ADMIN & TECH COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES

Date: Saturday, January 10, 2026
Time: 9:00 AM
Present: Bell, Berger, Alexander, Chief Rizzo, FO

Berger stated that the purpose of forming the Administration & Technology Committee was to address operational matters that previously "fell through the cracks" due to unclear committee assignments. The intent of this committee was to identify scope, establish structure, and improve accountability.

Regarding Village events, the committee had no objection to the events themselves but there was concern about the lack of definition, including event purpose and goals, budget/costing expectations, who is involved and in what roles, responsibility and oversight.

Regarding Trash Day Berger expressed concern that the event has periodically been abused due to lack of clearly enforced limits. He cited an example from past years in which someone dismantled a garage or shed and brought it in "four different truckloads," treating the event as free construction debris disposal rather than community cleanup support. The committee agreed that Trash Day is not meant to serve as an alternative to paid hauling and dumping services. Certain materials pose safety risks and should be restricted.

The committee discussed the fact that residents often attempt to bring unacceptable items such as paint, paint thinner, oils and other hazardous waste. The Village already publishes a detailed list in the newsletter and on the website. However, committee members discussed the need for greater visibility and stronger enforcement, since items continue to appear. The idea of coordinating a one-day hazardous waste collection in connection with Trash Day was discussed.

The committee concluded that the program is valuable and widely appreciated, but it needs guidelines and policies to protect employees, volunteers, and the Village itself. There should be a published policy empowering staff to refuse prohibited items.

The Village-wide yard sale, traditionally held the Saturday before Trash Day, has minimal involvement from the Village beyond promoting the date. The event began several years ago as a concept similar to Chagrin Falls, but participation appears to have declined. A significant issue raised was that various HOAs prohibit yard sales, creating confusion among residents and the public. The Village does not currently produce a map or list of participating addresses and has been using a simple identification approach (green balloons) rather than compiling administrative details. The committee expressed agreement that staff should not be burdened with added administrative work associated with address collection, mapping, and coordination.

Bell said he would contact Chagrin Falls organizers to explore whether South Russell residents could "piggyback" on the Chagrin Falls yard sale communication channels, possibly through an existing Facebook or promotional group.

The committee discussed the Veterans Breakfast, traditionally held on the Monday closest to Veterans Day. Monday is selected because the Sleepy Rooster, where the event has traditionally been held, is closed on that day, making it available.

The committee discussed an ongoing issue of whether the breakfast is intended to honor South Russell veterans only or veterans from the wider region. While the committee expressed respect for all veterans, it also emphasized that the event is funded by South Russell taxpayer money, and capacity is limited.

The committee identified a major operational gap: there is no centralized, transparent list of eligible veterans, and the invitation process has historically been managed primarily by the Mayor. Concerns included not knowing how the invitation list is generated, not knowing whether residency is required, and not having consistent outreach or tracking.

The committee agreed the Village should create a Village Veterans database using a web-based form (such as a Google Form) that feeds into a spreadsheet. This would allow veterans to self-register, and the Village could maintain an accurate list over time which would serve for better outreach for future veteran-related events. This could support not only the breakfast, but also events such as Memorial Day programming or cemetery-related veteran recognition.

The committee discussed spouses, caregivers, and drivers that transport the veteran to the event and whether those individual meals would be paid for by the Village. There would need to be clear limits and expectations, to prevent situations where large groups attend beyond the intended scope.

The committee acknowledged that in the past, some non-residents affiliated with local veterans may have been invited or may have attended. Members agreed it would be uncomfortable and disrespectful to turn people away at the event, but emphasized that eligibility rules must be clearly communicated in advance. A possible solution discussed was to allow non-residents to attend but requiring them to pay for their meals.

The committee discussed the fact that Council members are routinely invited and attend the event to serve as a meaningful show of support to veterans. However, the group emphasized that participation should remain limited to elected officials only, not their family members, unless those family members are veterans.

The committee raised concerns about whether Village employees who are veterans could attend while on duty and whether that creates ethical or compensation issues. Perhaps if an employee was a veteran, he/she could clock out of work to attend the event, and then clock back into work.

Discussion included concern about employees receiving benefits (a meal/event attendance) that could be construed as additional compensation.

The committee reviewed a draft Chain of Command policy. If a department head is out of the office or unavailable, or if an employee is injured or an emergency occurs, there must be a clear chain of decision-making.

The committee reviewed a proposed chain-of-command document that outlines escalation steps through department leadership. Members agreed the structure made sense and that the chain should remain focused on full-time staff roles, rather than relying on part-time elected officials.

The committee agreed to recommend adoption at the next Council meeting noting it can be approved by motion and inserted into the policy handbook. The policy would then be communicated to all staff by email.

The committee discussed the Village's designated Safety Officer role. Members acknowledged uncertainty regarding whether a formal appointment exists, whether required training has been completed, how often retraining is required, and whether documentation exists confirming qualification.

Members also discussed a structural concern of whether the Safety Officer is within the Street Department, the person may be placed in the position of "regulating themselves," which may not be ideal. The group agreed clarification is needed and that the issue may overlap between HR, Streets, and Administration responsibilities.

For practical purposes, the committee agreed to keep it within the Admin/Tech discussion until roles are clarified.

The Village's process of collecting outside affiliation information was discussed. This is done to prevent conflicts of interest before they arise. The committee emphasized that the purpose is preventative and transparency-focused, not punitive.

Records retention training is required and all elected officials will complete the training themselves.

The committee discussed the concept of reintroducing a "new resident orientation packet" (welcome wagon-type information), noting the Village has not done this for many years. The committee acknowledged that some content exists online but may be outdated. Members noted the benefit of including basic Village information and highlighting upcoming events such as Trash Day. No decision was made, but the topic was identified for a future meeting.

The Village received notice of a claim filed by the Mayor seeking insurance coverage for legal defense costs regarding the Mayor's actions. The claim was assigned to an adjuster, and no further action occurred at the time of the meeting. This was presented as an administrative awareness item.

The committee discussed frustration with the time required to complete basic IT tasks. Examples included the approval process for hardware/software, delays in activating new accounts, and procurement process issues.

Berger described receiving a significant phishing email attack (dozens of messages). The FO advised using the "report phishing" function to alert the ADP IT team. Berger reported he forwarded the situation to senior ADP leadership (Frank Antonucci) on January 1st and received a rapid response. While acknowledging strong security controls and responsiveness at leadership level, the committee expressed concern that basic service requests should not require escalation to top leadership.

The group recognized that ADP IT provides strong cybersecurity support, but there were concerns with routine user-service performance. The committee discussed the need to convene a meeting with ADP leadership to review service expectations and ensure professional response standards.

The Chief reported that his department recently completed a firewall upgrade with another IT service and it was very responsive. He explained that the vendor offers a retainer model (10 hours at $200/hour = $2,000 deposit) where work is deducted from the retainer as needed and unused retainer time carries forward, reducing waste. The company provided an estimate of approximately $3,500 to transfer all Village IT support services.

The vendor will meet with the Admin/Tech team at their February meeting and then the committee will meet with ADP to discuss concerns.

The Chief reported that the Police Department's internet service is insufficient for the new body camera and cloud video upload requirements. He said that upload speed is the critical factor for body camera video storage and transfer. A proposal was discussed for fiber internet upgrade through a provider (Windstream via Unity) at a cost reportedly $1.98 less than current cable service. The agreement will be added to the next council agenda.

The committee discussed the challenge of meeting on Saturdays and agreed it is not fair to require staff to give up weekend time. The committee agreed to meet on the second Monday of each month at 6:30 a.m.

Meeting adjourned at 10:16 a.m.