

Community Room

November 6, 2025

The meeting was called to order at 2:00 p.m. by chairperson Port. Trustee Mueller and Trustee Hare were 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 were present. Asst. Zoning Inspector Frank Kolk and Zoning Secretary Bonnie Guyer were present.

The Pledge of Allegiance was said.

FLAGPOLE: Ms. Port stated that we are still waiting for the flagpole to be repaired, and that we aren't trying to be disrespectful by not lowering, we just can't yet. Mrs. Walder stated that The Flag Store has parts, but is waiting to hear back about getting a spider lift because it will be less damage to the ground.

MINUTES: *Mr. Mueller made the motion to accept the minutes of the Regular Meeting held on October 2, 2025, as presented. Mr. Hare seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.*

Mr. Hare made the motion to accept the minutes of the Regular Meeting held on October 16, 2025, as presented. Mr. Mueller seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.

QUARTERLY REPORTS: *Ms. Port made the motion to acknowledge receipt of the 3rd Quarter 2025 departmental report from the Fire department. Mr. Mueller seconded the motion, and the votes are as follows: Mr. Mueller yes; Mr. Hare abstained; Ms. Port yes, and the motion passed.*

QUARTERLY REPORTS: *Mr. Mueller made the motion to accept the 3rd Quarter 2025 departmental reports from the Police, Road, & Zoning departments. Mr. Hare seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.*

CENTERRA UPDATE: Mr. Maltese stated he is still waiting on Portman Electric to get the explosion proof conduit scheduled, so until they receive that, system is on hold.

VERDANTAS UPDATE: Mr. Maltese stated that he just came from Verdantas, and they are working on preliminary numbers. Stated that they reached out to Mr. Haupt from the engineer's office for some clarification on a couple of questions that will affect the price but are waiting to hear back at this point.

CINTAS MOTION: Mr. Maltese is requesting a signature on a termination letter for all shop towels through Cintas because the price is too high and they require a 90-day notice. Mr. Maltese would also like to cancel service for the Cintas first aid box as well.

Ms. Port made the motion to authorize Christopher Hare to act as authorized signatory to sign letter to terminate the agreement with Cintas for the Road Department delivery on shop towels for the necessary 90-day notice. Mr. Mueller seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.

Mr. Maltese stated that his department is ready for the snow. All the plow are mounted and started staking the routes this morning.

Mrs. Walder asked Mr. Maltese if he has heard anything from the County regarding snow plowing and he stated that he never received anything from them. Mr. Maltese stated that he adjusted the routes to reflect and are actually doing a section of Caves that Hunting Valley use to do for them. Will not be plowing the county roads this year

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since he has not received anything from the county and stated that we are not the only township that hasn't heard from the county regarding plowing. Mr. Hare asked if we get salt through the county and Mr. Maltese stated that he goes off the state contract and its state pricing. Mr. Maltese stated that they have already received 200 tons of salt.

PAY APPLICATION #2 UPDATE: Mrs. Walder stated that we received change order 1 and the final pay application from County Engineer's. The change order had a net reduction of \$18,000, so the balance due is just under \$33,000. Mr. Maltese asked that the final payment not be paid until the punch list has been completed.

LARSEN PROPOSAL: BID REVIEW & SUPPORT: SUPPLEMENTAL SERVICES: FIRE DORM: Chief Frazier stated this is for Larsen to review the bids and offer their recommendation. This is an additional proposal for this scope of work. Mrs. Walder stated that she hadn't reviewed the proposal and asked for it to be sent to her.

Mr. Mueller made the motion to approve bid review and support services for the Fire Dept dormitory and locker room renovation, by Larsen Architects, based on the proposal dated November 4, 2025, emailed by J. Ptacek to Chief Frazier, for an amount of \$5,000.00 with reimbursables up to \$100.00. Mr. Hare seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.

CRWP HYFI COST SHARE AGREEMENT: RENEWAL: Chief Frazier stated this is for the water sensors on the Chagrin River. Ms. Port stated that she sent the agreement to the APA for review. Mr. Hare asked what the HyFi sensors do, and Chief Frazier stated it is constant monitoring of the levels of the Chagrin River and can monitor it during heavy rains.

Mr. Mueller made the motion to approve the 2026 renewal of the Cost Share Agreement with Chagrin River Watershed Partners for the HyFi Water Level Sensor Network for a cost of \$3,450.00 per the proposal dated October 29, 2025. Mr. Hare seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.

AUTHORIZED SIGNATORY: HyFi: *Mr. Hare made the motion to authorize Kristina Port to act as Russell Township's authorized signatory for the 2026 renewal of the Cost Share Agreement with Chagrin River Watershed Partners for the HyFi Water Level Sensor Network, dated October 29, 2025, pending APA review and Fiscal Office certification. Mr. Mueller seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.*

STRATAGIC PLAN UPDATE: The original date for the public presentation of the Fire Department Study was November 20th, but there are scheduling conflicts. The new date will be December 2nd at 4:30 pm.

