

Properties Committee Meeting Minutes

Date: July 13, 2026

Time: 8:30 a.m.

Location: Building Department

Members Present

- Chairwoman Ruth Cavanagh
- Council Member Jerry Canton
- Council Member Mary Rensel
- Mayor William Koons

Guest

- Tony Colini, Landscape Service

Call to Order

Chairwoman Cavanagh called the meeting to order at 8:30 a.m.

Corner Beautification Project

The committee met with landscape designer Tony Colini to discuss conceptual plans for beautifying the Village-owned property at the southeast and southwest corners of Bell Road and State Route 306. Committee members emphasized that the project should remain simple, attractive, fiscally responsible, and consistent with the preferences expressed in the recent community survey.

Chairwoman Cavanagh explained that she envisioned a landscaped earthen mound with colorful perennial plantings and shrubs on the west side of the intersection. She stated that she preferred a natural appearance rather than decorative lettering or floral displays spelling out the Village's name. The committee generally agreed that the landscaping should provide an attractive entrance into South Russell while remaining low maintenance.

Discussion then focused on the east side of the intersection. Members agreed that this location should feature a permanent Village identification sign surrounded by landscaping. Consideration was given to whether the sign should read "Village of South Russell" or "South Russell Village," with members expressing differing opinions on the wording. Regardless of the final wording, the committee agreed that the sign should be non-illuminated and integrated into the landscape.

Mayor Koons noted that the community survey demonstrated residents preferred a modest, tasteful design rather than expensive structures or elaborate features. Members agreed that the project should create an identifiable entrance into the Village without excessive cost.

Public Seating and Amenities

The committee discussed whether to include a picnic table or benches near Augie's and Sleepy Rooster, recognizing that patrons often wait outside those businesses. Members expressed concern that picnic tables could encourage litter, while benches would provide seating without inviting extended use or creating maintenance issues. The committee favored completing the primary landscaping first before deciding whether seating should be added later.

Existing Memorial Area

Members reviewed possible improvements to the existing flagpole and veterans memorial area. Rather than adding additional structures, the committee favored enhancing the area with colorful landscaping and plantings while retaining the existing memorial stone and flag display. Discussion also included repeating the landscaping theme with a small mound behind the memorial to create visual balance between both corners of the intersection.

Landscape Design Concepts

Mr. Colini recommended incorporating architectural elements from the Village Hall into the entrance signage to reflect the Western Reserve character of the community. He suggested angled signage to improve visibility for motorists approaching the intersection from multiple directions.

For the area near Augie's, Mr. Colini proposed using split-rail fencing, trees, and landscaping to soften the appearance of the parking lot while creating a more attractive gateway. Members agreed that additional trees would improve the appearance of the site and provide shade over time.

Safety was also discussed, particularly concerning motorists who frequently cut through parking areas. Members noted that landscaping and fencing could help discourage unsafe driving patterns while improving aesthetics.

Tree Selection

The committee discussed the existing ornamental pear trees and their long-term replacement. Mr. Colini explained that Callery pear trees are invasive, structurally weak, and undesirable for future planting. While members were reluctant to remove healthy trees immediately, they agreed replacements should be planned as trees decline. Alternative species discussed included flowering dogwoods and ornamental crabapple trees.

Veterans Recognition

Members discussed the possibility of expanding the existing veterans memorial by recognizing Village residents who served in the armed forces. Ideas included installing plaques or engraved panels listing veterans' names while maintaining flexibility to add future names. The committee favored a simple, tasteful design over expensive cast bronze memorials.

Mr. Colini agreed to prepare conceptual sketches incorporating the committee's ideas and to obtain preliminary pricing information for signage options.

Garden Club Marker

The committee discussed reinstalling the historic Chagrin Valley Women's Garden Club marker that had previously been removed and stored for safekeeping. Members agreed it would be appropriate to reinstall the marker as part of the landscaping improvements.

Bocce Court Project

The committee reviewed the status of the bocce court project and agreed that construction was progressing well. Discussion included purchasing a weather-resistant storage container for bocce equipment similar to installations at other communities. Members also discussed holding a ribbon-cutting or photo opportunity upon completion to recognize volunteers and publicize the project.

The committee briefly discussed whether future signage regarding pet waste might become necessary depending on public use of the facility.

Historic Cemetery

The committee discussed future improvements to the historic cemetery. Members agreed that establishing accurate property boundaries should be the first priority and supported obtaining a professional survey before additional work proceeds.

The committee also discussed:

- Preserving access to the cemetery.
- Cleaning and maintaining grave markers using accepted preservation practices.
- Utilizing Village staff rather than volunteers for chemical cleaning of historic stones.
- Continuing discussions with neighboring property owners regarding future access.

Estimated survey costs were discussed, with members anticipating a cost between approximately \$500 and \$1,500.

Scout Project Recognition

The committee discussed continuing the practice of installing small recognition plaques for Eagle Scout projects completed on Village property. Members agreed these plaques appropriately recognize volunteer efforts and have held up well over time. Updated pricing will be obtained before proceeding.

The committee also discussed maintaining existing Scout projects, including repainting and preserving older improvements as needed.

Tree City USA

Mayor Koons introduced the possibility of pursuing Tree City USA designation. Discussion centered on the estimated annual investment required and whether the Village already performs many qualifying activities through existing tree planting and maintenance programs.

Members agreed to review the program requirements further before determining whether participation should be included in the upcoming budget.

Action Items

- Tony Colini will prepare conceptual landscape designs for both corners of the intersection.
- Obtain preliminary pricing for entrance signage and veterans recognition features.
- Investigate options for incorporating architectural elements into the Village entrance sign.
- Reinstall the historic Garden Club marker as part of future landscaping.
- Continue construction and completion of the bocce court.
- Obtain pricing for bocce equipment storage containers.
- Arrange a photograph and public recognition following completion of the bocce court.
- Obtain updated pricing for Eagle Scout recognition plaques.
- Coordinate a property survey for the historic cemetery.
- Review Tree City USA requirements and determine budget implications.
- Continue planning for long-term cemetery maintenance and preservation.

Adjournment