

COMMUNITY ROOM

September 17, 2026

The meeting was called to order at 6:00 pm. by Chairperson Hare. Trustee Heutmaker and Trustee Port were present. Fiscal Officer Mr. Brown and Board Administrator Mr. Dovsek were present.

The following Department Heads were present: Zoning Inspector Mr. Kolk.

The Pledge of Allegiance was said.

MEETING MINUTES: *Ms. Port made the motion to accept the Minutes of the Regular Meeting, held on July 16, 2026, as presented by the Fiscal Office. Mrs. Heutmaker seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.*

MEETING MINUTES: *Mrs. Heutmaker made the motion to accept the Minutes of the Regular Meeting, held on August 6, 2026, as presented by the Fiscal Office. Ms. Port seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.*

BANK RECONCILIATION & FINANCIAL REPORTS: *Ms. Port made the motion to acknowledge receipt of the bank reconciliation and financial reports as presented by the Fiscal Office. Mrs. Heutmaker seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.*

ROAD DEPT: PAYMENT APPROVAL OF ROOFING ESTIMATE: Trustees addressed the roof repair quote and noted that only the Zoning Inspector, Mr. Kolk, was present. Trustee Hare acknowledged recent discussions with Mrs. Ezzone in the fiscal office regarding the roof in light of conversations with the Budget Commission. Trustee Hare felt the board at their upcoming October 1st meeting will have to pass a supplemental budget and that department heads will be expected to provide input if there are any changes they need in the budget. Salary levels for the year will also be reviewed. The plan discussed for the roof repairs was to shift the repair funds, originally slated for the 2027 budget, into the 2026 reserve account. This would allow the work to be completed sooner. Trustee Hare requested from the Road Department Head, Mr. Maltese, to identify any other maintenance projects that could similarly be moved up to 2026. Trustee Hare proposed tabling the approval of the roof repair quote until sufficient funds are encumbered in a proper line item for the work. Following discussion, the board agreed to hold off on the approval for another month.

UPDATES ON DEPARTMENTAL CONTRACTS AND PROJECTS: Trustee Hare provided brief updates on other pending matters including; the ambulance contract currently under legal review with our APA and the waste management contract negotiations which are currently going back and forth.

Township Administrator, Mr. Dovsek, brought up the handicap access improvements in preparation for election day. He reached out to ACM Construction to see about getting a quote and whether the awarded project could be completed by election day. Trustees discussed how they would fund the project. There is a current carryover allowance of \$25,000 which would need to be encumbered on a purchase order with the possibility of extending it into next year.

FACILITIES: ELECTION DAY USE OF PROPERTY: Discussion moved to a request by the Geauga County Board of Elections to use township facilities. They have asked to use both the town hall and the community room for election day. They need assistance in opening and closing the facilities as well as being provided with tables and chairs for poll workers.

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Trustees need to determine a primary and secondary point of contact. Trustee Heutmayer suggested the Police Department as a contact point considering their 24/7 availability. Trustee Hare agreed to serve as the primary contact and designate the Russell Police Department as our secondary contact.

Ms. Port made the motion to grant permission to the Geauga County Board of Elections to use the Community Room and Town Hall for Election Day on November 3, 2026, from 5:30 a.m. to 9:00 p.m. subject to township rules and regulations. Mrs. Heutmayer seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.

FACILITIES: ELECTION DAY REPRESENTATIVE: *Ms. Port made the motion to designate Christopher Hare as the primary point of contact and Russell Police Department as the secondary emergency contact for inquiries and access to Township property on Election Day, November 3, 2026. Mr. Hare shall be responsible for opening and closing the properties. Mrs. Heutmayer seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.*

FACILITIES: DAY OF ELECTION: *Mrs. Heutmayer made the motion to designate Amy Heutmayer as the authorized signatory to execute the Contract for November 3, 2026, Election Day Polling Location with the Geauga County Board of Elections. Ms. Port seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.*

