RECORD OF PROCEEDINGS
REGULAR COUNCIL MEETING
THURSDAY, OCTOBER 22, 2026 – 7:00 P.M.

MAYOR WILLIAM G. KOONS PRESIDING

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

MEMBER ABSENT: Rensel

OFFICIALS PRESENT: Fiscal Officer Romanowski, Police Chief Rizzo, Solicitor Matheney

VISITORS: Sean McCreary (Chagrin Falls Boosters); Scott Hill (wildlife management), Todd Kruse, Ridgecrest Dr.; Stephanie Voss, Fernwood

The Mayor called the Regular Council meeting to order and led the Pledge of Allegiance. The Fiscal Officer read the roll. **Cavanagh made a motion to approve the minutes of the October 5, 2026, Regular Council meeting, seconded by Porter. Voice vote – ayes, all. Motion carried.**

VISITORS:

Sean McCreary appeared on behalf of the Chagrin Falls Boosters to request use of Village roads for the annual Turkey Trot. McCreary explained that the 3.1-mile race would start at 9:00 a.m., with participants arriving at the high school beginning around 7:00 a.m., and that the course was substantially unchanged from the prior year. The Chief advised that the organization would place signs along the route and the Police Department would issue Facebook notices. Bell Road would be closed for approximately 50 minutes and Washington Street for approximately 15 minutes, with Washington St. reopened promptly after the first portion of the race. Council discussed notice to nearby residents and participant parking near school facilities. **Canton made a motion to approve the use of South Russell Roads for the Boosters Turkey Trot, seconded by Cavanagh. Voice vote – ayes, all. Motion carried.**

Scott Hill, a former Northeast Ohio wildlife-management contractor now residing in Idaho, spoke at Cavanagh's invitation regarding deer overpopulation and the effects of browsing on regeneration of trees and other vegetation at the Village park. He described past work in area municipalities, including controlled archery hunts, professional sharpshooting and live trapping, and estimated that local deer density could be approximately 50 or more per square mile based on visible browse lines; this was his estimate, not a Village population survey. He distinguished biological from social carrying capacity and explained that residential landscapes and supplemental feeding can sustain deer populations. He emphasized safety concerns associated with deer-vehicle collisions and the likelihood of strong public disagreement about population control.

In response to questions from Berger and Porter, Hill said that any reduction program would likely require ongoing efforts because deer can reproduce and move in from surrounding communities. He explained that reducing the doe population is important to long-term population control, and that a limited program could require years to achieve desired results. He identified controlled archery as a comparatively inexpensive option but said it requires careful site selection, rules and oversight; hiring specialists would be more expensive. He described programs in other communities and donation of

processed venison to food kitchens. Cavanagh stressed that the presentation was informational and no deer-management decision was being made.

MAYOR'S REPORT:

The Mayor presented information on the SolSmart program and a proposed guide or checklist for rooftop solar installations. He explained that the program offers free technical assistance and that the goal was to give residents and contractors a clearer explanation of the existing process. Porter, Bell and Berger asked whether the guide would impose any new rules or require amendments to the building or zoning code. The Fiscal Officer explained that a rooftop solar project already uses the Village's existing building permit through GovWell and that staff had revised the checklist to reflect existing requirements, rather than create a separate permit. The Solicitor cautioned that the title "solar permit" could suggest a new legal permit, and discussed the distinction between roof-mounted systems and ground-mounted installations, the latter potentially implicating zoning regulations. Members questioned the benefit of a separate guide when GovWell already walks applicants through permitting, as well as the value of SolSmart recognition. No ordinance or new permitting requirement was approved. Porter suggested that the Building Committee review the issue and make a recommendation at the next Council meeting, with additional input from the building inspector.

FISCAL OFFICER REPORT:

The Fiscal Officer reported that the agenda included construction progress payment application number six for the salt storage facility. She had completed her review of the prevailing-wage documentation that day and found it satisfactory. She also distributed a revised agenda with an additional October 22nd payment register so that the proposed payment could be included. She had no further report.

FINANCE COMMITTEE REPORT:

Berger reported that the Finance Committee met October 19th . Its principal discussion concerned the 2027 budget work session and the cost of proposed projects and expenditures. Although the Village appeared to have sufficient funds for the requests, adopting them all could take the Village outside the county Budget Commission's recommended financial guidelines. The committee therefore planned further work to evaluate available revenue streams and determine what the Village could responsibly fund in 2027. Berger deferred discussion of proposed compensation adjustments to the Human Resources Committee report.

SOLICITOR REPORT:

Solicitor Matheney stated that she had nothing to report.

STREET COMMITTEE REPORT:

Bell announced that the next Street Committee meeting was planned for Thursday, November 5, 2026 at 5:30 p.m. in the Street Commissioner's office. He then presented two payment motions.

