

Community Room

November 20,

2025

The meeting was called to order at 7:01 p.m. by chairperson Port. Trustee Hare was present. The Board Administrator Melissa Palmer and Fiscal Officer Karen Walder were present.

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

The Pledge of Allegiance was said.

7:04 p.m. OPEN PUBLIC HEARING: *Ms. Port made the motion to open the Public Hearing on the Zoning Amendment 2025-1. Mr. Hare seconded the motion, and it passed.*

There was brief discussion regarding passive park designation. The Board of Zoning Appeals stated that the current definition is solid and will protect the township but can review it in future.

Mr. Mueller joined the meeting at 7:04 p.m.

CLOSE PUBLIC HEARING: *Mr. Hare made the motion to close the Public Hearing on the Zoning Amendment 2025-1. Mr. Mueller seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.*

7:07 p.m. END OF PUBLIC HEARING

ZONING AMENDMENT 2025-1: *Mr. Mueller made the motion to accept the recommendations of the Russell Township Zoning Commission and adopt Zoning Amendment ZC2025-1. Mr. Hare seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.*

GUEST: GEAUGA PUBLIC HEALTH: SEPTIC HEALTH PROGRAM: Christie Pinkley from Geauga Public Health spoke about the state mandated septic health program. They are rolling out the program in phases and Russell Township is in the next phase. Residents will start receiving letters for the \$100 permit fee but it's good for five years. The program requires that residents get their system pumped, serviced or inspected at least once in the next five years. Ms. Pinkley stated Russell residents can expect the letter mid-December, and the fee is due by end of January. Ms. Port asked about late fees and Ms. Pinkley stated that a state-mandated late fee of 25% would apply, and said if any residents have questions, they should contact Geauga Public Health.

RESOLUTION OF CONGRATULATIONS: SHANNON STANICH: *Mr. Hare made the motion to adopt Resolution 2025-31: A Resolution of Congratulations for Shannon Stanich for her promotion to Major in the United States Marine Corps Reserves. Mr. Mueller seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.*

MINUTES: *Mr. Mueller made the motion to accept the minutes of the Regular Meeting held on November 6, 2025, as presented. Mr. Hare seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.*

QUARTERLY REPORTS: *Mr. Mueller made the motion to accept the 3rd Quarter 2025 departmental report from the Fire Department. Mr. Hare seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.*

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FIRE DEPT: Chief Frazier thanked Mr. Maltese and his crew for helping with drainage issues on the north side of the Fire Department's property. Chief Frazier stated that the State Fire Marshall came out two weeks ago with a fire blast trailer, which is a training tool that the crew gets to do live fire simulations. This counts towards their ISO Public Protection classification and the fire department has to do it annually. This was at no cost to the township.

FIRE: BID PROPOSAL REVIEW/RECOMMENDATION FROM LARSEN

ARCHITECTS: Mr. Ptacek of Larsen Architects stated that the township received four bid proposals for the construction of the fire dormitory project. Stated that two deemed beyond the reach of the budget that was set by the township, and the two remaining bids were reviewed and there was about a \$12,000 difference between the two competing bids. Larsen reviewed all of the subcategories that were asked for in the bid summary. Mr. Ptacek stated that after reviewing and doing some follow-up calls to confirm the scope of the work, he is recommending going with United Contractors as the proposed low bid. Stated that they have more of an aggressive schedule and a long list of municipal clients. Mr. Ptacek recommends that the township move ahead to secure a contract with them. Mrs. Palmer stated she is hoping to have the contract be awarded at the December 2nd meeting.

BID AWARD: FIRE DORMITORY: *Mr. Hare made the motion that the project entitled Russell Township Fire Dormitory & Locker Room Renovation, be awarded to United Contractors Inc. from Brookfield, Ohio, for the amount of \$141,800, with an option of an early start date reduction of \$10,000.00, as recommended by James Ptacek of Larsen Architects.* Mr. Mueller seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.