FISCAL OFFICE: RECOMMENDATION: Trustees proceeded with a lengthy discussion around retaining the former Deputy Fiscal Officer, Mrs. Skrovan-DeYoung and transitioning her into a full-time assistant to the Fiscal Officer. Fiscal Officer Brown expressed his gratitude to the Trustees for their guidance and confidence in his recommendation to hire Mrs. Skrovan-DeYoung. Her hiring would fill a position held by a former employee in the fiscal office. Fiscal Officer Brown proposed the compensation rate for this position at \$33.17 per hour. Trustee Port referenced a 2021 fiscal officer document noting that an assistant's salary range at that time started at \$22.46 per hour and maxed out at \$39.30 per hour after fifteen years. The proposed \$33.17 per hour was nearly at a ten-year experience level on that scale. Fiscal Officer Brown defended the proposed salary rate by stating his main concern is longevity and the importance of team consistency, alignment and compensation for the role being replaced. Trustees discussed the fact that this position, though full-time for the remainder of 2026, was budgeted as a part-time position in 2027; is Mrs. Skrovan-DeYoung fully aware of this? The discussion was for the position to be re-evaluated in the new year. Trustee Port voiced her agreement with the proposal Fiscal Officer Brown has presented; she was very comfortable with it and the fact that we have added revisiting this at the beginning of 2027. Trustee Hare assured the board that Mrs. Skrovan-DeYoung was fully aware of the situation and understood. We can make the motion contingent upon the re-evaluation at the beginning of the year.

Mrs. Heutmayer made the motion, on the recommendation of Fiscal Officer Brown, to hire Mrs. Susan Skrovan-DeYoung as Assistant to the Fiscal Officer as a rate of \$33.17 per hour, pursuant to Salary Schedule 47, with a one-year probationary period effective September 16, 2026, with re-evaluation of position on January 1, 2027. Ms. Port seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.

COMMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC WERE RECEIVED

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READING TO ROVER: PROPERTY USE: Township Administrator Mr. Dovsek spoke on behalf of the program and provided an update. Mr. Dovsek had received approval from the prosecutor's office and said that each dog, upon graduation from the program, obtains liability insurance. Mr. Dovsek would recommend the trustees grant the request based on these assurances. Trustee Hare echoed a point previously made by Trustee Port to approve use of the town hall rather than the community room. Trustee Port was concerned with dogs being brought into a space that we rent out to the public. A fee of \$25.00 per use was proposed to cover minimal cleaning costs. Mr. Dovsek clarified that the program historically runs twice a year.

Mrs. Heutmaker made the motion to approve the use of the Town Hall for the 'Reading to Rover' program, who shall be permitted usage of the property up to two times per year, pending time and availability, contingent upon the program's good standing with the Township, subject to the Rules of Township Property, and required waivers & security deposit. Mr. Hare seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.

READING TO ROVER: ORGANIZATION CLASSIFICATION: *Mrs. Heutmaker made the motion to approve the 'Reading to Rover' program's consideration for limited classification status in accordance with the Township's 'Government, Civic, and Charitable Rental Policy', in accordance with Township property rental policy. Mr. Hare seconded the motion, with a roll call vote: Mrs. Heutmaker Yes; Ms. Port No; Mr. Hare Yes, and it passed 2-1.*

UNRESOLVED ISSUE: ACCESS TO ADP-CONTROLLED DATA SERVERS: Trustees discussed the ongoing critical issue with the township's ability to access their own data server which controls all our surveillance cameras and their recordings. This system is still under the control of the county's ADP (Automatic Data Processing) department which has locked out or frozen the township's access. The township's new IT vendor, Simvay, has confirmed that the server is encrypted and inaccessible without ADP's cooperation. This lack of access affects surveillance cameras at both the administrative building and the recycling center. The board will consult with legal counsel, first with the APA and possibly with outside counsel should the county APA have to recuse herself due to their being a conflict which involves another county department.

PROPOSED COMMUNICATION TOWER: SITE, AUTHORITY, AND

COMMUNITY INPUT: Trustee Port identified the parcel as a township park. Ms. Port opposed the tower location due to the fact they have not made an application request but are asking for a consensus. Township Administrator Mr. Dovsek clarified the proponent first wanted to get community input before moving forward with their application. The board deferred any consideration of the tower proposal until a formal application is submitted.

GRIMM FAMILY MEMORIAL BENCH: ORIENTATION VS. POLICY

PARAMETERS: The board considered a request for a perpendicular bench orientation at the cemetery. The board questioned whether it exceeded our cemetery regulations. Mr. Dovsek clarified that the proposed change was orientation only, not size. The board did not take formal action vote but instead gave consensus of yes to Mr. Dovsek as the cemetery clerk for orientation of bench (due to already existing policy, not requiring a vote), upon the confirmation of schematic/diagram compliance with cemetery rules and regulations and final approval by road department.

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The pre-approval had already taken place by the time of this meeting.

