

TOWN HALL

April 3, 2025

The meeting was called to order at 2:01 p.m. by chairperson Port. Trustees Mueller and Hare were present. The Board Administrator Melissa Palmer and Fiscal Officer Karen Walder were present.

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

The Pledge of Allegiance was said.

MINUTES: *Mr. Mueller made the motion to accept the minutes of the Special Meeting held on March 20, 2025, as presented. Mr. Hare seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.*

HEMLOCK HILLS: VILIMAS RESIDENCE UPDATE: Mr. Wrench stated that Mr. Mueller called him to look at this property. Mr. Wrench stated he walked the property with Mr. Layne, and he took some pictures and submitted them to the Trustees. There is an individual that is paying the taxes on the house but does live out of state. Mr. Mueller has been in contact with the individual's attorney, Mike Drain. The individual will be coming into town on April 12th to see the property. Mr. Mueller advised Mr. Drain that safety service personnel be on the property due to safety concerns. Mr. Mueller would like a letter from the Fire Department that the property is hazardous and then would like a resolution drafted so the township can demolish the property. Mr. Hare thinks it should be up to the homeowner/individual paying the taxes to demolish the house and not use township funds. Ms. Port would like to wait till the individual comes into town before taking any kind of action. Ms. Port would like to know what the HOA covenants are. Ms. Port does not want to set a precedent for future properties and property owners "abandoning" their properties, so the township pays for any kind of cleanup. Mr. Mueller stated that he will ask Mr. Drain to come to the next meeting to discuss next steps on the property.

GREAT LAKES BILLING SETTLEMENT REQUEST: Chief Frazier explained this settlement was for a vehicle accident and to the offer is to take a reduced settlement of \$339. Mrs. Walder does not agree with taking the reduced settlement amount, questioning why the taxpayers would subsidize this fee and concern that it would set a precedent. Chief Frazier stated that this is a one off and they have never had one before. Chief Frazier stated that Great Lakes Billing recommends looking into collections and the township can have the Attorney General's Office to it and it's no charge to the township.

Mr. Mueller made the motion to accept the settlement adjustment amount of \$339.00 for EMS charges to be paid to Russell Township through Great Lakes Billing Associates, Inc, request date February 27, 2025, regarding account #21-54320INCRT1113. Mr. Hare seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.

FIRE DEPT: Chief Frazier stated that the inspection on the fire alarm was done at the Community Room yesterday and it passed.

Chief Frazier stated that the Fire Department received site certification for their training facility from the state of Ohio, so they can now conduct Fire/EMS continuing education classes. They can now run the classes and give certification instead of having to go through a hospital system.

CITIZENS POLICY ACADEMY: Chief Swaidner stated they are looking at new ways for community outreach and they will be starting up Citizens Policy Academy. It is a program designed to give exposure to community members the different aspects of

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law enforcement. It will be an 8-week program that will cover what the Russell Police Department does, the different services they provide, the different equipment they use and the specialty units that they have access to. One of the weeks the Fire Department will teach First Aid and CPR. This will be free of charge to the Russell Township residents and there will be an application process. Chief Swaidner stated that they will have a limited number for participation for the first year. If approved, he would like to start August 26th and go for the 8 weeks. Chief Swaidner hopes that they can graduate at the 2nd October trustee meeting. Attendees will receive a certificate of completion, and he would like to have a little ceremony to go with it. Mr. Mueller asked if any other communities do it and Chief Swaidner stated that while many departments in NE Ohio have this program, Bainbridge is the only other community in Geauga County that does this type of program. Mr. Hare appreciates the Police and Fire Department doing this for the community and suggests using the opioid funds for some education material as part of this program.

GARAGE UPDATE: Chief Swaidner stated that the garage is done, except for the final electric hooked up, which will be done tomorrow. Stated that they are already parking in the garage.

CHAGRIN MILLS & 306 INTERSECTION: The HOA feels that this intersection is hazardous and has more of a difficult turnoff. The ditch is deep, and they wanted to know if there was anything that could be done. Mr. Layne stated that there is no visibility issue with this intersection. Mr. Layne stated for anything to be done, would have to ask ODOT to do a survey of the intersection and ODOT would be the one to fix the ditch. Mr. Mueller asked Mr. Layne to contact ODOT to see if there is anything that can be done.

