RECORD OF PROCEEDINGS
REGULAR COUNCIL MEETING
MONDAY, OCTOBER 5, 2026 - 7:00 P.M.
MAYOR WILLIAM G. KOONS PRESIDING

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

OFFICIALS PRESENT: Fiscal Officer Romanowski, Police Chief Rizzo, Street Commissioner Young, Engineer Haibach, Solicitor Matheney

VISITORS: None

Mayor Koons called the Regular Council meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. and led the Pledge of Allegiance. Before roll call, Mayor Koons offered remarks in memory of Laura Heilman, who served the Village beginning as an administrative assistant and later becoming a certified building official and president of the Northeast Ohio Building Officials. He recognized her ability to assist residents and contractors, maintain Village standards and code requirements, and treat people fairly. A brief period of reflection followed. The Fiscal Officer then took the roll.

Canton made a motion to approve the minutes of the September 21, 2026 Regular Council meeting, seconded by Porter. Voice vote – ayes, all. Motion carried. minutes. Cavanagh made a motion to approve the minutes of the September 28, 2026 Special Council Meeting/Budget Work Session minutes, seconded by Porter. Voice vote – ayes, Canton, Cavanagh, Porter, Rensel, and Bell. Berger abstained.

VISITORS:
There were no visitors present.

MAYOR'S REPORT:
The Mayor distributed his Mayor's Report and also provided his notes from the Ohio Municipal League convention he attended the prior week. He invited Council members to contact him with any questions after they had an opportunity to review the material.

FISCAL OFFICER REPORT:
The Fiscal Officer reported that the 2027 draft budget had been distributed as a follow-up to the budget work session. Before the budget can be finalized, the Human Resources and Finance Committees must make a recommendation to Council regarding 2027 salary increases. She stated that any other changes or corrections requested by Council would also need to be incorporated before the final draft is prepared.

The Fiscal Officer reported that Council had previously approved Medical Mutual's no-shop health insurance quote. The original renewal reflected a 4.49% increase, but the revised renewal had been reduced to a 1.5% increase. She requested Council approval so the updated insurance figures could be reflected in the budget.

She also had prepared applications for real property tax exemptions for the drone garage and the park restroom. Because tax-exempt status is not automatic for newly placed-in-service property,

the Village must pay the taxes until the State approves the exemption application, after which a refund is typically issued. She explained that the salt building cannot yet be included because of timing requirements. She was continuing to gather the required deeds, dates the facilities were placed in service, and additional documentation related to the park restroom because pavilion rental fees generate revenue. Council was asked to authorize her to complete and submit the applications.

The Fiscal Officer further reported that the Building Inspector had previously served as the Village's Prevailing Wage Officer, but because he is a contractor rather than a Village employee, he is not permitted under the Ohio Revised Code to serve in that capacity. With the salt building project underway and prevailing wage documentation being submitted, Council needed to designate a Village employee. Discussion included whether a department head could be designated and then delegate the administrative work while retaining responsibility for sign-off. The Engineer noted that other communities use a variety of models, including in-house coordinators, shared outside coordinators, and contracted services.

Porter made a motion to designate the Fiscal Officer as the prevailing wage person for the Village of South Russell, seconded by Berger. Voice vote – ayes, all. Motion carried. The Fiscal Officer clarified that the designation could remain in place until changed.

Cavanagh asked about the Auditor's use of aerial information or drones to identify property changes. The Fiscal Officer stated that Auditor's Office personnel routinely inspect properties and that aerial information may also be used. The Chief noted that aerial imagery has historically been available for this purpose.

In response to a question regarding indigent burial, the Fiscal Officer explained that the Village is dealing with a case in which the family will not claim nor has the means to pay for the burial of a deceased family member. The Village is working through the required process and, under applicable law and Village cemetery rules, the remains will be cremated and the burial must be marked with at least a plaque identifying the deceased. She noted that the Cemetery had originally contemplated a common monument or stone for multiple indigent burials. Rensel suggested that residents may wish to attend the burial as witnesses once the arrangements are known. The Fiscal Officer said she would provide information once the remains and arrangements are finalized.