POLICE DEPT: Chief Swaidner stated this is the last weekend before they end their collection for Cram the Cruiser food drive. Chief Swaidner stated starting next week they will start their Toy Drive and will be collecting new and unwrapped toys in the lobby from November 13th through December 11th. Stated the department is participating in no shave November, and to participate they donate to the Toy Drive. Chief Swaidner stated that he and Lieutenant Lillash attended the AAA award ceremony yesterday because the department received the Platinum Award again. This is the third year in a row for outstanding achievement in traffic safety initiatives, such as safety programs they do at the schools. Mr. Mueller congratulated Chief Swaidner and his department on the passing of their levy.

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ZONING DEPT: Mr. Dietrich stated that they issued three permits and have nine violations they are actively working on. Some will probably end up with the prosecutor. Mr. Hare thanked the Zoning Department for all of their hard work. Stated they are following up with complaints as well.

Mr. Dietrich stated a copy of the proposed Zoning Resolution will be in the Zoning Office for anyone to review and anyone can call or email with any questions. Mr. Dietrich thanked the Zoning Commission for all their hard work revising the resolution and thanked Zoning Secretary, Mrs. Guyer for all of her hard work updating everything.

Mrs. Walder congratulated Mrs. Guyer completing her 1st year as the Zoning Secretary.

ACCEPT AMENDMENT FOR PUBLIC HEARING: *Mr. Hare made the motion to accept proposed amendment ZC 2025-1 to the Russell Township Zoning Resolution for Public Hearing. Mr. Mueller seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.*

SET DATE FOR PUBLIC HEARING: *Mr. Hare made the motion that the Russell Township Board of Trustees will conduct a public hearing on the proposed amendment, identified as number ZC 2025-1, to the Russell Township Zoning Resolution as attached hereto on the 20th day of November 2025 at 7:00 p.m. at the Community Room, 8501 Kinsman Road. Mr. Mueller seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.*

FISCAL OFFICE: Mrs. Walder thanked her staff for handling the Fiscal Office while she was away.

Mrs. Walder congratulated the trustee-elect and the Police Department on the passage of their levy. Congratulated all six candidates who stepped up to serve local government as candidates for the trustee position. Thanked the Russell Township voters, once again the voter turnout for Russell Township was the highest in the county. The voter turnout in the county was 32.91% with all precincts in Russell Township exceeded that by a significant margin.

Mrs. Walder gave an update on the camera security system and access controls, which were updated today by ADP to the latest version. Anyone that would like to have access controls on their computer, can reach out ADP and request it.

Mrs. Walder stated that her staff attended the OAPT Fall Conference and shared a couple of takeaways. BWC will not be doing their billion-back refund but can expect a 1% premium increase next year. Under cybersecurity and public records, if anyone uses ChatGPT that becomes a public record and is part of cyberspace. It is recommended that if you use ChatGPT, to get a paid version so it's more secure.

Mrs. Walder noticed another Township using the domain township.geauga.oh.gov and stated she reached out to ADP and found out that is an option for us to have Russell.geauga.oh.gov. Trustees did not wish to make a change at this time. Chief Swaidner indicated that the Police Department .gov domain is operational. Chief Frazier indicated that their migration to a .gov domain is in progress.

FACILITIES: MAINTENANCE & REPAIR ITEMS: Mrs. Walder stated that she has contractor lined up to take care of the Town Hall and Admin items and is working out a schedule because wanted to wait till after elections. Stated that work does not include winterizing the Town Hall and stated that Mrs. Ezzone is working on getting quotes for that and will likely have that for the next meeting. Thanked Mr. Maltese for helping with the process of the winterizing.

Mrs. Walder stated she received a request and will look at having the bleachers removed and wood seat bench tops replaced. Ms. Port stated that Mr. Maltese wanted to see the proposals for the cost of the replacements because he wants to make sure its composite versus wood. Mrs. Walder stated her staff will work on that.

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SUPPLEMENTAL APPROPRIATION #5: *Mr. Mueller made the motion to adopt the Supplemental Township Annual Appropriation Resolution 2025-29 to provide for the additional sums (SUPPL#5 \$172,200.00) to be set aside and appropriated in*

FUND 1000 \$14,000.00

FUND 2031 \$55,000.00

FUND 2081 \$15,000.00

FUND 2111 \$53,000.00

FUND 2281 \$35,000.00

for the fiscal year ending December 31, 2025, as recommended by the Fiscal Officer. Mr. Hare seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.

2026 DENTAL, VISION, LIFE, & VOLUNTARY LIFE RENEWAL: *Mr. Mueller made the motion to accept the renewal document from Principal Life Insurance Co., for Dental, Vision, Life, & Voluntary Life Insurance, emailed to the trustees by Karen Walder on October 24, 2025, indicating a 6.8% increase for the Dental coverage only, effective at 2026 renewal date, all benefits remain the same. Mr. Hare seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.*

INSURANCE: *Mr. Hare made the motion to approve the following insurance benefits for Russell Township officials and full-time employees for the year 2026:*

Health Insurance – Medical Mutual HRA 6750

Life Insurance – Principal Financial

Dental – Principal Financial

Vision – Principal Financial

Voluntary Life – Principal Financial

Mr. Mueller seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.

