

TOWN HALL

January 9, 2025

Fiscal Officer Karen Walder called the meeting to order at 2:00 pm. Trustees Kristina Port and Jim Mueller were present. Board Administrator Melissa Palmer was present.

The following Department Heads were present: Police Chief Tom Swaidner, Fire Chief John Frazier, Zoning Inspector Shane Wrench and Road Superintendent Gene Layne.

The Pledge of Allegiance was said.

Mrs. Walder asked everyone to take a moment of silence in remembrance of President Jimmy Carter and for everyone in California impacted by the fires.

Mrs. Walder thanked the Trustees for their service to the Township and 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.

**ORGANIZATIONAL:**

**CHAIR:** *Mr. Mueller made the motion to open nominations for Chair of the Russell Township Board of Trustees for the year 2025. Ms. Port seconded the motion, and it passed.*

Mr. Mueller nominated Kristina Port for the Chair.

*Mr. Mueller made the motion to close nominations for Chair of the Russell Township Board of Trustees for the year 2025. Ms. Port seconded the motion, and it passed.*

*For Ms. Port for Chair of the Russell Township Board of Trustees for the year 2025, the vote was as follows: Mr. Mueller yes; Ms. Port yes. Ms. Port was elected as Chair.*

**VICE-CHAIR:** *Ms. Port made the motion for Mr. Mueller to be Vice-Chair of the Russell Township Board of Trustees for the year 2025. Mr. Mueller seconded the motion, and it passed.*

**MINUTES:** *Mr. Mueller made the motion to accept the minutes of the Special Meeting held on December 18, 2024, as presented. Ms. Port seconded the motion, and it passed.*

**QUARTERLY REPORTS:** *Ms. Port made the motion to acknowledge receipt of the 4<sup>th</sup> Quarter 2024 departmental reports from the Police, Fire, Road, Facilities & Zoning. Mr. Mueller seconded the motion, and it passed.*

**POLICE DEPT: GARAGE UPDATE:** Chief Swaidner stated that Phase 1 is almost complete, and they are currently working on electrical. Once the weather breaks, they will get the concrete poured.

**ACCEPT DONATION:** *Mr. Mueller made the motion, based on the Fiscal Officer's recommendation, to accept the donation from Debby and Mark Tower of a gift card in the amount of \$150.00 to the Police Department. Ms. Port seconded the motion, and it passed.*

*Mr. Mueller 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.*

**ACCEPT DONATION:** *Mr. Mueller made the motion, based on the Fiscal Officer's recommendation, to accept the donation from George & Susan Baker of \$50.00 to the*

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*Police Department. Ms. Port seconded the motion, and it passed.*

*Mr. Mueller 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.*

**FIRE DEPARTMENT:** Chief Frazier stated that they sold the old pickup truck on GovDeals for \$9,200. The new pickup truck is outfitted and in service.

**ACCEPT DONATION:** *Mr. Mueller 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. Ms. Port seconded the motion, and it passed.*

*Mr. Mueller 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.*

**ACCEPT DONATION:** *Mr. Mueller 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. Ms. Port seconded the motion, and it passed.*

*Mr. Mueller 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.*

**QUALIFIED POOL: PROFESSIONAL ARCHITECTS:** Mrs. Palmer stated that we received 2 proposals for the pool of qualified professionals, and they were specifically advised for dormitory services but they can work on any project throughout the year. Received proposals from TC Architects and Larsen Architects, and we have worked with both of them in the past. These proposals were just statements of qualifications.

