders, and engineered mulch. An earlier estimate of approximately \$190,000 was clarified as including additional equipment that was not considered necessary.

The committee reviewed each item in the proposal and discussed several opportunities to reduce costs:

- Eliminate the additional climbing tower since a larger structure already exists.
- Purchase playground mulch separately, noting that the Village recently completed mulch replacement for approximately \$5,000 compared to the proposal's \$11,300 allowance.
- Focus on equipment that better serves toddlers, including additional swings, smaller climbing elements, and age-appropriate play features.
- Customize the proposal by selecting only the desired components since all items were individually priced.

Committee members agreed that before any purchase is made, the Village should seek substantial public input. Parents have consistently expressed that the current playground lacks sufficient swings and equipment designed for younger children. The committee discussed several methods for gathering community feedback, including:

- A Google survey for residents.
- A public listening session at the park.
- Displaying concept drawings and gathering comments during Fall Fest.

Mary Rensel agreed to assist with creating a Google survey with responses collected before Fall Fest so that public comments could help guide the final design.

Village Corner Landscaping Project

Street Commissioner Young reported receiving conceptual proposals from **Impullitti Landscaping** and **Chapin Landscaping** for improvements to the Village Hall corner at Bell

Road and State Route 306. One contractor provided conceptual renderings while another submitted an estimated cost of approximately **\$18,300** for landscaping that included trees, shrubs, perennial plantings, and stone borders, exclusive of any new entrance sign.

The committee discussed the overall vision for the corner property and emphasized that residents have consistently requested a simple, attractive, and low-maintenance design rather than an elaborate gathering space. Discussion centered on:

- Maintaining clear visibility at the intersection.
- Selecting salt-tolerant, low-maintenance plants with seasonal color.
- Using landscaping that complements Village Hall.
- Incorporating benches only if they serve a practical purpose.
- Avoiding costly structures such as gazebos that would require ongoing maintenance.

Several local landscaping contractors, including the student-operated **Mulch Movers**, were identified as potential installers once a final design is completed. Charlotte Brett agreed to assist with selecting appropriate plant materials.

Village Entrance Sign Discussion

The committee devoted significant discussion to replacing the existing Village entrance sign.

Members expressed interest in replacing the current black-and-white sign with one that better matches the Village Park signs and overall character of South Russell. Examples from neighboring communities were reviewed.

The committee also discussed the possibility of eventually installing an electronic message board. Advantages included:

- Easier communication of Village meetings and events.
- Elimination of aging sandwich-board signs.
- Reduced staff time required to manually change sign lettering.

Concerns included:

- High installation costs.
- Necessary zoning ordinance amendments.
- Community acceptance.
- Appropriate design, operating hours, and brightness.

Street Commissioner Young will research current zoning regulations, anticipated costs, and available options. The committee agreed that landscaping improvements should proceed independently while reserving space for a future sign installation. Public feedback may also be sought regarding a digital sign.

Rarick Cemetery

The committee discussed extending the split-rail fence to fully encompass Village-owned cemetery property. Street Commissioner Young presented estimates for replacing the existing fence:

- Auburn Fence – approximately **\$6,700**
- Superior Fence & Rail – approximately **\$6,900**
- Great Northern Fence – approximately **\$9,630**

Council has previously allocated \$5,000 for fencing; therefore, additional appropriations will be required.

Before any work proceeds, the Village must obtain signed property access waivers from adjacent property owners. Once access is secured, staff plans to clear brush, chip debris onsite, and remove remaining material before construction begins. The committee also discussed the possibility of accessing the property through neighboring land if appropriate waivers can be obtained.

Summer Concert at Village Park

The committee reviewed the Mayor's proposal to host a community concert at Village Park on **July 14**.

Members expressed tentative support for:

- Renting approximately 60 chairs.
- Obtaining pricing from rental vendors.
- Proceeding with the event pending final costs.

The committee requested rental pricing before final approval.

South Park Improvements

Street Commissioner Young requested authorization to refurbish landscaping at South Park, including:

- Removing deteriorated boxwoods.
- Replanting entrance beds.
- Installing landscaping around the South Russell Village Park sign.

The committee supported refreshing these landscape areas to match improvements previously completed at North Park. Discussion also included a possible future pavilion, estimated at approximately **\$7,000**, to provide additional shade for visitors.

Park Maintenance

Young reported that restroom maintenance continues every other day. Solar-powered ventilation fans have significantly reduced odors during daylight hours. Staff continues to use biological treatments and deodorizing systems while allowing beneficial bacteria to remain active before scheduling future pumping.