ROAD: DISPOSITION OF PROPERTY: *Mr. Mueller made the motion, at the recommendation of the Road Superintendent, to dispose of the item identified in an email dated March 27, 2025, entitled "Russell Road Department disposition of property," as the item is not needed for public use, is obsolete, or is unfit for public use. Mr. Hare seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.*

ROAD DEPT: Mr. Layne stated that South Russell has their trash day scheduled for April 26th and will send a few guys to help.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT CONFERENCE: TAKE AWAYS: Mrs. Walder stated that any elected official can go to this conference, not just Fiscal Officers. Mrs. Walder recommends that the Board should consider going to this conference next year, and that she put a copy of the conference agenda and descriptions in the circulation box for the trustees to look at.

Mrs. Walder stated that cybersecurity and cyberthreats were a big topic and noted that the Auditor of State is working on required cybersecurity policies that they will impose. Stated that a lack of cohesive a team can contribute to cybersecurity problems. She also forwarded an email from ADP to the Board with a follow-up. on the speakers stressed the importance of elected officials and their responsibility in establishing internal controls and in setting the tone from the top. We learned that the one number audit issue is a noncompliance with 5705.41D, which is the Fiscal Office Certification.

Mrs. Walder stated that under proposed legislation, there is a senate bill out there that would require townships to accept cryptocurrency.

LAUREL SCHOOLS PILOT UPDATE: Mrs. Walder stated that the Laurel check has been received in the amount of \$51,800 and has been divided between all departments per the previous resolution.

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2026 BUDGET PREP: Mrs. Walder stated that she created the ClearGov 2026 budget, and that anything that was in 2026 and further has rolled over. Asked the departments to update any projects in ClearGov and then resubmit all projects. Mrs. Walder stated that she sent an email to the Board about some thoughts to consider for the budget.

PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD: Mrs. Walder asked the Board if they wanted to add resident's name and address to be added to the minutes during public comments since it was being asked for during meetings. Currently, they are not added to the minutes and Mrs. Walder isn't suggesting changing the public comment section. The Board agrees not to change anything.

SUPPLEMENTAL APPROPRIATIONS: Mrs. Walder stated that she is working on supplemental appropriations for the next meeting. Mrs. Walder asked the Department Heads that if there are any other capital items, to put them in ClearGov under 2025 or to reach out to her.

COMMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC WERE RECEIVED

TOWN HALL PROJECT: Mrs. Walder re-sent the proposal from May of 2024 but doesn't know if it's still valid. Mrs. Walder asked the Board if they want to pursue this study for 2025 and stated that there is money allocated for this. Mr. Hare asked if there has been a study in the last 10 years and Mrs. Walder does not think so. He stated that the trustees need to establish what they want to do with the Town Hall before spending money on the study. The scope of the proposed study, focused on work to keep it historic. Mr. Hare asked if there is a way to narrow the scope of the work they want to accomplish and get a study just on that. Ms. Port suggests spending the money on a study again since we have money allocated. Mr. Mueller offered that the State Historical Society or Geauga County Historical Society might be a resource. Trustee Port offered to follow up.

TREE CITY: TRUSTEE LIAISON APPOINTEE: Mr. Hare agreed to be the township's Tree City liaison.

MEMORIAL DAY: PROGRESS REPORT: Ms. Port gave an update on the progress of Memorial Day. Ms. Port would like to ask our cleaner for the Admin building to clean the church again. Stated that the programs will be in the same format as last year. Stated that she still needs to find a speaker and Mrs. Walder suggested Jim Finley, the Fire Inspector and veteran from Chagrin Falls.

Mr. Mueller stepped away at 3:37 pm.

LEADERSHIP GEAUGA EMPLOYEE SPONSORSHIP: Mrs. Palmer stated that the township sponsors 1 employee a year to go through this program. The trustees agree to sponsor an employee for the 2025/2026 class. Mrs. Palmer told the Department Heads to spread the word to their employees and Applications will be reviewed at the May 1st meeting.

OPIOID SETTLEMENT AGREEMENT: Mrs. Walder stated that we received \$764.87 as part of the opioid settlement. It is part of One Ohio but it's through a different portal. Mrs. Walder stated that the portal had an agreement and sent it to the APA for review. The APA doesn't agree with some of the language and Mrs. Walder reached out to see if any changes could be made. The agreement was for the use of the portal, not for the funds.

