

TOWN HALL

January 8, 2025

Fiscal Officer Karen Walder called the meeting to order at 2:30 pm. Trustees Kristina Port, Christopher Hare and Amy Heutmaker were present. Board Administrator Melissa Palmer was present.

The following Department Heads were present: Police Chief Tom Swaidner and Zoning Inspector Frank Kolk. Asst. Fire Chief Nick Sambula was present.

The Pledge of Allegiance was said.

Mrs. Walder welcomed and congratulated the two newly elected trustees. Stated that her office has received their certificate of election, copy of their oath of office, and Trustees are bonded under the Township's performance of duty coverage and are authorized signers for payments. Mrs. Walder thanked Ms. Port for her services as Chair for the past year. The work of the township couldn't be accomplished without the experience and dedication of our Board and all the Department Heads.

Mrs. Walder recapped the 2026 property tax revenue by department, which is based on the amounts and rates that was adopted by the board in December. In total, Russell Township is estimated to collect about \$6.8 million, of which approximately half million is paid by the state as rollback for qualified levies. The Police Department will receive about \$2.8 million (42%). The Road Department will receive about \$1.6 million (23%). The Fire Department will receive about \$1.2 million (18%) and General Fund will receive about \$1.17 million (17%) of the property tax revenue.

Mrs. Walder stated that the Township and residents will start to see the effects of the property tax reform measures that were enacted in 2025. Mrs. Walder stated that the League of Women Voters is sponsoring a series of public education forums on property taxes and local services, the first which will be on February 25th at 6:00 pm at the Bainbridge library.

ORGANIZATIONAL:

CHAIR: *Ms. Port made the motion to open nominations for Chair of the Russell Township Board of Trustees for the year 2026. Mr. Hare seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.*

Ms. Port nominated Christopher Hare for the Chair.

Mrs. Heutmaker made the motion to close nominations for Chair of the Russell Township Board of Trustees for the year 2026. Mr. Hare seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.

For Christopher Hare for Chair of the Russell Township Board of Trustees for the year 2026, the vote was as follows: Mrs. Heutmaker yes; Ms. Port yes; Mr. Hare yes and the motion passed unanimously.

VICE-CHAIR: *Ms. Port a motion to open nominations for Vice-Chair of the Russell Township Board of Trustees for the year 2026. Mrs. Heutmaker seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.*

Ms. Port was nominated for Vice Chair by Mrs. Heutmaker and seconded by Mr. Hare.

Ms. Port made the motion to close nominations for Vice-Chair of the Russell Township Board of Trustees for the year 2026. Mrs. Heutmaker seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.

For Kristina Port for Vice-Chair of the Russell Township Board of Trustees for the year 2026, the vote was as follows: Mrs. Heutmaker yes; Ms. Port yes; Mr. Hare yes and the motion passed unanimously.

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MINUTES: *Ms. Port made the motion to accept the minutes of the Regular Meeting held on December 18, 2025, as presented. Mrs. Heutmaker seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.*

QUARTERLY REPORTS: *Ms. Port made the motion to acknowledge receipt of the 4th Quarter 2025 departmental reports from the Police, Fire, Road, Facilities, & Zoning. Mrs. Heutmaker seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.*

POLICE DEPARTMENT: Ms. Port stated she was looking through the different violation codes on the quarterly report and wanted to know cybersecurity/cyber scams show up. Chief Swaidner stated that their records management system has designated codes for different offences, so when they put in that offence, it generates that code and puts it in a summary form. Chief Swaidner stated that if she has any questions he can review it with her. Chief Swaidner stated that they are keeping track of tasks and cases that the Detective is working on and will include it in the next quarterly report.

POLICE: ACCEPT DONATION: *Ms. Port made the motion, based on the Fiscal Officer's recommendation, to accept the donation from Mr. Anthony Paskevich of \$1,000.00 to the Police Department. Mrs. Heutmaker seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.*

Mrs. Heutmaker made the motion to approve the use of the \$1,000.00 donation for the Police Department at the discretion of the Police Chief. Ms. Port seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.

POLICE: ACCEPT DONATION: *Ms. Port made the motion, based on the Fiscal Officer's recommendation, to accept the donation from the Tower family of an Augie's restaurant gift card in the amount of \$150.00 to the Police Department. Mrs. Heutmaker seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.*

Mrs. Heutmaker made the motion to approve the use of the \$150.00 gift card donation for the Police Department at the discretion of the Police Chief. Ms. Port seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.

