

Public Utilities Committee Presentation to the Russell Township Board of Trustees

Village of South Russell – Hemlock/Walters Road Culvert Replacement Project

Date: July 16, 2026

Based on the meeting transcript.

Call to Order

The Russell Township Board of Trustees convened its regular meeting and conducted a roll call, confirming the presence of all trustees. Following the Pledge of Allegiance, the Chair appointed Jessica to serve as clerk for attendance. The Chair also introduced Susan Scrogan, who is serving as Deputy Fiscal Officer while the Township continues its search for a permanent Fiscal Officer.

Because the primary agenda item involved a presentation from the Village of South Russell, the Board moved directly to welcome Councilman Mark Porter.

Public Utilities Committee Presentation

Hemlock/Walters Road Culvert Replacement Project

Councilman Mark Porter introduced himself as both a member of the Village of South Russell Council and Chair of the Public Utilities Committee, whose responsibilities include stormwater management. He explained that the purpose of his presentation was to provide a final update on the Hemlock/Walters Road culvert replacement project and to discuss the Village's request that Russell Township share in the remaining project costs following grant reimbursement.

Mr. Porter noted that the project benefits not only Village residents but also Russell Township residents because Walters Road serves as the municipal boundary and is traveled by residents of both communities. He emphasized that the project represents another example of regional cooperation and expressed the Village's willingness to continue partnering with Russell Township on future infrastructure improvements.

Project Completion Status

Village Streets Commissioner Tim Young provided a detailed update on construction.

He reported that the project is substantially complete. Final seeding and landscape restoration have been completed, and vegetation is expected to continue establishing as weather permits. While some minor settling has occurred along the road edges, the Village will continue monitoring those areas and add material as necessary.

Mr. Young addressed a resident complaint regarding the roadway shoulder. After reviewing the site, Village staff measured the available berm and confirmed that it exceeded standard width requirements. The Village engineer also evaluated concerns that the roadway remained too rough or contained an excessive dip. After driving the roadway and observing traffic, the engineer concluded that the roadway falls within acceptable design parameters and functions as intended.

Additional erosion-control measures beyond the original project scope were also installed to better protect the site.

Overall, Village officials expressed satisfaction with the quality of the completed work and stated that the project achieved its intended objectives.

Final Project Costs

Mr. Porter presented the final financial summary.

The total project cost was **\$108,741.43**, which exceeded the original estimate of approximately **\$96,000**. The increase was primarily attributed to engineering expenses that became part of the final project cost.

Funding consisted of:

- **Ohio Public Works Commission (OPWC) Grant:** \$46,200.00
- **Village of South Russell share:** \$62,541.43

The Village requested that Russell Township reimburse one-half of the remaining local cost, resulting in a requested Township contribution of:

\$31,270.71

Mr. Porter explained that this request was consistent with discussions held during the project's planning stages and stated that the Village would appreciate Russell Township's participation.

Trustee Discussion

Trustees questioned how the final project costs compared to the estimates previously discussed.

One trustee noted that earlier conversations anticipated a significantly lower Township contribution and expressed concern that the Board had not received updated cost estimates while the project was underway. The trustee stated that the Board had expected additional information before construction was completed and questioned whether sufficient budgeting had been performed for the increased cost.

Mr. Porter responded that the Village had previously estimated Russell Township's share at approximately **\$23,000** and believed supporting documentation had been forwarded by the Village Fiscal Officer. He acknowledged that the final cost increased because of engineering expenses and other project-related work.

Trustees recognized that unforeseen construction conditions, including additional repacking and materials, reasonably contributed to the increase. However, they also observed that the final request represented approximately a 20–25% increase over the earlier estimate.

Despite those concerns, trustees indicated they remained supportive of contributing financially toward the project because of its benefit to both communities.

Funding Source Discussion

Because the Township currently lacks a permanent Fiscal Officer, trustees discussed the need to determine the proper funding source before making a financial commitment.

Several possible funding sources were considered, including:

- Gasoline tax funds
- State permissive tax funds
- Other road-related appropriations

Trustees noted that gasoline tax funds appeared to contain sufficient unencumbered balances but wanted confirmation that such funds could legally be used for this project.

The Chair indicated staff would consult with the County regarding the allowable use of road-related funds before placing the matter on a future agenda for formal action.

Mr. Porter clarified that the Village was **not requesting immediate payment** and understood the Township needed time to determine the appropriate funding mechanism.

Public Comment

A resident who regularly travels Walters Road expressed concern about roadway safety near the completed culvert.

The resident stated that the eastern side of the roadway lacks guardrails despite a steep embankment and concrete drainage structure adjacent to the road. The resident believed the location presents a significant hazard, particularly during winter weather, and warned that a vehicle could leave the roadway and suffer a serious accident.

While acknowledging that engineers had approved the completed project, the resident urged both communities to consider installing guardrails to improve public safety.

Trustee Response

Trustees acknowledged that residents have continued to express concerns about the roadway and agreed the project provides benefits to both Russell Township and South Russell.

The Board reiterated its intention to identify an appropriate funding source before making a formal decision regarding cost participation. Trustees indicated they anticipated revisiting the matter at a future meeting once fiscal guidance had been obtained.

Mr. Porter thanked the Board for its consideration and reiterated the Village's appreciation for the Township's willingness to evaluate participation in the project.

Action Items

- **Township Administration**
 - Consult with the County regarding the permissible use of gasoline tax or other road-related funds for reimbursement of the culvert project.
 - Determine the appropriate Township fund from which any contribution could legally be made.
 - Place the reimbursement request on a future Board agenda after funding eligibility has been confirmed.
 - **Village of South Russell**
 - Continue monitoring settlement along roadway edges and perform maintenance as needed.
 - Maintain newly installed landscaping and erosion-control measures.
 - Continue discussions with Russell Township regarding reimbursement and future cooperative infrastructure projects.
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Meeting Conclusion

Following completion of the discussion, the Village representatives thanked the Board for its time and consideration and departed the meeting. Trustees indicated they would continue evaluating the funding request and revisit the matter once fiscal questions had been resolved. No formal action or vote was taken regarding the reimbursement request during this presentation.