

COMMUNITY ROOM

September 3, 2026

The meeting was called to order at 2:30 pm. by Chairperson Hare. Trustees Port and Heutmayer were present. Board Administrator Warren Dovsek and Fiscal Officer Jonathan Brown were present.

The following Department Heads were present: Police Chief Tom Swaidner, Fire Chief John Frazier and Zoning Inspector Frank Kolk. Zoning Secretary Bonnie Guyer was present.

The Pledge of Allegiance was said.

MEETING MINUTES: *Mrs. Heutmayer made the motion to accept the Minutes of the Regular Meeting, held on June 18, 2026, as amended by Bonnie Guyer. Ms. Port seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.*

ROAD: ROAD REPORT TO GCEO: It was noted it was submitted on August 12, 2026.

ROAD DEPT: A resident called regarding ongoing flooding at Blackford & Hemlock; requested road department to create a swale. Mr. Maltese is currently on vacation, but the message will be relayed to him upon his return.

POLICE DEPT: Chief Swaidner provided a brief update on the Citizens Academy. The program started at the end of August and was in its third week. Chief Swaidner reported that it seems like it's going as well as it did last year.

FIRE DEPT: Chief Frazier gave a brief update regarding the OP&F process for the new full-time firefighter. Stated that a former full-time firefighter who retired was part of OPERS, but the state has now moved firefighters into the Ohio Police & Fire Pension Fund (OP&F), which the township had not previously been a part of. To enroll the new firefighter, the township must join OP&F, which involves several administrative steps. Chief Frazier thanked Mrs. Ezzone, Mrs. DeYoung, and Mr. Dovsek for putting the documents together. He also mentioned that Jason Grassi had passed his pension physical.

RESOLUTION 2026-31 – OP&F PAYMENT AUTHORIZATION BY A.C.H.

ELECTRONIC TRANSFER: *Ms. Port made the motion to adopt Resolution 2026-31, a resolution authorizing payment by electronic transfer. Mrs. Heutmayer seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.*

RESOLUTION 2026-32 – ESTABLISHMENT OF OP&F PICK-UP PLAN: *Mrs. Heutmayer made the motion to adopt Resolution 2026-32, a model pick-up Resolution to establish a new OP&F pick-up plan, effective September 16, 2026. Ms. Port seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.*

OP&F AUTHORIZATION TO SIGN FOR A.C.H. DEBITS: *Ms. Port made the motion to designate Chris Hare as the authorized representative to sign the OP&F Authorization Agreement for A.C.H. Debits. Mrs. Heutmayer seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.*

OP&F EMPLOYER CERTIFICATION OF MEMBER ENROLLMENT: *Mrs. Heutmayer made the motion to designate Amy Heutmayer as the authorized representative to sign the OP&F Employer Certification of Member Enrollment, pursuant to O.R.C § 742.01. Ms. Port seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.*

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WASTE MANAGEMENT UPDATES: Dumpsters are scheduled to be executed in two weeks for Trash Drop Off. Mr. Maltese has been consulted on their placement. Mr. Hare gave an update on the dumpster contract. Mr. Hare mentioned he had received a call from an regarding the contract but had been unable to reconnect. He noted a positive development that it sounds like they were willing to change the payment part of the contracts, which was one of the biggest holdups. The other major issue was the unpredictable yearly increase in the contract.

ZONING RESOLUTION AMENDMENT: Mrs. Guyer gave a quick review of the amendments:

- Adding definitions for "electric vehicles" to Section 2.
- Removing a specific date reference to the zoning map in Section 3.
- Adding a new section to Section 4 addressing commercial EV charging stations, with no mention of residential ones.

Mrs. Guyer stated that the Planning Commission had very few comments, which were discussed and incorporated by the Zoning Commission where appropriate. To move forward, the trustees need to set a public hearing date. If the amendments are approved after the hearing, they will become official 30 days later.

Mrs. Heutmaker made the motion to conduct a Public Hearing on the proposed amendment, identified as ZC2026-1, to the Russell Township Zoning Resolution on the 1st day of October 2026, at 2:30PM in the Russell Township Community Room. Ms. Port seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.

POTENTIAL NEW RESTAURANT INQUIRY: Resident that has been living here for 10 years is exploring feasibility of a small burrito shop in the Township. Has prior success reviving a long-standing venue and aims to create jobs and local service to Russell Township. Acknowledges need for variance/conditional use; will research specifics and the process. Discussion on prior restaurant uses and potential grandfathering; grandfathered status lapses after two years of discontinuance. Parcel size noted at approximately 0.9 acres; landscaping minimums and traffic flow considerations raised. Clarification that denial could lead to BZA conditional use process; not an area variance.

FISCAL OFFICE APPOINTMENT: *Mrs. Heutmaker made the motion to acknowledge the appointment of Jonathan Brown to the position of Russell Township Fiscal Officer by Juvenile-Probate Court Judge Timothy Grendell, thus satisfying the remaining, unexpired term of the prior elected Fiscal Officer, Karen Walder, which shall expire at midnight on March 31, 2028. Ms. Port seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.*

RESOLUTION 2026-30 – DESIGNATION OF AUTHORIZED TOWNSHIP

BANKING REPRESENTATIVE: *Ms. Port made the motion to adopt Resolution 2026-30, a Resolution authorizing Jonathan Brown to be the representative to Russell Township's banking and investment accounts. Mrs. Heutmaker seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.*

COMMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC WERE RECEIVED

IT UPDATE: Brief update was discussed. Currently have new phone numbers, but hopefully they will be changing back.