POLICE: ACCEPT DONATION: *Ms. Port made the motion, based on the Fiscal Officer's recommendation, to accept the donation from George & Susan Baker of \$50.00 to the Police Department. Mrs. Heutmaker seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.*

Mrs. Heutmaker made the motion to approve the use of the \$50.00 donation for the Police Department at the discretion of the Police Chief. Ms. Port seconded the motion, and it passed.

POLICE: ACCEPT DONATION: *Ms. Port made the motion, based on the Fiscal Officer's recommendation, to accept the donation from Kimberly & Brock Milstein of an Uber Eats gift card in the amount of \$150.00 to the Police Department. Mrs. Heutmaker seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.*

Mrs. Heutmaker made the motion to approve the use of the \$150.00 gift card donation for the Police Department at the discretion of the Police Chief. Ms. Port seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.

POLICE: ACCEPT DONATION: *Ms. Port made the motion, based on the Fiscal Officer's recommendation, to accept the donation from the Robert Donahey family of \$250.00 to the Police Department. Mrs. Heutmaker seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.*

Mrs. Heutmaker made the motion to approve the use of the \$250.00 donation for the Police Department at the discretion of the Police Chief. Ms. Port seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.

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FIRE DEPARTMENT: Asst. Fire Chief Sambula stated that they will be having a blood drive on January 17th using the mobile blood drive unit due to the planned start of dormitory construction next week. Stated they created a QR code to sign up for the blood drive and has it on their social media page and will forward it to Mrs. Palmer to post it on the website.

FIRE: ACCEPT DONATION: *Ms. Port made the motion, based on the Fiscal Officer's recommendation, to accept the donation from George & Susan Baker of \$50.00 to the Fire Department. Mrs. Heutmaker seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.*

Mrs. Heutmaker made the motion to approve the use of the \$50.00 donation for the Fire Department at the discretion of the Fire Chief. Ms. Port seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.

FIRE: ACCEPT DONATION: *Ms. Port made the motion, based on the Fiscal Officer's recommendation, to accept the donation from the Tower family of an Augie's restaurant gift card in the amount of \$150.00 to the Fire Department. Mrs. Heutmaker seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.*

Mrs. Heutmaker made the motion to approve the use of the \$150.00 gift card donation for the Fire Department at the discretion of the Fire Chief. Ms. Port seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.

FIRE: ACCEPT DONATION: *Ms. Port made the motion, based on the Fiscal Officer's recommendation, to accept the donation from the Poe family of a Giant Eagle gift card in the amount of \$100.00 to the Fire Department. Mrs. Heutmaker seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.*

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

FIRE: ACCEPT DONATION: *Ms. Port made the motion, based on the Fiscal Officer's recommendation, to accept the donation from Sally Reed of \$40.00 to the Fire Department. Mrs. Heutmaker seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.*

Mrs. Heutmaker made the motion to approve the use of the \$40.00 donation to the Fire Department at the discretion of the Fire Chief. Ms. Port seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.

FIRE: ACCEPT DONATION: *Ms. Port made the motion, based on the Fiscal Officer's recommendation, to accept the donation from the Robert Donahey family of \$250.00 to the Fire Department. Mrs. Heutmaker seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.*

Mrs. Heutmaker made the motion to approve the use of the \$250.00 donation for the Fire Department at the discretion of the Fire Chief. Ms. Port seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.

HAZMAT COG PROXY: *Ms. Port made the motion to authorize the Chief Frazier and Assistant Fire Chiefs Sambula and Brown to carry a letter of proxy to the HAZMAT COG meetings in the event that a Trustee is not in attendance. Mrs. Heutmaker seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.*

ROAD: ACCEPT DONATION: *Ms. Port made the motion, based on the Fiscal Officer's recommendation, to accept the donation from George & Susan Baker of \$50.00 to the Road Department. Mrs. Heutmaker seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.*

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Mrs. Heutmaker made the motion to approve the use of the \$50.00 donation for the Road Department at the discretion of the Road Superintendent. Ms. Port seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.

PORTMAN/FUEL PUMP UPDATE: Mr. Hare stated that the pumps should be up and running tomorrow. Mrs. Walder stated that the Fiscal Office sent cancellation letters to the management service company and fuel delivery service the end of December.

JUNK CARS: IDENTIFICATION/REMOVAL: Mr. Kolk stated that vehicle that is in the garage would fall under junk vehicles. Mrs. Walder stated that if the board adopts the resolution to declare it as a junk vehicle, notices would still need to be sent to the interested parties and wait 14 days for any responses. Mrs. Walder asked the contractor to give pricing for the adder to take care of the junk vehicle and will have that for the next meeting.