LARSEN: FIRE DORMITORY: *Mr. Mueller made the motion to approve the use of Larsen Architects Inc for assistance during construction, on a time and materials basis, for the Russell Township Fire Dormitory & Locker Room Renovation for an amount up to \$1,500.00. Mr. Hare seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.*

POLICE: DETECTIVE: INTERVIEW PLAN, PAY DIFFERENTIAL: Chief Swaidner stated that he is seeking the board's approval to move forward with interviewing internal candidates first and then working through that process. Stated the process would be the same as done previously, letter of intent and then panel interview. If there are no internal candidates, they would post the job externally. Chief Swaidner is recommending a pay differential for the detective position. On the current salary schedule, there is a part-time detective lieutenant's position that he would like to eliminate and just do a detective position with a 2% spread above the highest paid patrol, which is about \$0.86 more per hour for the detective position. The trustees in agreement for Chief Swaidner to move forward with the interview process.

ODOT TRAFFIC SPEED STUDY UPDATE: Chief Swaidner stated that he received the speed study results back for SR 87. The study made the recommendation to lower the speeds from 50 miles an hour to 45 miles an hour from Clydesdale Trail going west all the way to where it drops to 40 miles an hour by Deepwood. The study shows that the speeds will remain the same from Clydesdale Trail going east to Sperry Road. Chief Swaidner stated that he spoke with the gentlemen that sent the study and stated that they don't need a letter

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from the Police Department for approval to move forward since it is a state road, but Chief Swaidner did draft a letter for board approval and will send it to Mrs. Palmer for review and will have it for the next meeting. Ms. Port asked when the change in the speed limit will be, and Chief Swaidner stated that is up to ODOT. Chief Swaidner stated that it wouldn't be enforceable until 90 days after the speed change.

Ms. Port asked if they mentioned anything about Caves Road and Chief Swaidner stated they did but that will be for the future. Stated there is high volume of traffic turning from east to north and ODOT will look at adding a turning lane in the future.

POLICE: RHODES QUOTE: Chief Swaidner stated that he spoke with Mrs. Walder about adding these to temporary appropriations as it was an item that was scheduled for 2026, and he would like to get the work scheduled for early February. Mr. Hare asked Chief Swaidner if he was having any current issues and Chief Swaidner stated that the memory is starting to experience failure due to age and parts for the current system are no longer available.

Mr. Hare made the motion to approve the installation of a new access control lock system at the Russell Police Department from Rhodes Security Systems based on the October 30, 2025, proposal to Chief Swaidner for an amount of \$39,975.00. Mr. Mueller seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.

AUTHORIZED SIGNATURE: RHODES: *Mr. Mueller made the motion to authorize Kristina Port to act as signatory for the Rhodes Security Systems proposal for the Police Department Access Control Lock System, dated October 30, 2025. Mr. Hare seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.*

KARVO UPDATE: Mr. Maltese stated that the change order and final payment have been sent over. Everything on his end is in order and prevailing wages are good. Mr. Maltese stated that Karvo has not completed the job so going to hold the final payment until they finish the punch list even if that's not till next year. Mrs. Walder stated that the change order results in a net deduction in the contract of about \$18,000.

ROAD PROJECT: KARVO: CHANGE ORDER APPROVAL: *Mr. Mueller made the motion, at the recommendation of the Geauga County Engineer, to approve Change Order No. 1 to the Township Road Project entitled 'RS-RUS-V-2025 The Asphalt Resurfacing of Various Roads in Russell Township,' this is a net reduction to the contract in the amount of \$ 18,303.50, for a revised Karvo Companies, Inc. Contract Value of \$395,240.25, based on the email from Jacob Scotes of the County Engineer's Office dated November 4, 2025. Mr. Hare seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.*

ROAD PROJECT: KARVO PAYMENT APPROVAL: *Mr. Hare made the motion to approve Pay Application No. 2 & Final for the Project entitled 'RS-RUS-V-2025 The Asphalt Resurfacing of Various Roads in Russell Township' in the amount of \$32,922.50 to Karvo Companies, Inc, as recommended by the Geauga County Engineer in the email from Jacob Scotes to the Board of Trustees dated November 4, 2025, and pending completion of the punch list as recommended by the Geauga County Engineer. Mr. Mueller seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.*

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SNOWPLOW ROUTES: Mr. Maltese stated that he reached out to the engineer's office to find out how they came up with their numbers because it's 8 miles and \$47,000 but they don't detail how they break it down and he hasn't heard back from them. Ms. Port stated that she reached out to the engineer's office saying the township would be covering our roads because we didn't have an agreement in time. Ms. Port stated that at the special meeting they made a motion suggesting a start date of January 1st depending if the engineer's office would give a new agreement and figures but haven't heard back.