Porter raised the Fiscal Officer's recommendation to move the December 21st Council meeting because of year-end work. Council discussed member availability and the Solicitor's schedule and agreed on December 14 at 5:30 p.m. **Porter made a motion that the Village Council meeting currently scheduled for December 21st at 7:00 p.m. be moved to December 14th at 5:30 p.m. in the year 2026, seconded by Cavanagh. Voice vote – ayes, all. Motion carried.**

FINANCE COMMITTEE REPORT:
Berger reported that, because of committee member availability, the next Finance Committee meeting would be held Thursday, October 22, 2026, at 9:00 a.m.; the previously scheduled meeting was canceled.

Berger made a motion to approve the Village's healthcare renewal with Medical Mutual, which includes a 1.5 percent increase, and to approve the Fiscal Officer and the Mayor, if necessary, to complete all documentation therewith, seconded by Cavanagh. Voice vote – ayes, all. Motion carried.

Berger made a motion to approve the Fiscal Officer to complete and submit the applications for real property tax exemption for the drone garage and the park restroom, seconded by Cavanagh. Voice vote – ayes, all. Motion carried.

SOLICITOR REPORT:
The Solicitor had nothing to report.

ENGINEER REPORT:
The Engineer reported on the 2026 Road Program, primarily the paving of Waverly. The concrete curb and gutter work had been completed, and he was continuing to work with the contractor to obtain a date for the asphalt work. He estimated that grinding, chip sealing, and paving would take approximately one week and said he would keep the Street Committee informed once a schedule is confirmed.

The Engineer also reported that an Ohio Public Works Commission (OPWC) application had been submitted for paving Lakeview. The estimated paving cost is approximately $830,000. The Village requested approximately $369,500 in grant funding and a $50,000 loan. Although the project did not make the initial OPWC funding round, the application was forwarded to the Small Government program and remained under consideration. The Engineer explained that the Small Government program provides a more flexible schedule. If awarded, the project could begin by July 1, 2027, with construction required to start before June 30, 2028, and be completed by June 30, 2029. He anticipated that, if funding is obtained, Lakeview would likely become a 2028 Road Program project.

STREET COMMISSIONER REPORT:
The Street Commissioner stated that he had submitted his report. Grading behind the Police Department had been completed, with finishing work planned for Wednesday and Thursday so the project could be wrapped up and grass established before winter.

The Street Commissioner reported that he had spoken with representatives of the chloride/salt reduction grant program. They requested that the Village indicate its intentions soon. After the grant agreement is signed, the Village will receive a reporting packet. The Street Commissioner stated that although the requirements appear stringent on paper, the grant representatives indicated they are willing to work with recipients on questions, timing, and flexibility. He also contacted Bainbridge Township, which had applied unsuccessfully in 2024 but received the grant this year and is now implementing its program.

Council discussed screening along the mound behind the Police Department near the Kensington Green properties. The Street Commissioner recommended Norway spruce, noting that they grow quickly, are relatively inexpensive, and are hardy in this area. He suggested beginning with approximately six to eight trees near the front corner of the mound, where the view toward the

neighboring home is most direct. Council also noted that the homeowners association could add trees on its property, potentially creating an alternating double row of screening.

The Street Commissioner reported on Rarick Cemetery. Cleanup of the rear 10 to 15 feet along the south side of the cemetery had been completed, debris and fallen trees were removed, seeding was performed, and approximately 80% of the headstone washing was complete. While an excavator with an attachment was rented, staff also reset larger headstones that had fallen or been pushed over. The equipment rental cost was approximately $900 and allowed two employees to accomplish work that otherwise would have required substantially more labor.

The Street Commissioner explained that the cemetery fence now needs replacement. Council had budgeted $5,000, but the lowest quote received was $6,700. The Fiscal Officer advised that money remained in the cemetery fund but the current appropriation was insufficient because of other cemetery expenses, so the budget would need to be amended. Porter stated the amendment would require an ordinance at the next Council meeting, which would delay the fence approximately two weeks.