Mrs. Heutmaker made the motion to approve Resolution 2026-3: Identifying and determining that motor vehicle found inside the structure at 8460 Ridgewood Lane, Russell Township, is a junk motor vehicle, and that the Russell Township Board of Trustees intends to remove the junk vehicle pursuant to ORC 505.871 not sooner than 14 days after notice is given per the ORC. Ms. Port seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.

Mrs. Walder stated that the house should be down by the end of day tomorrow.

ZONING DEPARTMENT: Mr. Kolk stated that the new Zoning Resolution has been posted on the website, and there were 10 permits issued in the fourth quarter and a few violation letters sent out. Stated he has had some communication with some of the previous violation letters, and some have already started cleaning up their yards. There were two variances for setbacks approved in fourth quarter.

Mr. Kolk stated that he attended the workshop for grants put on by Geauga Trumbull Waste Management and is going to apply for three grants: Go Green, DIG and tire recycling. For the Dig Grant, Mr. Kolk is recommending planting more trees on the west side to hopefully help control blowing trash.

There was discussion about who would handle submitting reports for stormwater, and since it was handled by previous Zoning Inspectors, the trustees would like Mr. Kolk to handle that.

FACILITIES: Mr. Kolk stated that he was able to fix the light for the flagpole. There is a circuit box and there is recommendation to raise it up three feet so it's not so close to ground, so moisture and snow don't get inside. Stated that the flag probably won't be fixed till the weather breaks because of getting a lift out there.

ADMINISTRATION: ACCEPT DONATION: *Ms. Port made the motion, based on the Fiscal Officer's recommendation, to accept the donation from George & Susan Baker of \$50.00 to the Administration Staff. Mrs. Heutmaker seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.*

Mrs. Heutmaker made the motion to approve the use of the \$50.00 donation for the Admin Building staff at the discretion of the Board Administrator. Ms. Port seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.

FISCAL OFFICER: Mrs. Walder thanked the departments and her staff for making sure encumbrances were in place for January 1st. Mrs. Walder stated her goal is to have year-end closed early February and prepare for adoption of permanent appropriations in March. She requested that the department heads revisit their capital project requests in ClearGov and update as needed.

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Mrs. Walder stated that besides property tax reform, cybersecurity will continue to be a big challenge in 2026. The requirements enacted in ORC 9.64 for Cyber Policies and associated training is the Township's best defense against fraud and the loss of taxpayer funds. Mrs. Walder encouraged the board to ensure all departments are in compliance as this will be an audit item in future audits.

Mrs. Walder discussed the elected officials pay based on the ORC and based on the township's budget. Stated that herself and Ms. Port got a midterm 1.75% raise and the new trustees received a 5% raise.

Mrs. Walder stated that she sent everyone a new vendor process regarding the search for unresolved findings for new vendors. Also, provided information on the competitive bidding threshold for 2026, which is \$79,568.

Mrs. Walder encourages the board to plan a work session to establish priorities and communicate them so that her office, our departments, and our residents can understand and contribute to those efforts.

COMMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC WERE RECEIVED

SLCGP CYBER GRANT AGREEMENT: Mr. Hare stated that Mrs. Walder sent out an email regarding cybersecurity services grant application regarding one of the projects that was part of this grant, which was multifactor authentication for the Police Department, which was already completed. There was discussion whether the trustees wanted to put that money into another project or whether a completed project would qualify for those funds. Chief Swaidner stated that he reached out to the representative and is waiting for a phone call back to answer if his project can be submitted for reimbursement or if the Township has to resubmit for a new project. Hoping to have an answer for the next meeting.

OPIOID FUNDS: HARM REDUCTION: Mrs. Heutmaker suggested using One Ohio Opioid Settlement funds to provide Narcan distribution boxes on Township property, and that since it's considered a good Samaritan, there's no liability to the Township. Mrs. Heutmaker stated that it is a use under the opioid guidelines. Mr. Hare indicated that Ms. Port is working with our APA on liability issues. The Police Chief and Fire Chief each indicated that Narcan is already carried in the police cruisers and ambulances. There was discussion about possible locations where the Narcan can be kept for 24/7 access.

GEauga COUNTY HEALTH DISTRICT ADVISORY COUNCIL: *Mrs. Heutmaker made the motion to appoint Kristina Port the Township representative to the Health District Advisory Council. Ms. Port seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.*

Ms. Port made the motion to appoint Amy Heutmaker the alternate Township representative to the Health District Advisory Council. Mrs. Heutmaker seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.

CHAGRIN RIVER WATERSHED PARTNERS: *Ms. Port made the motion to appoint Kristina Port as the Township representative to the Chagrin River Watershed Partners. Mrs. Heutmaker seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.*

Mrs. Heutmaker made the motion to appoint Amy Heutmaker as the alternate Township representative to the Chagrin River Watershed Partners. Ms. Port seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.