*Mr. Mueller made the motion to accept TC Architects and Larsen Architects into the pool of qualified professional architects and design firms for use by Russell Township based on the Statements of Qualifications received in January 2025. Ms. Port seconded the motion, and it passed.*

**HAZMAT COG PROXY:** *Mr. Mueller 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. Ms. Port seconded the motion, and it passed.*

**ACCEPT DONATION:** *Mr. Mueller 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. Ms. Port seconded the motion, and it passed.*

*Mr. Mueller 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.*

**2025 ROAD PROJECTS: DEERBROOK DR & BEECHWOOD DR:** *Mr. Mueller made the motion to approve Resolution 2025-3, a Resolution of Convenience and Necessity for the Improvement of Deerbrook Dr & Beechwood Dr in Russell Township which authorizes the Geauga County Engineer to prepare engineering plans. Ms. Port seconded the motion, and it passed.*

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**2025 ROAD PROJECTS: HEMLOCK RD:** *Mr. Mueller made the motion to approve Resolution 2025-4, a Resolution of Convenience and Necessity for the Improvement of Hemlock Rd in Russell Township which authorizes the Geauga County Engineer to prepare engineering plans. Ms. Port seconded the motion, and it passed.*

**ZONING DEPARTMENT:** Mr. Wrench stated that there's not much activity right now with permits. Mr. Wrench stated that he has been reading through HB 315 and what's going to change with the Zoning Department. Mr. Wrench stated they will be discussing this at the next Zoning Commission meeting on January 22. Stated that the OTA has a session on this topic at the Winter Conference and will be attending that. HB 315 goes into effect April 1, 2025. Mr. Mueller suggested that Mr. Wrench contact Legislative Services because they do analysis' on bills and can give a better summary. One change is that the police will be able to start issuing civil violations for zoning infractions.

Mr. Wrench stated that Mr. Guyer is doing a fabulous job and doing a lot of work in iWorq.

Mr. Wrench stated that he is working on the annual stormwater project with the other departments and should hopefully have it wrapped up by the end of this month.

**FACILITIES: TOWN HALL USE:** Mr. Wrench stated that he has had 2 requests to use the Town Hall. Russell Township Citizen's Park District and that is the 3<sup>rd</sup> Wednesday of every month 3:00pm – 6:00pm. Also, have Hemlock Hills HOA to have their meetings held on Sundays from 6:00pm – 10:00pm and then starting in May switch to Saturdays. Both have submitted their paperwork and Hold Harmless Agreements.

Mr. Wrench thanked the Trustees again for allowing him to attend the upcoming OTA Winter Conference.

**ACCEPT DONATION:** *Mr. Mueller made the motion, based on the Fiscal Officer's recommendation, to accept the donation from George & Susan Baker of \$50.00 to the Administration Building employees. Ms. Port seconded the motion, and it passed.*

*Ms. Port made the motion to approve the use of the \$50.00 donation for the Administration Building employees at the discretion of the Zoning Inspector. Mr. Mueller seconded the motion, and it passed.*

Ms. Port thanked George & Susan Baker for their generous donations to all the departments.

**FISCAL OFFICER:** Mrs. Walder stated that by Township elected officials, by statute, get a 1.75% pay raise. For 2025, the Trustee's compensation is \$25,602 and the Fiscal Officer compensation is \$35,075.

Mrs. Walder stated that we start 2025 will a little over \$12 million in resources.

**ELECTRONIC PAYMENTS RESOLUTION for 2025:** *Mr. Mueller made the motion to approve Resolution 2025-1, a Resolution authorizing payment by electronic transfer for calendar year 2025. Ms. Port seconded the motion, and it passed.*

**MILLER DODSON LEVEL 2 UPDATE:** Mrs. Walder said this proposal is to conduct a reserve study update. The proposal is for \$13,870 and would provide a Level 2 update, which would add the new Community Room, Police Garage and would do a refresh of the replacement cost for the current study. Mrs. Walder stated that the

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terms of the agreement are the same as the previous study. The APA has reviewed and wanted to alert the Trustee's, as in the previous agreement, calls for arbitration and the APA doesn't agree with it. Miller Dodson will not remove this line from the agreement.

