

COMMUNITY ROOM

April 2, 2026

The meeting was called to order at 2:30 pm. by chairperson Hare. Trustee Port was present and Trustee Heutmaker joined at 2:35 pm. 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 and Zoning Inspector Frank Kolk. Asst. Fire Chief Nick Sambula was present

The Pledge of Allegiance was said.

PLOW TRACKING: Mr. Maltese stated that he met with John Onyshko from Chester Township, and Mr. Onyshko gave him information on their program, Flow Ops, they use for snowplow tracking. Mr. Maltese reached out to Flow Ops for information and stated that pricing is very expensive for little yield. Mr. Hare thanked Mr. Maltese for looking into this.

BID AWARD: 2026 PAVING: *Ms. Port made the motion that the project entitled The Asphalt Resurfacing of Various Roads, RS-RUS-V-2026, Russell Township, Geauga County, be awarded to Karvo Companies, Inc., from Stow, Ohio, for the amount of \$584,209.20, as recommended by the Geauga County Engineer. Mrs. Heutmaker seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.*

Mr. Maltese stated that his department got everything cleaned up from the first storm, but this last round they are currently out doing tree work and ask for everyone to be patient as they go through the Township to cleanup. If there are any issues, Mr. Maltese said to call.

SLCGP CYBER GRANT: Chief Swaidner is looking for the Boards thoughts on this topic. The project that was accepted would have had to go out to bid and follow a formal process because it exceeded the \$10,000 threshold. Chief Swaidner stated can do a redirect and apply for another project because the funds are still available. The MFA project that he had is not eligible for reimbursement. Chief Swaidner asked the Board what they would like him to do and Ms. Port suggests redirecting it for another project.

POLICE: 9-8-8 SIGN DONATION: Chief Swaidner was at a Geauga Chief's meeting and a representative from the Geauga County Board of Mental Health and Recovery Services, introduced the 9-8-8 program, which is a suicide prevention and mental health crisis hotline that connects people immediately with a counselor. To help raise awareness, they offered to donate signs reading "Hope has a number, call 9-8-8, you're not alone," along with a QR code linking to the service. Chief Swaidner stated he reached out to WGCJR Board and asked if they would be willing to put it in the park and they agreed. The road department is also willing to assist with installation. Geauga Parks has already adopted the program and placed signs.

Ms. Port made the motion to accept the donation of metal signs informing about the 9-8-8 Service to Russell Township. Mrs. Heutmaker seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.

POLICE: ACCEPT DONATION: *Mrs. Heutmaker made the motion to accept the donation from Karen Walder in the amount of \$250.00 to the Police Department. Ms. Port seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.*

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

POLICE DEPT: SENIOR SEMINAR: Chief Swaidner stated that they will be hosting an informative session for the Township's senior community. It will cover topics for home security tips, fraud and scams, and personal safety. It will be held on May 12th from 2:00 pm – 3:00 pm in the Community Room.

DRIVEWAY APRON: AUTHORIZED SIGNATORY: *Mrs. Heutmayer made the motion to authorize Amy Heutmayer to act as Russell Township's authorized signatory for the G.A.R. Paving contract. Ms. Port seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.*

SSO CONTRACT: Mr. Hare and Chief Swaidner met with West Geauga school's regarding the SSO contract for Westwood Elementary School. Stated the Township needs to come up with a cost for Mr. McDermot to cover the school year again. Everyone's recommendation is to do a 1-year contract. Mr. Hare asked Mrs. Walder if they can work on providing a cost for the contract, assuming the Board would like to continue this relationship with West Geauga School providing an SSO.

FIRE: ACCEPT DONATION: *Ms. Port made the motion to accept the donation from Karen Walder in the amount of \$250.00 to the Fire Department. Mrs. Heutmayer seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.*

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

NOPEC NEC REQUEST: *Ms. Port made the motion to approve the use of NOPEC Energized Community (NEC) grant funds in the amount of \$777.20 to defray the cost of the eligible LED exterior Fire Station lighting purchases. Mrs. Heutmayer seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.*

FIRE DEPT: Asst. Fire Chief Sambula A severe storm hit the township, prompting about 20 storm-related calls over a 24-hour period starting around 6:00 pm Tuesday evening. Incidents included downed trees, power lines, and structural damage, spanning a little west of Caves and Fairmount following the track between Fairmount Road to the far northeastern part of town. Emergency response efforts continued into the next day and involved close coordination between the fire, police, and road departments.

Asst. Fire Chief Sambula stated he met with National Weather Service and the county EMA, and they are going to investigate whether a tornado touched down, with early indications suggesting a possible EF1 tornado with winds around 95 mph and a path about 75 yards wide. If confirmed, this could make the township eligible for additional funding and assistance for residents.

Asst. Fire Chief Sambula stated they started their roll out with the Police Department of the OPCI cyber awareness training. All members of the Police and Fire are enrolled and will complete the program for the Ohio Cyber Awareness. He and Police Chief Swaidner are overseeing the program to make sure it's completed.

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ZONING DEPT: Mr. Kolk had no updates at this time. Mr. Hare said that Dave Dietrich will be at the next meeting to go over forms and Barry Rogers will be at the next meeting as well to discuss Town Hall.

FISCAL OFFICER: Mrs. Walder restated her request that the Board seek an outside independent review of the allegations made against her as Fiscal Officer.

Mrs. Walder stated the Geauga County Auditor's office conducted a free Cyber Security Awareness seminar on March 30th. Even though she did not attend, she has a handout that was provided by the Sheriff's Office and will provide it to the Board.

