**RECORD OF PROCEEDING**
**SPECIAL MEETING - 2027 BUDGET WORK SESSION**
**MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 28, 2026 - 6:00 P.M.**

**MEMBERS PRESENT:** Bell, Canton, Cavanagh, Porter, Rensel

**MEMBERS ABSENT:** Berger

**OFFICIALS PRESENT:** Mayor Koons, Fiscal Officer Romanowski, Police Chief Rizzo, Street Commissioner Young, Administrative Assistant Galicki

The Mayor called the meeting to order, and the Fiscal Officer read the roll. The Mayor then turned the Budget Work Session over to Porter. Porter explained that the purpose of the meeting was to review the proposed 2027 budget in a working-session format using the Fiscal Officer's budget preparation summary, departmental worksheets, and the requests submitted by the Police Chief and Street Commissioner. Council proceeded fund by fund and discussed both immediate 2027 needs and longer-range capital planning.

**General Fund**

The Fiscal Officer reviewed the General Fund and explained that employee salary amounts were not being adjusted at this stage because Council had not yet determined 2027 wage increases. The former Mayor's discretionary line is now an emergency line item, with $10,000 maintained for emergency purposes. The State Auditor line will increase from $1,000 in 2026 to $7,500 in 2027 because the Village is due for its biennial audit of the prior two years. A $2,000 Board of Elections allowance was also retained because the Village had been notified that future ballot-related election costs would be charged to the Village.

Computer expenses were discussed in connection with the Village's ADP program. Because much of the computer and IT equipment was purchased at the same time in 2024, the Fiscal Officer worked with ADP to stagger replacements rather than replacing all equipment in one year. Equipment used daily would be replaced first, producing an estimated $29,000 computer expense for 2027, followed by approximately $8,000 in 2028 and $2,500 in 2029. Computers used only for occasional clock-in functions could be deferred because they receive substantially less use. The Fiscal Officer also noted that office desks that had originally been anticipated for 2027 were purchased in 2026 and no longer needed to be reflected in the budget.

Council discussed the Human Resources consultant line. The Fiscal Officer explained that the Village is currently working on job descriptions and hopes to complete most of the revisions internally because only a small number require substantial changes. The committee had not yet completed its review, so consultant assistance would be used only if necessary. Travel, education, and conference expenses were also reviewed. The $7,500 line supports required Fiscal Officer training and certifications, Ohio Municipal League (OML) and local-government conferences, Geauga County Township Association meetings, Northeast Ohio Area Coordinating Agency (NOACA)-related meetings, and similar continuing-education needs. The Fiscal Officer stated that the amount provides flexibility so the budget does not have to be repeatedly amended when additional officials attend conferences.

Advertising costs were reviewed in relation to statutory publication requirements. The Fiscal Officer explained that certain legislation, hearings, tax budget notices, zoning matters, and other legal notices must be published and documented for audit purposes. Because publication timing can require use of a daily newspaper when a weekly publication cannot meet the statutory deadline, the actual cost can vary. Overall General Fund expenses were lower than the prior year in part because the 2026 Village Hall basement project had been a one-time expense.

The Fiscal Officer also discussed a possible final phase of Village Hall interior improvements. The basement lighting and portions of the work had benefited from Northeast Ohio Public Energy Council (NOPEC) NEC grant funds. The remaining upstairs office areas have stained or rusted ceiling tiles and older lighting. The proposal is

to replace ceiling tiles and lighting in the copy room and administrative offices and, if furniture must be removed for that work, to paint the walls at the same time. Lighting and ceiling work may be grant-eligible, while painting would not be. A quote referenced during the meeting was slightly over $20,000, and the Fiscal Officer stated that available and anticipated NEC grant funds could cover a portion of the eligible work.

**Building Department Fund**

The Fiscal Officer reported that the Building Department Fund has relatively few changes. Inspection services remain a significant expense because of the volume of additions, renovations, roof replacements, and other work requiring inspection. The 2027 salary total is expected to be lower than 2026 because the 2026 budget included a period in which two full-time employees overlapped during the employee retirement transition. Council also reviewed the $2,000 insurance-waiver incentive, which is paid in $500 quarterly installments to an employee who elects not to take Village health insurance.