Bell made a motion to approve the construction progress payment application number six for the salt storage facility design build project to CNG Contracting LLC in the amount of forty

three thousand three hundred eight dollars and sixteen cents pending review of prevailing wage report, seconded by Cavanagh.

Berger raised a concern about the west wing of the completed salt facility: the existing loader reportedly cannot enter from the west because the roof clearance is approximately six inches too low, although it can enter from the north side. Council discussed whether the condition reflected design specifications, construction or inspection, and noted that the east wing is being used for stone, sand and other materials. Members suggested measuring the structure against the approved specifications, involving the engineer, and referring potential solutions to the Street Committee rather than immediately altering the structure or purchasing a different loader. The Fiscal Officer stated that she had already prepared the payment and later clarified that only approximately $500 remained from the original purchase order, contrary to an earlier estimate of less than $5,000. **Voice vote -ayes, all. Motion carried**. The precise second is not identified in the transcript.

Bell made a motion is to approve payment to ODOT in the amount of eighty-eight thousand seven hundred seventy-seven dollars and fifty-six cents toward the local share of ODOT engineering costs for the Bell Road East pavement project, seconded by Cavanagh. Voice vote – ayes, all. Motion carried.

In response to the Mayor's question about project reimbursements, the Fiscal Officer indicated that reimbursements may occur in installments according to the funding sources, including NOACA and OPWC, and that coordination with ODOT and NOACA would be necessary.

BUILDING COMMITTEE REPORT:

Cavanagh asked whether the Building Committee could approve its previous minutes during the Council meeting. After the Solicitor confirmed that the committee consisted of Council members and could act if a quorum was present, **Cavanagh made a motion to approve the minutes, seconded by Canton. Voice vote – ayes, all. Motion carried.**

Cavanagh reported that a Building Committee meeting had been advertised for Monday, November 2 at 8:00 a.m., with the Solicitor, police prosecutor and building inspector expected to participate. The purpose was to develop a more effective approach to properties that remain persistently noncompliant with Village regulations. She also expected to consult the Building Inspector concerning the solar permitting discussion. Concerning the Enbridge gas-line work, she reported that the Street Commissioner had objected to a proposed once-weekly inspection of erosion-control measures near Silsby Creek and requested more frequent review, potentially twice weekly, because of runoff concerns along Bell Road East.

Canton discussed Ohio's shortage of certified building inspectors and distributed information concerning the qualifications needed for certification. He urged the Village to consider succession planning for the current Building Inspector, who serves multiple communities. Canton proposed contacting Auburn Career Center and Kent State's Geauga-area campus to explore training or curriculum opportunities. Cavanagh also suggested Excel TECC, and Berger suggested approaching a contact who could identify an appropriate career-center representative. Other members discussed apprenticeship or training pathways and the importance of preserving the Village's own Building Department. Canton stated that he would begin outreach before year-end.

POLICE CHIEF REPORT:

The Chief advised that four residents had reported check-washing thefts within the preceding 30 days involving checks mailed to Enbridge for gas bills. The checks were allegedly intercepted, altered and negotiated for thousands of dollars. The Police Department was working with the Chagrin Falls postmaster; the possibility of postal-system involvement was under investigation and not established. The Chief recommended paying electronically through a bank when possible. Berger added that permanent check-writing ink pens may provide some protection against washing.

SAFETY COMMITTEE REPORT:

Canton announced that the Safety Committee meeting previously scheduled for the following Wednesday would be canceled after consultation with the Chief. The next meeting was set for Wednesday, November 25, 2026, at 9:00 a.m., notwithstanding its proximity to Thanksgiving. Responding to a question about Police Department operations, the Chief reported that the department was back to full staffing, a trainee had progressed to phase two, and shift preferences were working well, with several officers favoring midnight assignments.

HUMAN RESOURCES COMMITTEE REPORT:

Berger reported that the committee met October 19th . The October 9th employee recognition gathering at Tavern Six was well attended and appreciated. Suggestions included moving future events to spring and alternating breakfast and lunch times to make attendance easier for officers working different shifts. The holiday luncheon was scheduled for December 4th at Augie's. Updates to Village job descriptions had been gathered and reviewed, with presentation to Council anticipated November 2nd and adoption targeted for November 16th.

Berger made a motion to acknowledge the resignation of Leslie Galicki, effective November 13th, seconded by Bell. Voice vote – ayes, all. Motion carried.

Berger made a motion to post an ad for a full - time administrative assistant, seconded by Porter. Voice vote – ayes, all. Motion carried.

Berger said the committee had not yet decided how to fill the position but wanted to review the applicant pool. The posting would also be placed on the Village website.