STREET COMMITTEE REPORT:
Bell reported that the Street Committee met the prior Thursday and, because he was absent, Berger chaired the meeting and presented the report. Berger stated that the committee had a lengthy and positive discussion regarding brine and salt use. The Solicitor had reviewed the chloride reduction grant agreement documents and indicated they were available for Council action.

Council discussed the timing of the brine program. The Street Commissioner advised that equipment should not be purchased before the grant agreement is fully approved because doing so could jeopardize reimbursement. The committee's expectation was that the brine program would be implemented for the 2027-2028 winter season. **Berger introduced an ordinance approving the Ohio Environmental Protection Agency Strategic Initiatives Fund/H2Ohio Rivers Initiative Chloride Reduction Grant Agreement with the Village for $74,150, authorizing the Mayor to execute the agreement, and declaring an emergency.** The committee believed the reporting requirements could be met with cooperation from the Street Commissioner and administrative staff. The Street Commissioner explained that the grant reporting would generally require purchase documentation, proof of payment, and related forms, and he would confirm whether there is a cost to participate in the required Ohio group purchasing program.

For the upcoming 2026-2027 winter, the committee discussed the amount of rock salt on hand and recommended amending the current budget to purchase an additional 500 tons of salt for delivery on or before December 1st. Berger explained that this would provide additional inventory through January 1st when the new budget becomes available, after which the Street Commissioner could purchase additional salt as needed under the state contract. The Street Commissioner stated the price was approximately $55.08 per ton, and Berger later referenced $55.39 per ton from his report. The additional purchase was estimated at approximately $26,000. The Street Commissioner stated that average seasonal use is approximately 1,600 tons and that in two of the last ten years approximately 700 tons were used in November and December alone. The school had notified the Village that it would not be obtaining salt from the Village this year.

BUILDING COMMITTEE REPORT:
Cavanagh reported that the Building Committee met September 23rd. She first addressed the Village Hall sanitary sewer line. The Street Commissioner explained that a toilet backup led the Village to call the contractor that had installed the exterior lines. The contractor jetted and camera-inspected the line and found deterioration/swelling in the older cast-iron pipe beneath the building near the building edge. One option would require cutting the floor and replacing the pipe; the preferred alternative, if feasible, would be to ream the inside of the pipe and install a plastic liner to create a smooth interior. A specialty company was scheduled to inspect the line and provide an estimate. The Street Commissioner explained that there is some risk that reaming could reveal too little sound pipe to line, in which case floor removal and replacement would still be necessary. Cavanagh emphasized that the issue needs to be resolved promptly because employees require dependable restroom service as winter approaches.

Cavanagh reported on several properties with long-standing code compliance problems, including peeling paint, improperly parked or stored vehicles, and a neglected property where the owner had died. She contacted the Department on Aging but learned that its assistance is generally limited to emergency and safety repairs. She had not yet reached Habitat for Humanity and planned to continue exploring possible resources and legal options for properties with multiple barriers to compliance.

The committee also discussed preparing a concise informational sheet for residents considering solar panels or ground-mounted solar structures. Cavanagh planned to work with the Building Department Administrative Assistant and the building official to make the information brief but useful.

Canton raised the need to plan for future building inspection services when the current building official retires. He suggested speaking with nearby municipalities and cities to determine their succession plans and whether regional cooperation may become necessary. Council discussed the limited availability of certified inspectors and specialized electrical and plumbing inspection personnel. The Mayor was asked to help contact other communities regarding their plans.

Council then discussed the Village's participation in the SolSmart program. The Mayor explained that SolSmart recognizes communities at bronze, silver, and gold levels for meeting solar-related standards and that the Village received bronze recognition after completing a solar checklist. He stated there was no direct program fee and that he had submitted the application for the award. The Fiscal Officer noted that there had nevertheless been administrative and Solicitor costs associated with the process. Bell questioned whether Council approval should have been obtained before the application was submitted. The Solicitor stated that the Village normally obtains Council approval before applying for programs or awards. The Mayor agreed to bring additional written information about SolSmart to the next meeting, and Council discussed obtaining approval if the Village is to continue participating. Cavanagh emphasized that her primary goal was to give residents clear information on what to expect when pursuing solar installations.

