TOWNSHIP TRUSTEES REGULAR

COMMUNITY ROOM June 4, 2026

The meeting was called to order at 2:30 pm. by chairperson Hare. Trustees Port and Heutmaker were present.

The following Department Heads were present: Police Chief Tom Swaidner, Road Superintendent Giovanni Maltese, and Zoning Inspector Frank Kolk. Asst. Fire Chief Nick Sambula and Zoning Secretary Bonnie Guyer were present.

The Pledge of Allegiance was said.

CLERK PRO TEM: In the absence of a Fiscal Officer, Board of Trustees Chair Christopher Hare, appoints Jessica Ezzone to serve as clerk pro tem.

MINUTES: *Mrs. Heutmaker made the motion to accept the minutes of the Regular Meeting held on May 7, 2026, as presented. Ms. Port seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.*

MINUTES: *Ms. Port made the motion to accept the minutes of the Special Meeting held on May 14, 2026, as presented. Mrs. Heutmaker seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.*

MINUTES: *Mrs. Heutmaker made the motion to accept the minutes of the Special Meeting held on May 19, 2026, as presented. Ms. Port seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.*

MINUTES: *Ms. Port made the motion to accept the minutes of the Special Meeting held on May 21, 2026, as presented. Mrs. Heutmaker seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.*

ROAD DEPT: PAVING UPDATE: Mr. Maltese stated that the paving project has started. An initial assessment of Gamekeepers and Cypress Pond Lane suggests repair needs may exceed the original budget estimated by the county engineer. A final cost adjustment is pending measurement.

ROAD DEPT: OPWC GRANT: 50% MATCH: There was discussion on the OPWC Grant Application for 2027 paving for Hemlock Road. County Engineer recommends a 50% local match ($212,500) on a $425,000 project to strengthen grant chance. The Board discussed financial implications and fund certification process; application deadline not yet confirmed.

ROAD DEPT: UTILITY TRUCK & PLOW/TRACTOR & BOOM UPDATE: The purchase of the utility truck and tractor are both on hold until the amended certificate is received from the County Auditor and the absence of a Fiscal Officer to process payment. Mrs. Heutmaker expressed significant frustration, stating the delay is a completely preventable issue caused by the former fiscal officer's unilateral action of transferring $1 million off the certificate after the board had approved the purchases on March 19. Mr. Hare acknowledged the difficult circumstances but insisted on following procedure. He tabled the purchases until a deputy or new fiscal officer is in place to certify the funds.

POLICE: VEHICLE PURCHASE: Chief Swaidner clarified that the purchase of the 2027 Ford Police Interceptor is for the current year's budget. He confirmed with the fiscal officer that the funds ($48,140) are available in the vehicle reserve fund and stated that the requisitions were submitted. With funding confirmed to be secure, the Board approved the purchase and related outfitting costs.

Mrs. Heutmaker made the motion to approve the purchase of a 2027 Ford Police Interceptor for the amount of $48,140.00 from Montrose Ford of Fairlawn, Ohio, cost of document fees and 30-day tag included, Order No. U507, quoted May 22, 2026, per the May 27, 2026, email to the Trustees from Chief Swaidner. Ms. Port seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.

AUTHORIZED SIGNATORY: *Ms. Port made the motion to authorize Christopher Hare to act as authorized signatory for documents associated with the purchase of the 2027 Ford Police Interceptor from Montrose Ford of Fairlawn, Ohio. Mrs. Heutmaker seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously. Mrs. Heutmaker seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.*

HALL UPFITTERS: *Mrs. Heutmaker made the motion, at the request of the Police Chief, to approve the outfitting of the 2027 Ford Police Interceptor/Utility, by Hall Public Safety Upfitters, of Twinsburg, OH, per Estimate #EST-17086, dated May 11, 2026, for the amount of $14,893.85 which includes labor and shipping. Ms. Port seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.*

CLEVELAND TRIM & STRIPE: UPFITTERS: *Ms. Port made the motion, at the request of the Police Chief, to approve the reflective graphic kit for the 2027 Ford Police Interceptor, from Cleveland Trim & Stripe Co., of Cleveland Heights, OH, per Quote #25040, dated May 28, 2026, for the amount of $1,034.00. Mrs. Heutmaker seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.*

FIRE DEPT: DORMITORY UPDATE: Asst. Chief Sambula stated the project is ahead of the schedule, with occupancy taken and inspections passed. The final two pay applications were reviewed and approved by Larson Architects. The state grant secured by Senator O' Brien provided budget relief, allowing a planned $67,000 department expense to be avoided and retained in the general fund.