Berger made a motion to approve the 2027 salary increases, seconded by Bell. Berger stated that the committee recommended a 3.5% wage increase for 2027, noting a reviewed statewide range of approximately 3.1% to 3.6%, favorable health-care costs and current economic conditions. **Voice vote – ayes, all. Motion carried.**

Berger made a motion to approve the Village continuing the physical exam incentive of two hundred and fifty dollars for 2027, seconded by Bell. Berger explained that the annual-physical incentive had previously been increased to $250 and participation had improved. The Fiscal Officer described an employee who obtained a physical specifically because of the incentive. **Voice vote – ayes, all. Motion carried.**

During questions following the report, Bell raised a Medical Mutual refund of approximately $5,800. Berger explained that the payment was associated with medical loss-ratio requirements, and the Fiscal Officer stated that she allocated the refund among funds based on the proportions of premiums previously paid. She indicated that payments related to more than one year.

PROPERTIES COMMITTEE REPORT:

Cavanagh reported on the October 12th Properties Committee meeting, at which a guest discussed Tree City USA and native-plant education. Although members appeared interested in learning more about trees, she observed limited interest in undertaking the administrative responsibilities of Tree City recognition at present. She also reported that the mound behind the Police Department had been removed, graded and seeded; the Chief agreed that the area looked much better. Cavanagh mentioned possible arbor lighting but did not know whether it had been purchased.

Regarding Rarick Cemetery, Cavanagh distributed fence proposals. She identified Auburn Fence as the low bidder at $6,700, compared with a second quote of $11,950. Discussion clarified that the quoted work included removal of the old fence and installation of the replacement; Village employees might remove the old fence and save approximately $700. **Cavanagh made a motion to accept Auburn Fence's bid of $6,700 for split rail fence to surround Rarick Cemetery, seconded by Canton.** After discussion, Cavanagh modified the proposal to a **not-to-exceed amount of $6,700**, allowing for Village removal of the old fencing if feasible. **Voice vote – ayes, all. Motion carried.** Cavanagh also thanked Street Department employees for their careful cleaning of cemetery gravestones and the improved readability of inscriptions.

Cavanagh next discussed landscaping for the Village intersection corner lots. A site walk on September 28th with Village personnel established proposed planting locations, with attention to preserving sight distance for motorists approaching Bell Road from Chillicothe Rd. Members also discussed a possible angled sign designed to be visible from more than one approach. Because Council had not yet received the site plan or a firm not-to-exceed price, consideration of the planting plan was deferred to a subsequent meeting, potentially November 2nd . Members favored addressing plantings first and separately budgeting any substantial signage expense in 2027.

PARK COMMITTEE REPORT:

Cavanagh reviewed alternatives for an accessible pathway at Village Park from the parking area toward the playground, with possible additional connection to the bocce courts. Preliminary costs were approximately $4,000–$4,200 for concrete and $1,600 for compacted crushed aggregate; the latter was described as wheelchair-accessible and more permeable. Bell asked about ADA accessibility. Berger inquired whether Western Reserve Land Conservancy (WRLC) approval would be needed; Cavanagh confirmed that the proposal must be submitted for its review. She and the Mayor described a recent park inspection with Pete McDonald of WRLC. The Mayor complimented the park's condition and WRLC's favorable regard for it.

Cavanagh expressed concern that children wearing cleats were damaging the bocce-court playing surface and that equipment had sometimes been left unsecured. Options discussed included signs, a website reminder and a lock or combination on the ball-storage container, while avoiding a system that would require administrative staff to distribute keys. No final approach was selected. Berger

reported that two possible locations had been marked for a toddler play area and that the original playground vendor had been asked to quote a revised approximately 25-by-25-foot area with four or five play features suitable for very young children. The committee was awaiting the revised proposal.

Following the Park report, the Mayor advised that Chagrin Falls schools were considering disposing of some playground equipment near the athletic field and had asked whether the Village might be interested. Council members were encouraged to examine it; no acceptance decision was made.

PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMITTEE REPORT:

Porter reported that the committee met at 6:30 p.m. that evening. On the Enbridge project, he stated that installation had begun at the western end of the Bell Road work area near Alderwood and the park crosswalk. Members observed that a section of storm piping had been removed to make room for the eight-inch gas main, and intended to follow up to ensure proper restoration. The anticipated completion of approximately 5,000 feet of gas line had shifted from early November to approximately the period just before Thanksgiving, excluding some restoration work. The committee planned continued attention to traffic, school-bus movements and other scheduling concerns.

The Village Engineer had supplied preliminary Hazelwood project plans. Porter anticipated asking Council to authorize advertising for bids toward late November, considering a contract award around late December and potentially starting construction around January 20, with completion targeted for mid-June. These were preliminary dates, not approved construction milestones. Porter also recommended engaging Chagrin River Watershed Partners again to prepare the Village's upcoming MS4 stormwater report, believed due April 1st . The Fiscal Officer explained that the prior work also required engineering support and that a formal agreement would likely require Council legislation. Porter asked the Mayor to request a proposal or contract for consideration at the next meeting; no contract was approved during the report.