The next Building Committee meeting was scheduled for October 28, 2026, at 8:00 a.m.

POLICE CHIEF REPORT:
The Chief reported that the School Safety Officer (SSO) agreement expires December 31, 2026. The Solicitor had updated the agreement, and a proposed 2027 agreement would be included in the next Council packet. The agreement is expected to be for three years, with costs tied to the Village salary schedule and billed quarterly. The Chief recommended continuation of the arrangement.

SAFETY COMMITTEE REPORT:
Canton reported that the Safety Committee met September 23rd at 9:00 a.m. and approved the minutes of its August 26th meeting. The committee discussed the budget, including a possible mobile digital message sign costing approximately $15,000. The Chief explained that such a sign could be used for event cancellations, emergency notices, road closures, water main breaks, fires, accidents, and other public information. It would be smaller than the highway-style sign previously borrowed from Pepper Pike. He had obtained one quote from the company that provides the Village's speed signs but recommended additional research and review by the Planning Commission before any purchase.

Council discussed whether existing sandwich boards with laminated signs could accomplish some of the same event-notification purposes at much lower cost. The Street Commissioner noted that a mobile electronic sign could also provide value in emergencies at different locations throughout the Village. The Chief agreed that further research should be completed before proceeding.

Porter made a motion to authorize the Chief to obtain three or two more quotes for a mobile sign for consideration by the Properties or Streets Committees, seconded by Cavanagh. Voice vote – ayes, all. Motion carried.

The committee also discussed the restroom project and Police Department staffing. The Chief confirmed that the department was at full staffing with 11 full-time and eight part-time personnel. The department currently has four cruisers, one School Resource Officer vehicle, one drone, and one unmarked vehicle. Regarding the 2025 Farmers Market plan, the Chief stated there was nothing further to add beyond the map discussion and that the Mayor would follow up with the market. The next Safety Committee meeting was scheduled for October 28, 2026, at 9:00 a.m. at the Police Department.

HUMAN RESOURCES COMMITTEE REPORT:
Berger reported that the Human Resources Committee was determining whether its next meeting would be October 12th or October 13th, depending on member availability. He also updated Council on the committee's work regarding the November 7th Council retreat. Berger and Rensel reported that the proposed facilitator did not have the public-sector organizational experience needed to provide the greatest value to the Village, but was assisting identify other possible facilitators.

The November 7th retreat remains scheduled for 8:00 a.m. Berger explained that the goal is to help Council better understand Village operations from three perspectives: legal, accounting/fiscal, and managerial/organizational. He said the committee hopes the retreat will begin an ongoing educational process rather than be a one-time event. The search for an

appropriate facilitator would continue, with recognition that the public-sector nature of the Village narrows the field of candidates.

PROPERTIES COMMITTEE REPORT:
Cavanagh reported that the Properties Committee met September 28th. She reiterated the significant improvements at Rarick Cemetery, including cleaned headstones that are now readable and cleanup of the rear of the property. She thanked the neighboring Cotesworth family for allowing access for equipment and stated that the Village would address any cleanup concerns resulting from that access.

Cavanagh reported that she and a Service Department employee had measured proposed planting locations on the corner lot/park area. To reduce salt-spray damage and allow room for mature growth, the preliminary spacing was approximately 20 feet from the road and 15 feet between plants. She planned to meet with the Street Commissioner at 8:30 a.m. the next morning to review the layout. She also complimented the landscaping behind the Police Department and drone garage.

Cavanagh stated that residents had contacted her with concerns about materials associated with the Bell Road gas line project being removed, creating uncertainty about whether work would proceed. Later in the report, the Mayor advised that new yellow gas pipe had been delivered that evening.

Regarding Christmas lighting, the Street Commissioner reported that a lift had been rented for the last week of October so employees could safely complete high work along rooflines and buildings while properly harnessed and tied off. Ground-level decorating would continue as weather permits. Cavanagh noted that the temporary cut trees used on the southwest corner lot last year would not be repeated, although existing trees would be decorated. The Street Commissioner stated that no major new lighting expenditure was anticipated because quality materials purchased last year were organized and stored by building in sealed totes for reuse.