Mrs. Walder indicated that they do a meeting a couple times of year with ADP to review the Township's work with them and suggested a meeting on May 15th and Mrs. Walder if there is a trustee that would be interested in attending. Ms. Port stated she could attend if the date could be changed.

BWC GROUP RETROSPECTIVE RATING: *Ms. Port made the motion to approve Russell Township's renewal of the Bureau of Workers' Compensation Group Retrospective Rating Program. Mrs. Heutmayer seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.*

AUTHORIZED SIGNATORY: *Ms. Port made the motion to authorize Karen Walder to act as Russell Township's authorized signatory for the Bureau of Workers' Compensation Group Retrospective renewal application approved April 2, 2026. Mrs. Heutmayer seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.*

SEDGWICK INVOICE: *Ms. Port made the motion to approve expenses from Sedgwick, the township's representative to the Bureau of Workers' Compensation Group Retrospective Rating Program, in the amount of \$2,160.00, Invoice #1611456, dated March 11, 2026. Mrs. Heutmayer seconded the motion, and the votes are as follows: Mrs. Heutmayer yes; Ms. Port yes; Mr. Hare abstained and the motion passed.*

AUTHORIZED SIGNATORY: *Ms. Port made the motion to authorize Jessica Ezzone to act as Russell Township's authorized signatory for the Sedgwick invoice dated March 11, 2026. Mrs. Heutmayer seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.*

Mrs. Heutmayer thanked Mrs. Walder for her wise stewardship per her email to the APA this week regarding the funds that were available on March 1st and with the first collection that came in, per Mrs. Walder's ORC responsibilities, she moved \$1.45 million from active funds to investments.

PERMANENT APPROPRIATIONS: Mrs. Walder stated that there was a clerical error in the permanent appropriations that were adopted at Monday's meeting.

Mrs. Heutmayer made the motion to adopt Resolution 2026-10 Amended, the Permanent Township Annual Appropriations for the fiscal year ending December 31, 2026. Ms. Port seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.

COMMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC WERE RECEIVED

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LEADERSHIP GEAUGA SIGNATURE PROGRAM: Mrs. Palmer reminded the Department Heads that if anyone is interested in the program, need to apply by April 15th.

BUDGET WORKSHOP DATES: There was brief discussion regarding dates for the budget workshops and May 19th, and May 21st were decided on from 12:00 pm to 3:00 pm.

Brief discussion regarding supplemental appropriations and Mrs. Heutmaker would like to discuss this at the next meeting.

GSWCD PAYMENT: Brief discussion regarding this payment but the trustees have continued this discussion till the next meeting.

BUDGET PLANNING & PROCESSES: Mr. Hare stated that he spoke to some neighboring trustees on how they handle their annual budgets. Suggests having regular check-ins, without needing special meetings to compare departmental budgets against actual spending. The goal is to better understand what the main drivers are of expenses and ensure departments stay within budget. Discussed adding a mid-year review in July to evaluate big projects the departments may have and determine if any should be reconsidered if they aren't going to be performed.

AMERICAN 250: Mr. Hare discussed an America 250 event and seeing if we can utilize the Town Hall or the church. Would like to get some speakers if possible. Suggest seeing if there is a veteran of the Revolutionary War, either in Geauga County or in Russell's cemetery, and look into a story of what that veteran did. Would like to get a George Washington impersonator to give a speech or historical lesson. Would like to consider a date in early June.

IT PROJECT: Ms. Port discussed exploring the consolidation of a single IT vendor for better efficiency. Ms. Port is gathering information from multiple IT companies to see what services they can provide. She has a list of what ADP provides for the Administration and Road Department and the cost breakdown. Ms. Port asked Mrs. Walder for their support costs for the last two years. Has some preliminary information from one company, ISSquared that she will send to Mrs. Palmer to send out to the trustees and suggests reviewing at the next meeting to discuss the possibility of integrating the Township's IT systems. Mr. Hare asked that the information include a scope of work and identification of any financial savings.

MEMORIAL DAY: Ms. Port gave a brief update on the Memorial Day planning. Stated will work with Mrs. Palmer to make sure the program is in place. Ms. Port asked Mr. Kolk if he has gotten pricing on a portable restroom, and he stated he got pricing from one vendor but was advised to get pricing from another vendor as well.

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). Mrs. Heutmaker seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.*

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

*Item #1: Melissa Palmer and Giovanni Maltese
In at 3:54 pm; out at 4:43 pm*

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Item #2: Melissa Palmer

In at 4:43 pm; out at 4:44 pm

Item #3: Melissa Palmer

In at 4:44 pm; out at 5:03 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 5:04 pm.

ROAD DEPT PROMOTION: *Mr. Hare made the motion to accept Road Superintendent Giovanni Maltese's recommendation and promote Matt Romagni to the position of Laborer IIIA in the Russell Township Road Department. The promotion is effective April 1, 2026. A one-year probation period will begin on the official starting date. Pay scale for Matt Romagni will be \$34.43 per hour per Salary Schedule 45. Ms. Port seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.*

ROAD DEPT PROMOTION: *Mrs. Heutmaker made the motion to accept Road Superintendent Giovanni Maltese's recommendation and promote Nick Reese to the position of Laborer IIA in the Russell Township Road Department. The promotion is effective April 1, 2026. A one-year probation period will begin on the official starting date. Pay scale for Nick Ries will be \$32.15 per hour per Salary Schedule 45. Mr. Hare seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.*

PURCHASE ORDERS AND BILLS WERE APPROVED AS ATTACHED.

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

The meeting was adjourned at 5:09 pm.

Christopher Hare, Chair

Karen Walder, Fiscal Officer

Recorded by: J. Ezzone