Mr. Maltese wants to know better if it's going to be a profit or loss if the township agrees to plow for two of most severe months of winter. The county has two shifts and the township has one, so overtime should be factored in as well as burnout and how that can affect the crew. Wear and tear on the vehicles also need to be considered. Mr. Maltese stated that if the trustees want to move forward with an agreement starting January 1st, then they will take on the county roads.

ROAD: NOSDA MEMBERSHIP: *Mr. Mueller made the motion to authorize Russell Township's membership in the Northern Ohio Service Director's Association (NOSDA) for the annual amount of \$25.00. Mr. Hare seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.*

FISCAL OFFICE: Mrs. Walder thanked everybody who attended the Open House last Saturday.

Mrs. Walder informed the department heads and trustees that she will be out of the office next week and returning on December 1st.

Mrs. Walder stated that All Seasons was out today and completed the quick list of facilities repairs at the Town Hall and Administration Building. They also went to Bob Hall Field and took a look at the benches, and All Seasons will be able to replace the wood and hopefully for the next meeting will have a quote for the removal of the bleachers and replacing the benches.

Mrs. Walder stated that she did send an email out to the board and all department heads information on a public records request from South Russell and asked for immediate attention.

Mrs. Walder stated the request for proposal was issued to contractors to demolish the Williams property and to dispose of the junk vehicles. Asked for the proposals to be back by December 1st and will hopefully have a recommendation for the next meeting.

Mrs. Walder stated she received the amended amounts and rates resolution from the Budget Commission, which will be for the next meeting.

TOWN HALL: WINTER: KOBELLA QUOTE: Mrs. Walder stated we received two quotes for winterizing the Town Hall and was recommending Kobella. Mrs. Walder stated that she sent the terms and conditions to our APA who recommended three changes, one involving language to strike that Kobella could charge us for any unpaid amounts including interest, reasonable attorney fees and costs of collection. APA wanted the addition of any disputes to be presented in a court of competent jurisdiction of Geauga County and requested the addition of Kobella to retain general liability insurance with Russell Township named as an additional insured. Mrs. Walder stated that she did send it to Kobella requesting these changes but hasn't heard back. Mrs. Walder asked the board what they would like to do if she doesn't hear back from Kobella; suggesting the Board could seek another proposal, not winterize the Town Hall or continue to try and get the terms and conditions modified. Board agrees to try and get the modifications from Kobella and if not, will circle back.

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Mr. Hare made the motion to approve the winterizing of the Russell Town Hall by Kobella Plumbing Heating & Cooling based on the November 5, 2025 estimate #64017329 for an amount of \$766.00, pending acceptance of amended terms by Kobella. Mr. Mueller seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.

AUTHORIZED SIGNATURE: KOBELLA: *Mr. Hare made the motion to authorize Kristina Port to act as signatory for the Kobella estimate for the Town Hall winterization, dated November 5, 2025. Mr. Mueller seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.*

TOWN HALL: WINTER: KOBELLA QUOTE: *Mr. Mueller made the motion to approve the spring reopening of the Russell Town Hall by Kobella Plumbing Heating & Cooling based on the November 5, 2025 estimate #64014603 for an amount of \$352.00, pending acceptance of amended terms by Kobella. Mr. Hare seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.*

AUTHORIZED SIGNATURE: KOBELLA: *Mr. Hare made the motion to authorize Kristina Port to act as signatory for the Kobella estimate for the Town Hall spring reopening, dated November 5, 2025. Mr. Mueller seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.*

BANK RECONCILIATION & FINANCIAL REPORTS: *Mr. Mueller made the motion to acknowledge receipt of the monthly bank reconciliation and financial reports for October 2025, as submitted by Fiscal Officer Karen Walder. Mr. Hare seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.*

TRUSTEE REQUEST FOR CREDIT CARD: Mrs. Walder stated the topic of additional credit cards for the trustees was brought up. Stated this came around the same time the Auditor of State put out a bulletin that dealt with use of the township's tax exemption certificate, which may only be used when the goods or services are paid for by Russell Township directly. Mrs. Walder gave the example of the upcoming OTA conference, when making a hotel reservation, the tax-exempt can only be applied if using a township credit card to pay for the hotel. Mrs. Walder said if any of the trustees are interested in getting a credit card to email her the request and she would get the process started. The bulletin also stated will need to have a policy in place on the use of the township's tax exemption certificate and will work with Clemens Nelson on such policy.