PARK COMMITTEE:
Cavanagh reported that the Parks Committee had not met again since the cancellation of the Fall Festival. She continued discussions with the Ohio Department of Natural Resources (ODNR) and wildlife personnel regarding deer population levels and stated that the local deer population appears to significantly exceed healthy levels. She said the committee supports continued investigation and that a recommendation would be developed after additional information is gathered.

Cavanagh reported that there was little new information regarding bocce court management. She planned to contact the residents involved in bocce regarding equipment security and use expectations and expressed a preference to avoid creating a formal scheduling system. Council discussed recent damage or wear and the need to protect the court surface.

The committee also continued work on an ADA-accessible route to the playground. The Street Commissioner had measured approximately 150 linear feet from the pavilion to the playground and approximately 180 feet from the parking lot. Council had discussed using compacted limestone screening similar to towpath material rather than brick. Cavanagh favored the shorter

route from the pavilion, while the Mayor favored a route from the parking lot. Cost estimates and a final route decision are still needed so the Village can proceed with ADA compliance.

Cavanagh reported that Berger had continued work on concepts for toddler playground equipment and that Rensel had taken the lead on potential equipment selections. A working meeting was scheduled for Monday, October 12, at 9:00 a.m. to discuss the details and possibly visit the park.

Mayor Koons reported that he had submitted a photo to the newspaper in hopes of generating an article about the bocce court and suggested that the residents involved compare practices with other communities. Cavanagh and the Street Commissioner recognized residents who purchased and installed a scoreboard, sign, ball box/balls, court distance markings, and ball holders for the court.

Cavanagh made a motion to approve the use of the South Russell Village Park by the Chagrin Falls Middle School cross country team to hold a meet on October 14, 2026, from 3 to 6, and to waive the pavilion rental fee, seconded by Canton. Voice vote – ayes, all. Motion carried.

The Chief noted that a Turkey Trot flyer had been posted although no one had yet approached Council regarding the event. The Mayor stated he would determine who was sponsoring the event. He also advised that Pete McDonald, Western Reserve Land Conservancy (WRLC) would be at the park on Wednesday, October 14th, at 3:30 p.m. for a park walk and that others were welcome to attend. He further reported that 52 deer had recently been counted in the park.

PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMITTEE REPORT:

Porter reported that the Public Utilities Committee met October 1st and that draft minutes were included in Council's packet. The committee's principal discussion concerned the Enbridge Bell Road pipeline project. Enbridge project manager Wendy Fee notified the Village that the original pipeline contractor had been replaced. The replacement contractor remains bound by the permit application's terms and conditions, and the required $35,000 bond had been posted. The permit had not yet been issued because final review was pending, although the plans were unchanged. The contractor anticipated beginning work October 12th and completing it by approximately November 3rd.

Porter stated that he would contact Enbridge to ask whether the company could also correct the gas line that passes through a stormwater line on East Washington Street while crews are working in the Village. He also reminded Council that a prior coordination meeting with Enbridge, subcontractors, the Fox Run and Chagrin Lakes Homeowners' Associations (HOA), and Gurney School representatives addressed traffic control and other project considerations, and the presentation remains available through the Village website/YouTube channel.

The committee also reviewed the Hazelwood project. The Engineer's update indicated that bidding would likely occur around December 7th because additional cambering and specification work was needed. Construction was envisioned to begin around Martin Luther King Jr. Day and be completed by June 19th. Although the project had been delayed approximately one month, it

remained on track, and the planned work is expected to alleviate stormwater problems in the Hazelwood and adjacent Village areas.

The committee discussed a potential project at 29 Woodside Dr. Additional planning is needed before a proposal can be presented. An easement agreement had been sent to the Mayor for the property owner, and the Mayor stated that the owner was waiting to receive it. Porter requested feedback after the owner reviews the easement. The project was tentatively viewed as a 2027 project, with a preference to begin as early in the year as practical.

The next Public Utilities Committee meeting was tentatively discussed for October 22nd at 6:30 p.m., subject to member availability. The Mayor noted that the Lake Louise HOA wished to attend, and Porter said he would circulate an availability inquiry and adjust the date if necessary.