The Fire Prevention Officer line was budgeted at $5,000. Although recent expenditures have been lower, the Fiscal Officer explained that the officer must inspect Village businesses annually and is paid based on actual hours worked. The Building Department computer line of approximately $20,000 includes the GovWell software license, estimated at roughly $17,000 to $18,000, as well as computer replacement or repairs. The Fiscal Officer said the new GovWell software has significantly reduced walk-in traffic, improved contractor acceptance, and helps ensure required documents and approvals are completed before an application can advance.

**Fire and Ambulance Fund**

The Fiscal Officer explained that the major pressure in the Fire and Ambulance Fund is the increasing fire/ambulance contract and the phase-out of Village ambulance billing receipts. The contract increased from approximately $535,000 in 2025 to $615,000 in 2026 and is projected at approximately $684,000 in 2027. In addition, the Village received two-thirds of ambulance billing receipts in 2026, is expected to receive only one-third in 2027 and thereafter will no longer receive those billing receipts. The Fiscal Officer estimated the lost EMS billing revenue at approximately $50,000.

Council discussed whether high-volume private facilities could bear some additional share of emergency-response costs. The Police Chief reported that Meadow Falls accounts for approximately 18% to 20% of total fire-department call volume and noted that Cleveland Clinic on East Washington Street is also a significant user. Members discussed the fact that ambulance billing already occurs through insurers and questioned whether an additional municipal charge could be imposed without simply increasing revenue to the fire provider under the existing agreement. No conclusion was reached, and it was suggested that the legal and contractual issues should be researched further. The Finance Committee's ongoing discussion of a possible fire-protection levy was also acknowledged as a major 2027 issue.

**Service Fund and Facilities Planning**

The Service Fund includes approximately $14,000 for building maintenance, consisting of about $10,000 for routine maintenance and approximately $4,000 for carpeting in Police Department offices.

Council discussed the need for a more systematic building maintenance and capital-replacement plan. The Fiscal Officer referenced the Miller-Dodson report and the multi-year planning worksheet she had prepared to place major projects into future years rather than trying to fund every identified need in 2027. Examples included future parking-lot paving and striping and a Village Hall elevator, which was discussed as a possible 2030 project with an estimated planning allowance of about $60,000. The purpose of the schedule is to make large expenses visible in advance and establish a more deliberate reserve strategy.

**Cemetery Fund**

The Fiscal Officer explained that the Cemetery Fund is adjusted near year-end to reimburse the Village for labor used for grass cutting, burials, and related cemetery work. The 2026 budget was higher because of Rarick Cemetery repairs. For 2027, the miscellaneous-other line was discussed at approximately $12,500 for burial

materials, foundations, stone, and similar expenses. Labor is tracked separately and charged back to the fund as appropriate.

### Police Department / Safety Fund

The Police Chief reviewed the Safety Fund and explained that the MDT line includes mobile data terminals, software, and cameras. The line is increasing by approximately $20,000 to cover the continuing body-worn-camera subscription. Other technology and new-equipment lines are decreasing following recent upgrades, so the operating budget is otherwise relatively stable apart from the proposed building addition and vehicle replacement.

The Chief discussed the Village's speed-display program. Several units are now in more permanent locations, with some moving among developments as needed. The 2027 objective is to increase coverage on the east end of the Village because most units currently serve the west end. The Chief reported that the program has been effective, including average speeds of approximately 35 mph on Bell Road west near the park. One unit was moved from Snyder Road to Bell Road in response to concerns from the Lake Louise/Ridgecrest area about vehicles coming down the hill.

Fuel expenses were reviewed. The Chief stated that the hybrid cruisers have materially reduced fuel consumption and that, as of the prior month, Police Department fuel expenditures were approximately $9,000 against a $20,000 annual budget. The department has four marked road cruisers, one SRO vehicle, and one unmarked vehicle. A replacement cruiser at approximately $75,000 is needed for 2027 and was confirmed as a budget item.