FIRE: UNITED: PAY APPLICATION #3: *Mrs. Heutmaker made the motion to approve Pay Application No. 3 for Payment for the Fire Department Dormitory Project, invoice dated May 21, 2026, in the amount of $62,457.85 to United Contractors, Inc., as recommended by JP Ptacek, Project Architect, Larsen Architects, Architect's Certificate dated May 26, 2026. Ms. Port seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.*

FIRE: UNITED: PAY APPLICATION #4: *Ms. Port made the motion to approve Pay Application No. 4 for Payment for the Fire Department Dormitory Project, invoice dated May 21, 2026, in the amount of $13,435.87 to United Contractors, Inc., as recommended by JP Ptacek, Project Architect, Larsen Architects, Architect's Certificate dated May 26, 2026. Mrs. Heutmaker seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.*

FIRE: ACCEPT DONATION: *Mrs. Heutmaker made the motion, based on the Fiscal Officer's recommendation, to accept the donation from Christopher Hare of $100.00 to the Fire Department. Ms. Port seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.*

Ms. Port made the motion to approve the use of the $100.00 donation for the Fire Department at the discretion of the Fire Chief. Mrs. Heutmaker seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.

WASTE MANAGEMENT UPDATE: Contract renewal is under review with minor changes requested from the APA. The current contract expires 7/17/26.

FACILITIES UPDATES: Brief discussion regarding trash bins at Bob Hall Field. Discussed getting a dumpster but agreed it was not a good idea due to risk of public dumping. Mr. Hare stated that he will contact the West Geauga Baseball Federation to see what kind of solution they can come up with.

There was brief discussion regarding the fencing at Bob Hall Field and the Board advised Mr. Kolk to proceed with Auburn Fencing to replace the wire fencing.

AUTHORIZED SIGNATORY: MANAGEMENT REPRESENTATION LETTER: An exit conference with Charles E. Harris & Associates was completed for the 2024-2025 audit period. No significant risk findings were reported only two minor misclassifications were corrected. The state Auditor's secondary review is pending, so until it is stated certified, public records will be released with a disclaimer.

Mrs. Heutmaker highlighted the management letter noting misclassification issues and expressed broader concern over internal controls, especially in the context of the police levy. She also pointed out a large variance in the Police Department's carryover, which could affect the public's trust for future levies. Mr. Hare explained that the budget commission interprets projected expenditures as fully spent, leading to such variances. He emphasized the need for better tracking of capital projects and carryover and solicited recommendations from trustees to improve projection accuracy.

Ms. Port made the motion to authorize Karen Walder and Chair Christopher Hare to sign the Management Representation letter to Charles E. Harris and Associates, Inc. dated May 21, 2026 on behalf of Russell Township for the Auditor of State audit period 2024-2025. Mrs. Heutmaker seconded the motion, and the votes are as follows: Mrs. Heutmaker no; Ms. Port yes; Mr. Hare yes and the motion passed.

AUTHORIZED SIGNATORY: POST-AUDIT LETTER: *Ms. Port made the motion to authorize Karen Walder and Chair Christopher Hare to sign the Post-Audit letter on behalf of Russell Township, received from Charles E. Harris and Associates, Inc. dated May 21, 2026 for the Auditor of State audit period 2024-2025. Mrs. Heutmaker seconded the motion, and the votes are as follows: Mrs. Heutmaker no; Ms. Port yes; Mr. Hare yes and the motion passed.*

RESOLUTION OF APPRECIATION: *Ms. Port made the motion to adopt Resolution 2026-22, a Resolution of Appreciation for Russell Township Fiscal Officer Karen Walder. Mrs. Heutmaker seconded the motion, and the votes are as follows: Mrs. Heutmaker abstained; Ms. Port yes; Mr. Hare yes and the motion passed.*

THEN & NOW: F&S AUTOMOTIVE: *Ms. Port made the motion to approve a Then and Now Purchase Order in the amount of $1,170, for towing service for Fire Department vehicle #4359 by F&S Automotive, Inc. based on Invoices 99041 dated 4/25/2026 in the amount of $585.00, and 99046 dated 5/1/2026 in the amount of $585.00 submitted by Chief Frazier. Mrs. Heutmaker seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.*

THEN & NOW: COUNTRYSIDE: *Mrs. Heutmaker made the motion to approve a Then and Now Purchase Order in the amount of $25,142.35, for repairs to Fire Department vehicle #4322 by Countryside Truck Service, based on Invoice 29544 dated 5/11/2026 in the amount of $654.33 and 29545 dated 5/11/2026 in the amount of $24,488.02 submitted by Chief Frazier. Ms. Port seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.*

CJ LANDSCAPING: *Ms. Port made the motion to approve payment in the amount of $1,040.50 against invoice 3585 as final payment to CJ Landscape for the Russell Community Room Landscape Project. Mrs. Heutmaker seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.*

GUEST SPEAKER: RIVER KALE: Mr. Kale from Congressman David Joyce's office presented available constituent services. Mrs. Heutmaker and Mr. Maltese met with Mr. Kale before the meeting discussing grant opportunities for road projects.

COMMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC WERE RECEIVED

OTARMA CONTACT & ALTERNATE: At this time Mr. Hare could not locate the form from OTARMA but will circulate it once he finds it. Mr. Hare stated he will be the contact and Mrs. Heutmaker stated she will be the alternate.

AUDIT DISCUSSION: Discussion on the necessity of a limited transition audit. Mrs. Heutmaker stated that multiple people have expressed the need for an audit and formally requested a "Yes" or "No" vote on supporting a limited transition audit. Mr. Hare stated that there are insufficient funds left for 2026 to hire a contracted auditor. Mr. Hare suggested tabling this topic until funds are available.

BUDGET WORK UPDATE: A special budget meeting is scheduled for Monday, June 15, at 4:30 PM to review departmental budgets. The goal is to agree on a budget by the June 18 meeting, allowing for a 10-day public review period before a budget hearing on July 2. Mr. Hare would like to reduce the General Fund spending to under $1 million in actuals, a level not seen since 2022. The General Fund should be a "last resort" for departmental assistance.

Proposed using dormant funds (e.g., zoning, motor vehicle) to cover specific expenses like salaries or salt purchases, thereby reducing the burden on the General Fund and main departmental budgets. This is a temporary measure to utilize existing cash balances.

Budgeted line items like uniform allowances and workers' comp are being adjusted to more closely match actual spending. Delaying vehicle replacements is critical for extending budget longevity. The possibility of leasing or financing vehicles for the Road department, similar to the Fire department's model, was raised as a future consideration.

Fire and Police were praised for their realistic, well-structured budget requests and five-year planning. A key success for the Road Department would be restoring the annual paving budget to $700,000 without General Fund assistance, achieved through vehicle deferments and other efficiencies. Mr. Hare suggests moving Zoning salary into the inactive Zoning fund to reduce its carryover and lighten the General Fund's load.

INTERNSHIP DISCUSSION: Ms. Port stated she talked to ADP regarding an intern for live streaming and handling the social media page. Mr. Hare stated that they are not going to budget for an intern, that he expects the new full-time Board Administrator to cover these duties.

IT UPDATE: Ms. Port stated that the MTS Agreement has been with the APA for almost three weeks to review. Chief Swaidner noted that the current proposal includes a full year of service hours, but the contract would only be active for half the year. Stated that Simvay agreed to amend the proposal to reflect a pro-rated cost for the remainder of the year.

EXECUTIVE SESSION: *Ms. Port made the motion to move into executive session to discuss the employment and compensation of public employee pursuant to ORC 121.22 (G) (1). Mrs. Heutmaker seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.*

The meeting moved into executive session at 4:09 pm.

Item #1: Chief Frazier
In at 4:13 pm; out at 4:14 pm
Item #2: Chief Frazier
In at 4:14 pm; out at 4:14 pm
Item #3: In at 4:14 pm; out at 4:16 pm
Item #4: In at 4:16 pm; out at 4:26 pm
Item #4: Drew Esposito of Clemans Nelson via phone
In at 4:26 pm; out at 5:14 pm

Mr. Hare made the motion to return to regular session. Mr. Port seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously

The meeting moved to regular session at 5:14 pm.

ACCEPT RESIGNATION: M PALMER: *Ms. Port made the motion to accept the resignation of part-time Board Administrator Melissa Palmer, based on discussions held with the Board beginning December 2025, and an email dated May 4, 2026, resignation effective May 31, 2026. Mrs. Heutmaker seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.*

BOARD ADMINISTRATOR: HIRE: *Mrs. Heutmaker made the motion to hire Warren Dovsek as a full-time Board Administrator at the rate of $34.10 per Salary Schedule 45, pending completion of all Fiscal Office paperwork, reference checks, and acceptable BCI check, effective July 1, 2026. A one-year probationary period commences on the official starting date. Ms. Port seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.*

FIRE DEPARTMENT PARAMEDIC*:* *Ms. Port made the motion to approve the move of Mr. Nathan A Oriani from EMT to part-time Paramedic, at the starting rate of $24.31 per Salary Schedule 45, due to his successful completion of the Paramedic Program, effective June 1, 2026. Mrs. Heutmaker seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.*

FIRE DEPARTMENT PARAMEDIC: *Mrs. Heutmaker made the motion to approve the move of Mr. Owen Denton from EMT to part-time Paramedic, at the starting rate of $24.31 per Salary Schedule 45, due to his successful completion of the Paramedic Program, effective June 1, 2026. Ms. Port seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.*

PURCHASE ORDERS AND BILLS WERE APPROVED AS ATTACHED.

Mr. Hare made the motion to adjourn. Ms. Port seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.

The meeting was adjourned at 5:22 pm.

Christopher Hare, Chair

Fiscal Officer

Recorded by: J. Ezzone