Mr. Hare made the motion to accept the funds from the ENDO Public Opioid Trust Settlement in the amount of \$764.87. Ms. Port seconded the motion, and it passed.

PORTAL AUTHORIZATION: *Mr. Hare made the motion to authorize Fiscal Officer Karen Walder to use the ENDO Public Opioid Trust Portal Account on behalf of the Russell Township Board of Trustees for the purposes of providing payment instructions. Ms. Port seconded the motion, and it passed.*

Mr. Mueller stepped back in at 3:40 pm.

GSWCD FINANCIAL SUPPORT: *Mr. Mueller made the motion to express appreciation to Geauga Soil and Water Conservation District for the services and programs they provide to Russell Township residents and in meeting the township’s NPDES goals, and to authorize a 2025 annual payment of \$3,000 per invoice #2025-RUS-PH2. Mr. Hare seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.*

ACOUSTIC PLAN UPDATE: Mr. Wrench stated that he just received the estimate from the installer today. Going from the acoustic engineer analysis, the price range is \$22,000 - \$26,000. Stated that the Board may opt not to do all the recommendations from the engineer to save on cost, but there will still be some sound issues. Mr. Wrench stated that the installer can come on site and bring some material if needed. The time frame would 4-6 weeks. Mr. Wrench stated that colors for the panels would need to be decided, or they can do color match. Mrs. Walder advised the board they would need to come up with an estimate for the supplemental she is doing for the next meeting or can use the \$50,000 already appropriated from the capital grant money for this project. The trustees agree to use the capital grant money for this project.

ADA DOOR OPERATORS UPDATE: There was discussion on who was going to be responsible for doing the ADA door operator. Mr. Wrench stated that ACM was getting an estimate for it, but Mrs. Walder thought we were done with change orders, and we were going to do get estimates on our own. Ms. Port would rather have everything done now instead of having projects pushed off. Mrs. Walder stated that our current contract with ACM went through the end of February except for items on the punch list and Strollo’s contract went through the end of March. If we have ACM install the ADA door operator, the trustees would need to extend the contract with ACM and Strollo. Mr. Wrench noted another issue is that ADP would need to be consulted to assess whether the current access control system could be modified to work with an ADA door operator. That could also be an additional cost associated with ADA. The trustees agreed to handle the ADA door operator on our own and asked Mr. Wrench to pick up this work and tell ACM we will not need an estimate. Chief Swaidner offered that he has two local vendors that do the ADA door operators. There was also some confusion about the programming for Community Room access and Ms. Dorka clarified for the Board how it would be handled.

VENUE AGREEMENT & RECOMMENDATIONS: There was brief discussion on costs for the Community Room usage.

Resident Rates

Security Deposit	Security Deposit with alcohol	Hourly Rate	Overage Fee
\$200	\$300	\$60/hr	\$100/hr

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Nonresident Rates

Security Deposit	Security Deposit with alcohol	Hourly Rate	Overage Fee
\$275	\$375	\$100/hr	\$150/hr

Ms. Dorka asked the Board if there are any uses that the Board will need to approve, and Mr. Mueller stated that she can make that decision. The Board told Ms. Dorka if there is something she isn't comfortable with, to come to them for a decision.

EXECUTIVE SESSION: *Mr. Hare made the motion to move into executive session to discuss the employment and compensation of public employee and the appointment of an elected official pursuant to ORC 121.22 (G) (1) AND pursuant to ORC 121.22(G)(2) a potential land sale at competitive bid. Mr. Mueller seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.*

The meeting moved into executive session at 4:39 pm.

Item #1: Karen Walder, Melissa Palmer

In at 4:40 pm; out at 4:54 pm

Item #2: Melissa Palmer, Chief John Frazier, Karen Walder

In at 4:54 pm; out at 4:55 pm

Item #3: Melissa Palmer, Chief John Frazier, Karen Walder

In at 4:55 pm; out at 4:56 pm

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

The meeting moved to regular session at 4:56 pm.

#2 FIRE-EMS RECRUIT APPOINTMENT: *Mr. Mueller made the motion to appoint Mr. Jarod Eaton to the position of Fire-EMS Recruit, effective April 4, 2025. 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.

The meeting was adjourned at 4:57 pm.

Kristina Port, Chair

Karen Walder, Fiscal Officer

Recorded by: J. Ezzone