Council also discussed repair of the drone vehicle, which the Chief said may involve wiring or shore-line connections rather than the inverter itself. Any repair needed would be handled through vehicle maintenance or, if applicable, another equipment budget. The Chief described a planned handgun replacement of approximately $20,000. The department generally replaces handguns on a five- to eight-year cycle and is considering Glock pistols equipped with red-dot sights based on the recommendation of the department's firearms instructors. The old weapons would be traded in, and the replacement would include weapons for part-time officers as part of their issued equipment.

The SRO and SSO agreements were also discussed. The Chief expected refreshed agreements to be received by the end of the month. Health insurance costs will depend on staffing and employee elections; the Fiscal Officer noted that 2026 costs were suppressed by periods of understaffing and may rise when the department is fully staffed. Full-time police personnel participate in the Police and Fire pension system, while part-time personnel participate in OPERS.

### Special Land and Building / Police Addition and Service Garage

Council then addressed the proposed Police Department addition that would connect the existing drone garage to the Police Department and provide improved restroom facilities. The capital request was discussed at approximately $160,000 to $166,500. The Chief explained that, if funded, the first steps would be to obtain formal architectural drawings, proceed through the Architectural Board of Review, Planning Commission, and Zoning Board of Appeals as required, and then advertise the project for bids.

The Fiscal Officer advised that the initial budget could not accommodate every Special Land and Building request and that the Village was approximately $160,000 short of funding all identified projects on that page. Council therefore compared the Police addition with concrete work at the new salt structure and replacement of the Service Department garage floor. The Street Commissioner described significant salt-related spalling in the garage floor, including areas approximately 1-1/4 inches deep, which creates a trip hazard. He said the worst areas could be temporarily filled with thin-set material to extend the floor for another year, but replacement is ultimately needed. The work could be phased by completing one half of the garage at a time so operations could continue.

The Chief acknowledged that the Police Department can continue using its present restroom facilities even though they are inadequate and poorly ventilated, and he agreed that the garage-floor safety concern could take priority. Council discussed adding only an architectural-planning allowance for the Police project in 2027 and deferring construction until budget conditions are clearer. The consensus was to increase the Safety Fund miscellaneous-

other line from $2,500 to $7,500, providing approximately $5,000 for architectural plans and preliminary approvals. If funding becomes available later in 2027, Council could amend the budget and proceed to bid; otherwise, construction could move to 2028. Grant opportunities, particularly those related to ADA-compliant public restroom improvements, would also be investigated.

Based on the discussion, the initial plan was to move forward with the Service Department floor and salt-structure concrete, with estimates of approximately $75,000 for the floor and $70,000 for the concrete, while limiting the Police addition to planning costs for 2027. Council also discussed creating a more formal Special Land and Building reserve fund. The Fiscal Officer explained that Ohio law requires reserve funds to identify the specific purpose, annual contribution, intended expenditures, and time period. The existing Large Equipment reserve expires after 2027, and Council discussed whether a similar long-term approach could provide approximately $50,000 per year for future building and facility needs.

**Street Maintenance Fund**

The Fiscal Officer and Street Commissioner reviewed the Street Maintenance Fund. Water-main testing can be reduced to zero because the Village declined the United States Geological Survey (USGS) contract. The annual MS4 stormwater report remains a required expense and involves both the Soil and Water Conservation District and the Village Engineer. No specific 2027 dredging project was identified at this time.

Fuel storage and tracking were discussed. The Street Commissioner plans to move the Village fuel tanks outside the building near the salt structure for fire-code and operational reasons. He described a controlled fueling system that records the product, vehicle, and operator and would permit secure 24-hour access. He said bulk delivery is not necessarily cheaper than retail fuel, but on-site storage is valuable for convenience, emergency readiness, and continuous snow-and-ice operations. Village fuel cards would remain available as a backup.

Vehicle maintenance was increased because several pieces of equipment are aging. Salt costs are also rising, with the 2027 state-bid price discussed at approximately $55 per ton compared with about $48 previously. The Village had committed to 1,800 tons and had approximately 500 tons on hand. The Street Commissioner said the Village used about 1,600 tons during the previous winter and typically prefers to enter winter with substantially more than 500 tons available. Council expressed concern about maintaining adequate inventory through November and December before the new fiscal year.