*Mr. Mueller made the motion to authorize the preparation of a Level 2 Update to the township's Reserve Study by Miller Dodson Associates per the proposal dated December 13, 2024, which expands the Reserve Study to add:*

*New Community Room*

*New Police Cruiser Garage*

*and to refresh:*

*Replacement costs for items currently in study for a Reserve Study cost of \$13,870.00*

*Ms. Port seconded the motion, and it passed.*

**AUTHORIZED SIGNATORY: RESERVE STUDY:** *Mr. Mueller made the motion to authorize Fiscal Officer Karen Walder to act as Russell Township's authorized signatory for the Miller Dodson Reserve Study proposal, dated December 13, 2024. Ms. Port seconded the motion, and it passed.*

**STROLLO ADDITIONAL SERVICES PAYMENT REQUEST:** Mrs. Walder stated she sent to the board her due diligence regarding the payment request. Stated that just before the meeting she started receiving information from Strollo that she requested to support the additional services for the payment request. Mrs. Walder stated that she will have a recommendation for the next meeting for the additional services between October – December, which would be a Then & Now purchase order, and dollar amount for additional services from January 1<sup>st</sup> to January 31<sup>st</sup>. Also, the APA has recommended some language to extend the agreement with Strollo through January 31<sup>st</sup> in writing.

Ms. Port asked about extending past the January 31<sup>st</sup> deadline. Mrs. Walder stated that there are 2 agreements going on, an agreement with Strollo for their services and an agreement with ACM for their construction services. The last change order was to extend the services with ACM through January 31<sup>st</sup> and if it looks like the construction isn't going to be completed by then, would have to do another change order to extend that agreement.

**YEAR-END UPDATE:** Mrs. Walder stated that her staff did a great job getting bills paid and getting purchase orders and blankets open. Mrs. Walder stated that she is hoping to get the year-end completed by the end of January.

#### **COMMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC WERE RECEIVED**

**MEETING SCHEDULE: REVISED:** Mrs. Palmer stated this was to just update the location of the Trustee Meetings to the Community Room otherwise she would need to Sunshine all meetings. Mr. Mueller stated he didn't know the intention was to move the meetings to the new Community Room. Wants some time to think about this. Ms. Port stated that this will be discussed at the next meeting.

**CONFERENCE ATTENDANCE:** *Ms. Port made the motion to approve reasonable and necessary expenses for Jessica Ezzone to attend the Ohio Safety Congress and Expo April 16 - 18 2025 in Columbus. Mr. Mueller seconded the motion, and it passed.*

Ms. Port would like for all employees to submit take aways from all conferences.

**GEAUGA COUNTY HEALTH DISTRICT ADVISORY COUNCIL:** *Mr. Mueller made the motion to appoint Jim Mueller the Township representative to the Health District Advisory Council. Ms. Port seconded the motion, and it passed.*

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*Mr. Mueller made the motion to appoint Kristina Port the alternate Township representative to the Health District Advisory Council. Ms. Port seconded the motion, and it passed.*

Ms. Port noted two upcoming HDAC meetings on Mar 2 and Mar 12 regarding candidates' selection and recommended that Mr. Mueller watch for an email on this.

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

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

**HAZMAT COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS:** *Ms. Port made the motion to appoint Jim Mueller as Trustee representative to the HAZMAT Council of Governments. Mr. Mueller seconded the motion, and it passed.*

**CVIGC:** *Ms. Port made the motion to appoint Jim Mueller as the Trustee representative to the Chagrin Valley Intergovernmental Council. Mr. Mueller seconded the motion, and it passed.*

**OPBA:** *Mr. Mueller made the motion to appoint Kristina Port as the Trustee representative to the Ohio Patrolman's Benevolent Association township management committee. Ms. Port seconded the motion, and it passed.*

**VERCOG:** *Ms. Port made the motion to appoint Jim Mueller as the Trustee representative to the Valley Enforcement Regional Council of Governments. Mr. Mueller seconded the motion, and it passed.*

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

**PREVAILING WAGE COORDINATOR:** *Mr. Mueller 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 Gene Layne shall serve as the Prevailing Wage Coordinator. Ms. Port seconded the motion, and it passed.*

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

**DRUG/ALCOHOL ALTERNATE LIAISON:** *Mr. Mueller made the motion to authorize Gene Layne 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.*