STORM WATER MANAGEMENT PROGRAM: *Ms. Port made the motion to appoint Kristina Port as Township representative to the Storm Water Management Program. Mrs. Heutmaker seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously..*

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HAZMAT COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS: *Ms. Port made the motion to appoint Amy Heutmaker as Trustee representative to the HAZMAT Council of Governments. Mrs. Heutmaker seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.*

CVIGC: *Mrs. Heutmaker made the motion to appoint Christopher Hare as the Trustee representative to the Chagrin Valley Intergovernmental Council. Ms. Port seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.*

OPBA: *Ms. Port made the motion to appoint Christopher Hare as the Trustee representative to the Ohio Patrolman's Benevolent Association township management committee. Mrs. Heutmaker seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.*

VERCOG: *Ms. Port made the motion to appoint Christopher Hare as the Trustee representative to the Valley Enforcement Regional Council of Governments. Mrs. Heutmaker seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.*

WG DCC: *Ms. Port made the motion to appoint Amy Heutmaker as the Trustee representative to the West Geauga District Communications Committee. Mrs. Heutmaker seconded the motion, and it passed.*

PREVAILING WAGE COORDINATOR: *Ms. Port made the motion to appoint Melissa Palmer as the Prevailing Wage Coordinator for all Russell Township Prevailing Wage projects per ORC 4115.071 except for Russell Township Road Projects on which Giovanni Maltese shall serve as the Prevailing Wage Coordinator. Mrs. Heutmaker seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.*

DRUG/ALCOHOL LIAISON: *Ms. Port made the motion to authorize Melissa Palmer to act as the Russell Township Designated Employee Representative to the Geauga County Drug & Alcohol Consortium. Mrs. Heutmaker seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.*

DRUG/ALCOHOL ALTERNATE LIAISON: *Mrs. Heutmaker made the motion to authorize Giovanni Maltese to act as the Russell Township Alternate Designated Employee Representative to the Geauga County Drug & Alcohol Consortium. Ms. Port seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.*

ANNUAL RFQ/SOQ: PROFESSIONAL SERVICES: ARCHITECT, LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT, ENGINEER: 2026-2027: Mrs. Palmer stated that she will put ads in the paper for landscape architect, architect, and engineer calling for RFQ/SOQs and then the process for reviewing SOQs.

RESOLUTION: ELECTRONIC PAYMENTS for 2026: *Ms. Port made the motion to approve Resolution 2026-1, a Resolution authorizing payment by electronic transfer for calendar year 2026. Mrs. Heutmaker seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.*

RESOLUTION: GOV DEALS: *Ms. Port made the motion to approve Resolution 2025-2 Authorizing the Use of Internet Auction for Disposition of Township Property. Mrs. Heutmaker seconded the motion, and it passed.*

ELECTED COMPENSATION: *Ms. Port made the motion for the Trustees and Fiscal Officer to be compensated for their services using the salary method, consisting of equal monthly payments pursuant to stated amounts as authorized by the ORC, made solely from the General Fund, and with any adjustments to be made in the final pay for the year. Mrs. Heutmaker seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.*

CONFERENCE ATTENDANCE: *Ms. Port made the motion to approve reasonable and necessary expenses for Jessica Ezzone to attend the Ohio Safety Congress and Expo from March 11-13, 2026, in Columbus. Mrs. Heutmaker seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.*

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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 3:44 pm.

*Item #1: Melissa Palmer, Jessica Ezzone, Jennifer Dorka & Karen Walder
In at 3:44 pm; out at 3:47 pm*

*Item #2: Melissa Palmer, Jessica Ezzone, Jennifer Dorka & Karen Walder
In at 3:47 pm; out at 4:05 pm*

Ms. Port made the motion to return to regular session. Mrs. Heutmaker seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously

The meeting moved to regular session at 4:05 pm.

#1 ZONING: CONSULTING AGREEMENT: DAVE DIETRICH: *Ms. Port made the motion to accept the proposal delivered to Melissa Palmer on December 3, 2025 by Planning & Zoning Services LLC for David Dietrich to provide assistance to Russell Township & Zoning Department staff Frank Kolk and Bonnie Guyer, at a rate of \$40.00 per hour up to \$3,200.00. Mrs. Heutmaker seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.*

PURCHASE ORDERS AND BILLS WERE APPROVED AS ATTACHED.

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

The meeting was adjourned at 4:06 pm.

Christopher Hare, Chair

Karen Walder, Fiscal Officer

Recorded by: J. Ezzone