The next Public Utilities Committee meeting was tentatively planned for Thursday, November 5, 2026 at 6:30 p.m. immediately following the Street Committee meeting, in the Street Commissioner's office, subject to confirmation. Following the report, Cavanagh and the Mayor briefly noted a proposed, not enacted, state measure concerning compensation or penalties related to electric utility outages.

SAFE BICYCLE AND PEDESTRIAN TRANSPORT COMMITTEE REPORT:

Bell reported that the committee met October 9th and considered the future of approximately $800,000 in NOACA funding associated with the proposed pathway. The committee expected to make a go/no-go recommendation around April or May 2027, including whether to allow funds to be used by a more advanced municipal project while preserving the possibility of a later application. To inform the decision, the committee intended to conduct a more detailed electronic resident survey in early 2027 showing a better-defined concept and using a validated survey methodology appropriate for grant applications. Communications planning would accompany the survey.

Bell reported that Rensel was developing a grant application to the Geauga Park Foundation. The initial discussion cited a November 1st deadline, prompting the Solicitor to ask whether Council authorization would be required before submission. Bell agreed to clarify the timing and details. Later, he indicated that November 1st was an internal target for completion rather than the actual submission

deadline. Bell also described the possibility of installing additional signs reminding motorists to give bicyclists three feet of passing clearance, while avoiding excessive signage.

ADMINISTRATIVE TECHNOLOGY COMMITTEE:

Berger reported that the committee met before the Council meeting and asked the Chief to describe ongoing problems with livestreaming meetings. The Chief explained that the Village's internet and Wi-Fi services were functioning normally and its fiber connection was fast, but the streaming equipment had failed. A router and optical network equipment had been replaced; remaining suspected issues involved the camera, laptop ports or other hardware, although the cause had not been established. Technicians from the Village's technology support providers had spent much of the day diagnosing the problem and planned further work, potentially removing equipment for repair. No restoration date was available. The Mayor also complimented the responsiveness of county technology support personnel who had recently repaired his computer.

ORDINANCES AND RESOLUTIONS:

Bell provided a second reading of an ordinance approving the Ohio Environmental Protection Agency Strategic Initiatives' fund H2Ohio with the Village of South Russell for grant funds in the amount of $74,150.00, authorizing the Mayor to execute the grant agreement on behalf of the Village and declaring an emergency.

Bell introduced an ordinance increasing Street Maintenance Fund expenses $28,000 and Cemetery Fund expenses $7,000, and declaring an emergency. Bell made a motion to waive readings, seconded by Cavanagh. Roll call – ayes, all. Motion carried. Bell made a motion to adopt, seconded by Cavanagh. Roll call – ayes, all. Motion carried. **ORD 2026-68**

Canton introduced an ordinance approving the Memorandum of Understanding between the Village of South Russell Police Department and the Chagrin Falls Exempted School District regarding the deployment of a School Safety Officer, authorizing the Mayor and the Police Chief to enter into the Memorandum of Understanding on behalf of the Village, and declaring an emergency. Canton made a motion to waive readings, seconded by Cavanagh. Roll call – ayes, all. Motion carried. Canton made a motion to adopt, seconded by Cavanagh. Roll call – ayes, all. Motion carried. **ORD 2026-69**

Bell introduced an ordinance authorizing the Mayor to prepare and submit an application for the Village of South Russell to participate in the Ohio Public Works Commission State Capital Improvement and/or Local Transportation Improvement Programs(s) for the Lakeview and Leaview Lanes pavement repair project and to execute contracts as required 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 2026-70**

PAYMENTS REGISTER:

Berger made a motion to ratify the payment register of October 15, 2026, in the amount of 173,408.75 and the payment register of October 22, 2026, in the amount of $56,546.81, seconded by Porter. Voice vote – ayes, all. Motion carried.

NEW & OTHER BUSINESS:

Berger made a motion to approve Friday, December 4, 2026, at 12:00 p. m. for the holiday luncheon at Augie's Pizza, seconded by Porter. Voice vote – ayes, all. Motion carried.

Bell made a motion to allow the Fiscal Officer to sign the certification of availability of local funds for the Lakeview and Leaview pavement repair project, the amount of 419,500, seconded by Berger. Voice Vote – ayes, all. Motion carried.

ADJOURNMENT: ADJOURNMENT: Being that there was no further business before Council, Bell made a motion to adjourn at 8:41 p.m., seconded by Canton. Voice vote – ayes, all. Motion carried.

William G. Koons, Mayor

Daniell Romanowski, Fiscal Officer

Prepared by Leslie Galicki