HRA FUNDING 2026: *Mr. Mueller made the motion to approve the township funding of the HRA at the \$6,750/individual & 13,500/family level (Russell Township covering 100% of the deductible) for the year 2026. Mr. Hare seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.*

EMPLOYEE CONTRIBUTION: *Mr. Mueller made the motion to continue the 15% employee contribution amount toward the 2026 benefits package. Mr. Hare seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.*

AUTHORIZATION FOR FO: *Mr. Hare made the motion for the Fiscal Officer to act as signatory and executor for the Principal Financial Vision, Dental, Life, and Voluntary Life renewal agreements emailed October 24, 2025. Mr. Mueller seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.*

SALARY SCHED #43: *Mrs. Walder stated that the Salary Schedule reflects the 3% increase per the collective bargaining agreement and extended parity to all departments as has been historically done.*

Mr. Mueller made the motion to adopt Salary Schedule 43, effective January 1, 2026. Mr. Hare seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.

Mr. Hare stepped away at 2:53 pm.

FO QUARTERLY REPORT: *Mrs. Walder stated that all major funds have received 100% of their budgeted revenue throughout the year. Stated that cemetery is \$7,000 over the budgeted amount and Zoning is \$2,500 below their budgeted amount. Interest on investments is up \$50,000 over budgeted amount.*

Mr. Mueller made the motion to acknowledge receipt of the third quarter 2025 report

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from the Russell Township Fiscal Officer. Ms. Port seconded the motion, and it passed.

Mr. Hare stepped back in at 2:54 pm.

COMMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC WERE RECEIVED

OTARMA RESPONSES (SOATs): Mrs. Palmer stated she forwarded everything to the Trustees and stated that there are two items that will continue to be in process and submitting as is.

Mr. Hare made the motion to approve the OTARMA Statements of Actions Taken in response to and in compliance with the 13 August 25, 2025, OTARMA recommendations. Mr. Mueller made seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.

ACCEPT DONATION: *Mr. Mueller made the motion to accept the donation of the POW/MIA flag from Mr. Newell Howard to the Russell Township Board of Trustees. Mr. Hare seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.*

US PROTECTIVE SERVICES: Mr. Hare brought up the fact that he gets a call almost every Monday night regarding Briar Hill with communication failure, and it's probably just a bad battery. Chief Frazier stated that he will follow up on it.

BOCC "PIGGYBACK" PROVISION: The trustees had a discussion regarding the Board of Commissioners provision in the State budget to expand Homestead or Owner Occupancy. Commissioner Brakey is looking for feedback from Townships before they make a vote. If they enact the "piggyback" it would apply to entire county and reduce funds across all departments. Mr. Hare felt that the Township has a choice to either use General Fund monies to assist other Departments or sign on to this action by the County Commissioners. Ms. Port and Mr. Mueller do not want the County Commissioners to make decisions for Russell Township. Mr. Hare stated that he will type up the statement that the township is not in favor of this action.

2026 CONFERENCE ATTENDANCE: *Mr. Hare made the motion to approve reasonable and necessary expenses for up to three attendees to attend the OTA Winter Conference, February 4-6, 2026, in Columbus, OH. Mr. Mueller seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.*

OTA TOWNSHIP EDUCATION SUBSCRIPTION RENEWAL: *Mr. Hare made the motion to authorize the renewal of an annual OTA Township Education Subscription for use by township active and affiliate members of the Ohio Township Association for unlimited webinars and webinar archive access in 2026 for the cost of \$250.00. Mr. Mueller seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.*

PERSONAL POLICY MANUAL: Mrs. Palmer stated that if there are a lot questions a work session could be set up. Ms. Port stated that she had some questions, and Mrs. Palmer said to send them to Ms. Dorka within the next week. Mrs. Palmer advised board if they have any questions or comments to send an email to Ms. Dorka.

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

The meeting moved into executive session at 4:00 pm.

TOWNSHIP TRUSTEES

REGULAR

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Item #1: Melissa Palmer, Chief Swaidner, Karen Walder, Jessica Ezzone

In at 4:00 pm; out at 4:03 pm

Item #2: Melissa Palmer, Chief Swaidner, Karen Walder, Jessica Ezzone

In at 4:03 pm; out at 4:04 pm

Item #3: Melissa Palmer, Chief Swaidner, Karen Walder, Jessica Ezzone

In at 4:04 pm; out at 4:06 pm

Item #4: Melissa Palmer, Chief Swaidner, Karen Walder, Jessica Ezzone

In at 4:06 pm; out at 4:23 pm

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

The meeting was moved to regular session at 4:23 pm.

#1 VACATION BUYBACK: *Mr. Mueller made the motion to approve payment for the equivalent of 120 hours of vacation for Chief Thomas Swaidner. Mr. Hare seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.*

PURCHASE ORDERS AND BILLS WERE APPROVED AS ATTACHED.

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

The meeting was adjourned at 4:24 pm.

Kristina Port, Chair

Karen Walder, Fiscal Officer

Recorded by: J. Ezzone