After extensive discussion, Council agreed that additional salt should be obtained under the current contract if possible. The Fiscal Officer believed the contract permitted approximately 15% above the 1,800-ton commitment, or about 270 tons, subject to confirmation. Council directed that a budget amendment be prepared Council meeting so the additional salt could be ordered promptly and placed in the new salt structure. Members emphasized that they did not want to depend on emergency borrowing from neighboring communities or the spot market during a regional shortage. The Street Commissioner said typical delivery is about two weeks and explained that conservation measures have prevented the Village from running out in the past. He would get the Fiscal Officer the amendment amount.

The discussion also addressed the proposed brine program. The Street Commissioner stated that brine could potentially reduce salt use by as much as 30%, but the reimbursement grant has detailed quarterly-reporting requirements and runs from September 1, 2026, through August 31, 2027. The Fiscal Officer said the Village must fully understand the reporting schedule and reimbursement rules before committing to the purchase. The Street Commissioner was asked to contact Bainbridge and Northfield, both of which have experience with brine equipment and grant funding, and report back. The Street Committee will also define the desired "wet road" operating standard because that policy affects salt usage, equipment, staffing, and budget needs.

Road striping was reviewed and reduced from a proposed $45,000 to $20,000 for 2027. The Street Commissioner explained that Bell Road east striping will be part of the paving project, leaving Bell Road west and handwork such as stop bars as the primary Village striping needs. Council discussed timing Bell Road west striping so that both sections of Bell Road present a consistent appearance after the east-side paving is complete. Crack sealing will continue selectively. The Street Commissioner said it is most effective on newer pavement and becomes less

useful when a roadway reaches a condition where cracking is too extensive. For 2027, the major paving focus remains Bell Road east, with only limited repairs elsewhere; broader road work is expected to resume in 2028.

### State Highway Fund

The Fiscal Officer explained that a statutory portion of gasoline-tax and vehicle-registration revenue must be placed in the State Highway Fund and may be used only for State Route 306. Approximately $8,000 is budgeted annually for salt and related work at the Route 306 intersection.

### Bell Road East / Special Road and Bridge Funds

Council reviewed the Bell Road east project and the related Special Road and Bridge funding. The Fiscal Officer explained that the project must be accounted for through the appropriate fund because it includes both NOACA and Ohio Public Works Commission (OPWC) grant participation. Grant reimbursements will be received as eligible work progresses, while the Village remains responsible for engineering, ODOT oversight, third-party review, and other administrative costs. A zero-percent loan of approximately $50,000 over 20 years is also part of the funding package. The Fiscal Officer noted that engineering and review expenses have already been incurred over multiple years, so the final Village share must be evaluated using the full project history rather than only the construction contract.

Council confirmed that Bell Road east is expected to be the Village's principal road project for 2027 and that a separate full Road Program is not planned for that year. The project is expected to be completed by approximately mid-December 2027 under the current schedule. Members noted that Bell Road west will eventually require another major rehabilitation and suggested that long-range reserve planning for that future project should begin before the roadway reaches the same condition as Bell Road east.

### Large Equipment Fund

The Street Commissioner reviewed the Large Equipment Fund and updated several requests based on current pricing and operational evaluation. A pickup truck originally budgeted at $60,000 was closer to $78,000 to $79,000 with a plow and related equipment. The proposed excavator decreased from approximately $95,000 to about $92,000. After further review, the department concluded that a compact tractor would be more useful than the originally proposed skid steer because it would provide better park access, mobility, and multi-purpose capability with less ground impact. That request was reduced from approximately $95,000 to about $47,000. A trailer was added so the equipment could be safely transported, and a stand-on mower was also discussed because improved visibility around cemetery headstones could reduce the risk of damage.

The Fiscal Officer confirmed that the fund can cover the proposed equipment and that, after the purchases originally discussed, approximately $120,000 would remain. Because 2027 is the final year of the current reserve fund, Council discussed whether the fund can be extended or must be closed and re-established. The Fiscal Officer will consult the auditor regarding the required legislation and procedure. The Street Commissioner emphasized that the excavator would improve efficiency, reduce the department's traffic footprint, provide better access to drainage areas, and reduce ground disturbance in the cemetery. He recommended retaining the existing backhoe for now because its trade-in value is low and the Village recently invested approximately $9,000 in repairs.