COMMUNITY ROOM: FEE WAIVER: *Mrs. Heutmaker made the motion to waive the \$240.00 Community Room Fee "In Full" for long-time resident and former Board of Zoning Appeals member, Mr. Bill Downing, as appreciation of his many years of service to Russell Township. Ms. Port seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously. The security deposit was retained.*

The Board of Trustees agreed to proceed with an acknowledgment and optional formal resolution recognizing Andrew Puzder, a Russell native serving as the UN Ambassador to Europe. Mr. Hare offered to write a personal note to meet the residents' travel deadline for delivery.

RESOLUTION TO SUPPRESS THE COLLECTION OF THREE CONTINUING LEVIES FOR A ONE-YEAR PERIOD IN TAX YEAR 2026 – 2026-33: *Mr. Hare made the motion to suppress the collection of three continuing levies of township special revenue funds for a one-year period in tax collection year 2026, in accordance with the Geauga County Budget Commission's recommendation, identifying: a) Police Levy of 1.50 mills passed on November 5, 2013, b) Police Levy of 2.50 mills passed on November 4, 2025, and c) Road Levy of 1.10 mills passed on November 5, 2013, as amended. Mrs. Heutmaker seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.*

Township Administrator Mr. Dovsek will circulate the completed resolutions and levy specifics for prosecutor Susan Wieland's review in October. Trustee Hare wanted to ensure the amended resolution lists all three levies explicitly once confirmed. Deadline for prosecutor's review is targeted for October 2026.

RESOLUTION TO COMMIT RUSSELL TOWNSHIP TO FUND NINE RESERVE FUNDS IN FULL FOR A ONE-YEAR PERIOD IN TAX YEAR 2027 – 2026-34: *Mrs. Heutmaker made the motion to adopt a resolution committing Russell Township to fund nine reserve funds in full with a one-year period in tax year 2027, in accordance with the Geauga County Budget Commission's recommendations to fully fund capital and retirement reserves. Ms. Port seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.*

PUBLIC RECORDS REQUESTS, APA/ATTORNEY PATHWAYS, AND POLICY STANDARDIZATION: The board went into a comprehensive discussion about organizational process improvements. Fiscal Officer Brown voiced frustration about deviations from expected processes for public records requests. They laid out a framework where the fiscal office should manage the intake, documentation and routing of all requests, including zoning-related documentation. And that all public record requests go to the APA for review. Participants emphasized the need for a written, standardized policy to reduce the township's legal exposure. They did affirm the fiscal office as the central gatekeeper for all public records requests and zoning-related documentation. A draft for standardized public records and zoning routing policy will be circulated for review.

LEGAL FEE AGREEMENT SIGNATORY: Trustee Hare introduced a fee agreement with Mazanec, Raskin and Ryder Co., L.P.A. after clarifying that the contract was a general services umbrella.

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Mrs. Heutmayer made the motion to authorize Kristina Port as the designated signatory on behalf of the Russell Township Board of Trustees for the Fee Agreement retaining the legal services and counsel of Mazanec, Raskin & Ryder Co., L.P.A. Ms. Port seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.

The rationale was to have legal counsel contractually available for specific cases or when the township's primary counsel, Susan Wieland, APA for the County, states she must recuse herself. The chair outlined a disciplined framework when outside counsel would be utilized, but limit usage to board-approved scenarios, specialized zoning litigation, and instances when Ms. Wieland (APA) formally recuses. A written procedure governing engagement with external counsel will be drafted by Mr. Hare with assistance from Clemens-Nelson.

FACILITIES, MAINTENANCE, AND EVENT OPERATIONS: Fiscal Officer Brown requested a shift to improving organizational processes to better manage facilities, equipment, and events. Mr. Hare acknowledged historical reliance on individuals. Fiscal Officer Brown emphasized the need to document processes, so responsibilities do not "rest in someone's head". Trustees went on to discuss the need for a dedicated part-time facilities coordinator and for centralized, digitized maintenance schedules referencing a binder located in the trustee's office. Trustees briefly discussed recent event logistics such as the tire drive and other waste pickups. Mr. Hare was committed to overseeing assignments and trustees agreeing to divide responsibilities.

EXECUTIVE SESSION: *Ms. Port made the motion to move into executive session to discuss personnel employment matters pursuant to ORC §121.22 (G) (1). Mrs. Heutmayer seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously. No one was invited into executive session.*

The meeting moved into Executive Session at 7:24 pm.

Mr. Hare made the motion to return to Regular Session. Mrs. Heutmayer seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.

The meeting moved back into Regular Session at 7:29 pm.

Mr. Hare made the motion to adjourn. Mrs. Heutmayer seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:30 pm.

Christopher Hare, Chair

Jonathan A. Brown, Fiscal Officer

Recorded by: Warren Dovsek
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