The committee also discussed weed management practices. Young explained that staff spot-sprays individual weeds, allows herbicide to take effect, and then removes weeds manually to minimize chemical use while protecting desirable plantings. Members agreed this targeted approach was appropriate.

Village Hall Landscaping and Beautification

Resident Charlotte Brett presented numerous recommendations for improving the appearance of Village Hall and other municipal buildings.

Suggestions included:

- Decorative planters at the Village Hall entrance.
- Matching planters at the Police Department entrance.
- Hanging flower baskets at Village Hall, the Building Department, and Service Department.
- Seasonal red, white, and blue plantings.
- Decorative bows and patriotic bunting for Independence Day.
- Refreshing decorative gravel around the Police Department.
- Additional landscaping near Village signage.

The committee generally supported the concepts and agreed that consistency in planter styles and seasonal displays would improve the appearance of Village facilities. Staff will investigate planter options, brackets, and self-watering containers to reduce maintenance.

Parking Lot Discussion

The committee discussed whether additional parking should eventually be added near Village Hall to accommodate the Saturday Market and large community events.

Members questioned whether permanent parking expansion is necessary given that:

- Additional paved area will become available once the old salt dome is removed.
- Residents have generally preferred preserving green space.
- Existing parking lot striping should eventually be completed following future resurfacing projects.

No action was taken.

Salt Storage Project

Chief Rizzo and Street Commissioner Young recommended extending concrete pavement beyond the new salt storage building to accommodate heavy truck traffic and prevent future pavement deterioration. Members agreed the modest additional investment would likely reduce future maintenance costs.

Park Dumpster Proposal

To reduce weekend overtime associated with emptying park trash after rentals, Young proposed installing a screened dumpster enclosure near the park restroom.

The proposal included:

- A fenced enclosure.
- Controlled access using either a key or electronic lock.
- Requiring renters to empty their own trash before receiving a refundable deposit.

Committee members agreed the concept warrants additional investigation.

Bocce Court

Young reported that construction of the bocce court continues. Limestone screenings and railroad ties are expected to be installed shortly, with final grading and seeding anticipated by the following week, weather permitting.

Community Events

The committee reviewed several proposed community events.

Colonial Campout: Members expressed safety concerns regarding an overnight public camping event at Village Park. While recognizing that organized scouting events operate under structured supervision, the committee concluded that any Village-sponsored event should remain an evening-only program rather than overnight.

Butterfly Release and Children's Bike Ride: The committee supported continuing plans for a children's bicycle ride combined with a butterfly release event in partnership with local volunteers.

9/11 Commemoration: The Mayor proposed mowing a "9-11" design into park grass. Committee members questioned whether the display was appropriate and suggested postponing the idea.

Veterans Breakfast: Discussion included placement of service flags and compensation for Service Department employees who install them. The matter will be revisited closer to Veterans Day.

Village Hall Renovation Update

Chief Rizzo reported substantial progress on the Village Hall basement renovation.

Work completed or underway includes:

- Relocation of IT equipment.
- Office reconfiguration for the Building Department.
- Painting and ceiling replacement.
- Carpet installation.
- Preparation for new office assignments.
- Planning for future Service Department office and break room improvements.

Chief Rizzo also reported discovering a significant historical mouse infestation above the ceiling during demolition. Extensive cleaning has been completed, and a pest control contractor has been scheduled to inspect the building and recommend exclusion measures before renovation work proceeds.

Approval of Previous Minutes

Canton made a motion to approve the minutes of the previous Properties Committee meeting, seconded by Cavanagh . Voice vote – ayes, Cavanagh and Canton. Rensel abstained. Motion carried.

Meeting adjourned at 10:48 a.m.

Action Items

- Develop and distribute a community survey regarding playground improvements.
- Refine playground proposal based on public feedback and prioritized equipment.
- Continue development of the Village corner landscaping plan and solicit competitive bids.
- Research costs, zoning requirements, and design options for a future Village entrance sign.
- Obtain signed access waivers before proceeding with Rarick Cemetery clearing and fencing.
- Obtain chair rental pricing for the July 14 concert.
- Proceed with South Park landscape improvements.
- Investigate installation of a screened dumpster enclosure at Village Park.
- Research self-watering planters, hanging basket hardware, and seasonal landscaping enhancements for Village facilities.
- Obtain pest control proposal for Village Hall.
- Continue Village Hall renovation and IT relocation.
- Continue bocce court construction toward completion.