TEMPORARY APPROPRIATIONS 2026: *Mr. Hare made the motion to adopt Russell Township's Temporary Annual Appropriation Resolution 2025-30 for the fiscal year ending December 31, 2026, as recommended by the Fiscal Officer. Mr. Mueller seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.*

COMMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC WERE RECEIVED

UNITI/WINDSTREAM/KINETIC NOTIFICATION: *Mr. Mueller made the motion to acknowledge the ownership change from Windstream/Kinetic to Kinetic ABS OH LLC based on the letter and packet received from Michael Friedman, of Robbins, Kelly, Patterson Tucker, dated October 24, 2025. Mr. Hare seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.*

AUTHORIZED SIGNATURE: UNITI/WINDSTREAM/KINETIC NOTIFICATION: *Mr. Mueller made the motion to authorize Kristina Port to act as signatory for the letter from Michael Friedman, of Robbins, Kelly, Patterson*

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Tucker, regarding Kinetic ABS OH LLC, dated October 24, 2025. Mr. Hare seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.

HOLIDAY REQUEST: The trustees agree to organize an employee holiday luncheon at the Community Room. Mrs. Walder stated that she recommends Ms. Dorka to help plan the party.

Ms. Port made the motion to organize an annual township review and appreciation event for Township employees, affiliates, and volunteers and to approve funding for the event up to \$4,000.00. Mr. Mueller seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS: Mr. Hare brought up the opioid funds and would like a plan in place to use these funds. Stated at one point there was talk about donating to Ravenwood Center but wants the trustees to figure out a plan.

Mr. Hare stated that Mrs. Walder sent an email regarding the Geauga Trumbull Waste Management grant. Ms. Port stated she registered for a webinar for this.

Mr. Hare brought up the topic of the Community Room use for HOA's if the Town Hall is going to be winterized. Trustees briefly discussed having a different agreement for recurring groups and Mr. Hare said he would work with our APA on what the trustees have to do to get the rental agreement amended for recurring usage. Mr. Hare stated that he has talked to Ms. Dorka about this issue, and he is hoping to have something for the next meeting.

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

The meeting moved into executive session at 8:41 pm.

*Item #1: Melissa Palmer, Chief Frazier, Karen Walder, Jessica Ezzone
In at 8:45 pm; out at 8:46 pm*

*Item #2: Melissa Palmer, Chief Frazier, Karen Walder, Jessica Ezzone
In at 8:46 pm; out at 8:47 pm*

*Item #3: Melissa Palmer, Karen Walder, Jessica Ezzone
In at 8:47 pm; out at 8:48 pm*

*Item #4: Melissa Palmer, Karen Walder, Jessica Ezzone
In at 8:48 pm; out at 8:49 pm*

*Item #5: Melissa Palmer, Karen Walder, Jessica Ezzone
In at 8:49 pm; out at 9:16 pm*

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

The meeting was moved to regular session at 9:19 pm.

#1 FIRE-EMS RECRUIT APPOINTMENT: *Mr. Mueller made the motion to appoint Dominic Matthews to the position of Fire-EMS Recruit, effective January 1, 2026. Mr. Hare seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.*

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#2 FIRE-EMS RECRUIT APPOINTMENT: *Mr. Mueller made the motion to appoint Calla Corrigan to the position of Fire-EMS Recruit, effective November 21, 2025. Mr. Hare seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.*

#3 BZA: *Mr. Mueller made the motion to re-appoint Nicole Mulloy to a full 5-year term on the Board of Zoning Appeals commencing January 1, 2026. Mr. Hare seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.*

#4 ZONING COMMISSION: *Mr. Mueller made the motion to re-appoint Barry Rogers to a full 5-year term on the Zoning Commission commencing January 1, 2026. Mr. Hare seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.*

#5 FACILITIES COORDINATOR: NEW HIRE: *Mr. Mueller made the motion to hire Frank Kolk as the part-time Facilities Coordinator, at the rate of \$25.00, pending candidate's acceptance; a one-year probation will begin on the official starting date of December 1, 2025. Mr. Hare seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.*

PURCHASE ORDERS AND BILLS WERE APPROVED AS ATTACHED.

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

The meeting was adjourned at 9:19 pm.

Kristina Port, Chair

Karen Walder, Fiscal Officer

Recorded by: J. Ezzone