When asked to prioritize the equipment requests, the Street Commissioner placed the excavator and trailer first, followed by the compact tractor, with the mower lower in priority. Council then discussed deferring the approximately $78,000 pickup truck so more funds would remain available for the next large plow truck. The existing 2007 International will be evaluated in 2028; because a large truck can take a year or more to build and outfit, the planning process may need to begin in 2027. A future replacement was discussed in the range of approximately $250,000 to $300,000. Council generally favored prioritizing the excavator, trailer, and tractor and preserving additional reserve capacity for the large truck.

### Parks and Recreation

Council discussed increasing the Fall Festival budget to approximately $15,000 but also questioned whether the event should be reworked because of repeated weather risk and competition from neighboring fall events.

Alternatives discussed included a different seasonal event, a concert with food trucks, a movie night, or a midsummer event. Members noted that a simpler event could reduce Village cost and staff workload because attendees could bring their own chairs or blankets and food vendors could operate independently. No final event format was selected, and the discussion was left for future planning.

**Hazelwood / Special Road Fund**

The Special Road Fund discussion focused on the Hazelwood project. The project is expected to be bid late in 2026, with award around December and construction beginning in early 2027, followed by restoration and completion by approximately June. Because most invoices are expected in 2027, the Fiscal Officer said the majority of the appropriation should remain in the 2027 budget. Council discussed a total project allowance in the approximate $650,000 to $750,000 range, with about half funded by a state grant and an additional loan component of approximately $50,000. Members recognized that the exact Village share will depend on the final bid and grant terms.

**Operating Fund**

The Operating Fund includes a proposed increase for Village Trash Day to approximately $13,000. The Street Commissioner and Council discussed tire reimbursement and metal-recycling revenue but noted that the budget must reflect gross expenses. Uniform expenses were also reviewed. The Street Commissioner requested an increase in the annual clothing allowance because of higher costs and the department's move to higher-quality work clothing. The Fiscal Officer advised that any increase would require an HR policy change before the budget could be adjusted, so the Street Commissioner was directed to bring the request to the next Human Resources Committee meeting.

Street sweeping is budgeted to allow at least one and preferably two sweeps annually, with emphasis on curbed streets and areas served by storm sewers. Council discussed whether the new Bell Road pedestrian/bicycle area should be swept more frequently to remove small stones and cinders that could create hazards for cyclists. The Street Commissioner indicated that the existing allocation should provide sufficient flexibility if additional sweeping is needed.

The Mayor proposed increasing the tree-maintenance line from $7,000 to $8,000 so the Village could document spending of approximately $2 per resident and pursue Tree City USA designation. Council discussed the administrative requirements, including a tree-management policy or plan and what the designation does for the Village. The Mayor replied it was for bragging rights. They agreed to adjust the line to $8,000. The existing Show Your Colors allocation of approximately $1,500 was considered sufficient for replacement flags and poles.

**Other Budget Considerations**

Near the conclusion of the session, the Mayor raised pedestrian-safety concerns at the Bell Road/Route 306 intersection after observing a young rider on a motorized scooter traveling in the turn lane and entering the gas station. Council discussed whether crosswalk improvements would address the broader safety concern. The Police Chief noted that a rider on a motorized vehicle would not necessarily use a pedestrian crosswalk, but members agreed that the intersection warrants further review. Preliminary discussion placed possible crosswalk improvements in the general range of approximately $40,000 to $50,000, although no current estimate has been obtained. The Chief stated that the Village Engineer should be consulted regarding design and possible grant opportunities. The item was treated as a future capital consideration rather than a 2027 commitment.

**Adjournment**

At 8:07 p.m., Cavanagh made a motion to adjourn, seconded by Bell. Voice vote – ayes, all. Motion carried.

William G. Koons
Mayor

Danielle Romanoski
Fiscal Officer

Prepared by Leslie Galicki