Bell reported receiving a call from the Fox Run HOA regarding stormwater at the neighborhood entrance on Bell Road, where water reportedly continues to collect and crest the neighborhood roadway during heavy rain. The Chief suggested the catch basin may be collecting debris. Council asked the Street Department to inspect the catch basin first. The Engineer noted that a retention basin has been discussed in the area over the years, but the immediate issue did not appear to warrant that level of construction without further investigation.

SAFE BICYCLE AND PEDESTRIAN TRANSPORT COMMITTEE REPORT:
Bell reported that the committee would meet Friday, October 9, 2026, at 7:30 a.m. Berger asked about the recent meeting with NOACA regarding Bell Road and the pending grant. Council discussed the need, at some point, to decide whether to commit to the project and the related funding or release the funds so they can be used for another entity's project that was ready. Bell agreed that establishing a future decision point would be reasonable, particularly because holding the funds without a commitment could negatively affect NOACA's ability to support other projects. No decision was made during this report.

ADMINISTRATIVE TECHNOLOGY COMMITTEE:
The Chief reported that bandwidth problems had affected the previous two meetings, including the current meeting. Testing had been performed that day, and the service provider was scheduled to send a technician the following day. Berger noted that the problem appeared to involve both internal and external connectivity, so the exact cause was not yet known. From an administrative standpoint, Berger also reported ongoing work to organize the Veterans Breakfast.

ORDINANCES AND RESOLUTIONS:
Cavanagh introduced an ordinance approving the agreement between the Village of South Russell and DAGG Inspection Services LLC for professional certified building inspection services, authorizing the mayor to execute the agreement on behalf of the Village of South Russell and declaring an emergency. Cavanagh made a motion to waive readings, seconded by Porter. Roll call – ayes, all. Motion carried. Cavanagh made a motion to adopt, seconded by Porter. Roll call – ayes, all. Motion carried. **ORD 2026-66**

Bell introduced an ordinance authorizing the Mayor to enter into contract with the State of Ohio Department of Transportation for the project PID number 121808 for resurfacing of Bell Road

East (C.R. 10) from Chillicothe Rd. (S.R. 306) to the South Russell east corporation line and declaring an emergency. Bell made a motion to waive readings, seconded by Berger. Roll call – ayes, all. Motion carried. Bell made a motion to adopt, seconded by Berger. Roll call – ayes, all. Motion carried. **ORD 2026-67**

PAYMENTS REGISTER:
Berger made a motion to ratify the payment register of September 29, 2026, in the amount of $40,172.20, seconded by Porter. Voice vote – ayes, all. Motion carried.

NEW & OTHER BUSINESS:
The Fiscal Officer advised that she would not attend the October 28th Building Committee meeting, although the Building Department Administrative Assistant would be present. She would also be unavailable for the Finance Committee meeting referenced in the discussion.

Cavanagh echoed the Mayor's earlier remarks regarding Laura Heilman, describing her as a valued Village employee and friend and recognizing Greg Heilman for the care he provided .

Berger made a motion to excuse Mark Porter from the October 19, 2026, Council Meeting. Discussion immediately shifted to the resulting quorum concerns and possible rescheduling of the meeting; no vote was taken. Council then discussed attendance and quorum concerns for the October 19th Council meeting, including Porter's anticipated absence and another member's absence. The discussion also focused on the need to address budget amendments for cemetery expenses and salt purchases. Council considered alternate dates and ultimately agreed to move the meeting to October 22nd at 7:00 p.m. The Public Utilities Committee meeting planned for that evening would be adjusted or shortened as necessary. **Porter made a motion to move the October 19th Council meeting to October 22nd at 7:00 p.m., seconded by Cavanagh. Voice Vote – ayes, all. Motion carried.**

ADJOURNMENT:
There being no further business before Council, at 8:31 p.m. Cavanagh made a motion to adjourn, seconded by Porter. Voice vote – ayes, all. Motion carried.

William G. Koons, Mayor

Danielle Romanowski, Fiscal Officer

Prepared by: Leslie Galicki