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

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**CINTAS AGREEMENT:** *Mr. Mueller made the motion to accept the national rental agreement between Cintas Corporation and the State of Ohio for traffic mat rental services for Russell Township, with an agreement term of 36 months, a monthly fee of \$40.98, and cancellation without obligation. Ms. Port seconded the motion, and it passed.*

**AUTHORIZED SIGNATORY: CINTAS AGREEMENT:** *Ms. Port made the motion to authorize Fiscal Officer Karen Walder to act as Russell Township's authorized signatory for the Cintas Agreement via DocuSign. Mr. Mueller seconded the motion, and it passed.*

**COMMUNITY ROOM: CLEANING SERVICE:** Mrs. Walder stated that she and Mr. Wrench did a walkthrough with our cleaning service and received an estimate for his services. Mrs. Walder stated that she will have this ready for the next meeting.

**COMMUNITY ROOM EXPENSES:** Mr. Mueller asked if there was going to be separate revenue and expense account for the Community Room so we can track the building costs versus revenue. Mrs. Walder stated that there is a separate revenue and expense account, but there are many expenses that will be shared with the Administration building. Mr. Mueller recommended some type of proration be devised. Mrs. Walder stated that she will look into what can be done with tracking.

Mrs. Walder stated that she had several residents contact her regarding the process of appointing a new trustee. Stated some expressed the lack of process being taking and no interviews being done. Ms. Port stated that she hasn't heard of any complaints and wasn't aware that Mrs. Walder was getting any complaints. Mrs. Walder stated that although she does not have a vote in this matter, as a fellow elected who serves the residents of Russell, she urged the Board to develop a selection process and follow it, so that when the appointment is made, our residents can understand the qualifications put forward by the candidate and support the Board in the ultimate selection.

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

The meeting moved into executive session at 3:25 pm.

*Item #1: Melissa Palmer, Shane Wrench, Gene Layne & Chief John Frazier*

*In at 3:25 pm; out at 3:29 pm*

*Item #2: Melissa Palmer, Gene Layne & Chief John Frazier*

*In at 3:29pm; out at 3:30 pm*

*Item #3: Melissa Palmer, Gene Layne & Chief John Frazier*

*In at 3:30pm; out at 3:32 pm*

*Item #4: Melissa Palmer, Gene Layne & Chief John Frazier*

*In at 3:32pm; out at 3:37 pm*

*Item #5: Melissa Palmer & Chief John Frazier*

*In at 3:37pm; out at 3:38 pm*

*Mr. Mueller made the motion to return to regular session. Ms. Port seconded the motion, and it passed.*

The meeting moved to regular session at 3:38 pm.

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**#2 FIRE-EMS RECRUIT APPOINTMENT:** *Mr. Mueller made the motion to appoint Mr. Sawyer Wrench to the position of Fire-EMS Recruit, effective January 10, 2025.*

*Ms. Port seconded the motion, and it passed.*

**#3 REHIRE COMPENSATORY TIME REQUEST: GENE LAYNE:** *Mr. Mueller made the motion to authorize 120 hours of compensatory time for Mr. Gene Layne per his annual request for 2025 based on his rehire agreement. Ms. Port seconded the motion, and it passed.*

**#4 ROAD DEPT NEW HIRE:** *Mr. Mueller made the motion to hire Brad Nakoff as a full-time Road Laborer/Mechanic, Class IIB, at the rate of \$33.72 per Salary Schedule 40, pending completion of all paperwork with the Fiscal Office, acceptable results of the drug test and FBI/BCI background check, and Mr. Nakoff's receipt of CDL within 1 year of hire date; a one year probation will begin on the official starting date of February 1, 2025. Ms. Port seconded the motion, and it passed.*

**FIRE TRAILERS:** Chief Frazier and the Trustee's discussed moving 2 trailers into the Administration garage. The Trustee's agreed there is space for them. Chief Frazier had previously consulted with Facilities Manager Shane Wrench regarding this.

**PURCHASE ORDERS AND BILLS WERE APPROVED AS ATTACHED.**

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

The meeting was adjourned at 3:41 pm.

Kristina Port, Chair

Karen Walder, Fiscal Officer

Recorded by: J. Ezzone