BUDGET UPDATE: Mr. Hare gave a brief update on the Township's 2027 budget and recent press coverage following the former fiscal officer's resignation in May 2026. He acknowledged that clerical data entries did occur during the administrative transition, including an inverted sign on a police transfer line and duplicate entries for capital

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items. He characterized these as standard housekeeping that the administration is correcting.

Mr. Hare objects to the Geauga County Budget Commission's potential use of these errors to unilaterally suspend over 2 million in voter-approved operating levies. He argued this would create a structural deficit for the police department and would accelerate the need for a new police levy, and halt capital projects like vehicle replacements and building updates. He stated the Township's capital reserves of roughly \$2.46 million are not idle cash, but legally restricted funds tied to a 40-year capital reserve study, needed for major upcoming expenses like replacing two 20-year-old ambulances. He concluded by highlighting that the board had already proactively initiated voluntary rollbacks on Police and Road levies for 2027 to provide tax relief while preserving long-term fiscal stability.

MRS. HEUTMAKER STATEMENT: See attached letter.

FAIRMOUNT SCHOLARSHIP: Brief discussion regarding Township monetary support for third-party scholarships. Mr. Hare stated that the Township will continue internal employee scholarships and self-sponsored student leadership scholarships. Stated that the Township will support Fairmount Center by offering free space when appropriate, promoting fundraising, but must decline direct scholarship funding to third parties to avoid setting a precedence.

Mr. Hare stepped away at 3:38 pm.

NATURAL GAS UTILITY RENEWAL PLAN: The board discussed renewing the Township's natural gas utility contract, with options presented by broker Ryan Boucher of Fidelis United Energy Solutions. After some discussion about market volatility, the board decided on a 24-month fixed-rate contract.

Mrs. Heutmaker made the motion to approve the new gas utility plan terms and conditions, as presented by broker and consultant Ryan Boucher of Fidelis United Energy Solutions, LLC, of a 24 month fixed contract at a rate of \$4.29 per McF [thousand cubic feet], effective October 1, 2026 to September 30, 2028. Ms. Port seconded the motion, and it passed.

NATURAL GAS PLAN AUTHORIZED SIGNATORY: *Mrs. Heutmaker made the motion to authorize Chris Hare to sign the Natural Gas Contract Agreement on behalf of Russell Township, based upon the pricing and rates provided to the Township as of October 1, 2026. Ms. Port seconded the motion, and it passed.*

Mr. Hare returned at 3:40 pm.

SAFETY COUNCIL LUNCH: Ms. Port brought up the next Safety Council lunch and asked who could attend the September 11 lunch. Suggested it would be good for someone from the Fire Department to attend since the topic was on AED inspections.

GEAUGA SOIL & WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT EVENT: Ms. Port expressed interest in attending Geauga Soil and Water's annual dinner on October 6th. The invitation is open to the other Trustees.

THERAPY DOGS: READING WITH ROVER: Mr. Dovsek presented an inquiry from the organizer of the Reading with Rover reading program. The program is a 20-year-old volunteer initiative where certified therapy dogs from the Cleveland Clinic host reading events for children. The group was recently told they can no longer use the West Geauga Public Library and are seeking a new venue. The events involved 10-25 certified therapy dogs and were very popular events. Concerns were raised about

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potential liability without a certificate of insurance, cleaning fees, and the appropriateness of using the newly renovated community room. The Town Hall was suggested as a more suitable, less-used alternative. The issue was tabled pending legal review on insurance requirements.

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

The meeting moved into executive session at 3:49 pm.

Item #1: Chief Frazier

In at 3:55 pm; out at 3:56 pm

Item #2: Chief Frazier

In at 3:56 pm; out at 3:57 pm

Item #3: Susan Skrovan-DeYoung, Jonathan Brown

In at 3:57 pm; out at 4:55 pm

Item #3: Susan Skrovan-DeYoung, Jonathan Brown

In at 4:55 pm; out at 5:10 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 5:10 pm.

RYAN REGINELLI: Mrs. Heutmayer made the motion to approve the hiring of Part-Time Paramedic Ryan Reginelli, upon completion of the Paramedic National Registry Testing, at a rate of \$24.41 per hour, in accordance with Salary Schedule 47, with an effective commencement date of September 1, 2026. Ms. Port seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.

CADET RECRUIT: GISELLE SALAZAR: Mrs. Heutmayer made the motion to approve the hiring of unpaid Cadet Recruit, Giselle Salazar, at a rate of \$0.00 per hour, with an effective commencement date of September 1, 2026. Ms. Port seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.

LEGAL RETAINER: *Mrs. Heutmayer made the motion to approve the proposed retention of Mazanec, Raskin & Ryder Co., LPA to provide legal services to the Township. Ms. Port seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.*

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

The meeting was adjourned at 4:47 pm.

Christopher Hare, Chair

Fiscal Officer

Recorded by: J. Ezzone