

TOWN HALL

May 4, 2023

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

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

The Pledge of Allegiance was said.

**MINUTES:** *Mr. Mueller made the motion to accept the minutes of the Regular Meeting held on April 20, 2023, as presented. Ms. Port seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.*

**ZONING DEPT: JOINT ZONING WORKSHOP RECAP:** Mr. Wrench stated that the minutes from the court reporter will not be ready for another week. Mr. Wrench stated they had a Zoning Commission meeting the Wednesday after the joint meeting and the Board is looking into the bullet points that were brought up, such as, HOA definitions, fencing, expanding home occupation, and lighting limits through enforcement.

Mr. Wrench stated that Dave Dietrich finished up his Zoning Resolution revision project and it is now in the Zoning Commission's hands to make any final adjustments and get it submitted. He recommends submitting to the Trustees as one package, however the Trustees could hold hearings over several meetings. Stated that the APA and Planning Commission have reviewed everything and provided comments back.

**SITE TOPO UTILITY PLAN:** Mr. Wrench stated he reached out to a local civil engineer and is waiting to hear back. Mr. Rambo told Mr. Wrench to go ahead and hire a civil engineer to do the surveying.

*Mr. Mueller made the motion, at the Facility Manager's request, to authorize the hiring of a licensed Professional Surveyor, with vendor paperwork complete in the Fiscal Office, to create a Site, Topo, & Utility Plan for the Proposed Community Meeting Building per the suggestion of architect Gregg Strollo, for an amount up to \$3,000. Ms. Port seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.*

**DIG GRANT PAYMENT:** Mr. Wrench stated that the closeout report was submitted to GTSWMD. Mr. Wrench stated it was processed and GTSWMD sent us a reimbursement check for the \$11,454.55 for Phase 1 of the fence. Mr. Wrench stated that the fence company was out staking and will begin Phase 2 of the fencing project at the Recycling Center next week.

**RIVER GLEN DRAINAGE COMPLAINT:** Mr. Brian Borawski came before the Board with concerns about drainage at his residence. He asked whether the Township could install a drop structure to address the erosion issue. Mr. Layne stated he has been to this site many times. Mr. Layne stated that the Township has a 12" culvert pipe that drains just the interior of the cul-de-sac, so it does not take a lot of water. Mr. Layne stated there is a deep ravine and has had erosion issues for over 20 years, but the road has not been affected. Mr. Layne stated that there is a pipe under the homeowner's driveway, which is rotted. Mr. Layne stated that the homeowner is responsible for replacing the pipe under the driveway. Mr. Layne stated that the Road Department can take care of the high berm with no problem, but the Townships culvert is not causing any issues. If a drop structure needed to be put in, Geauga County Engineer would have to design it and then would have to go out to bid for the work.

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**BID AWARD: ASPHALT RESURFACING VARIOUS ROADS:** *Mr. Mueller made the motion that the project entitled The Asphalt Resurfacing of Various Roads, in Russell Township, Geauga County, be awarded to Geauga Highway Co., from Hiram, Ohio, for the amount of \$677,200.00, as recommended by the Geauga County Engineer. Ms. Port seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.*

**DRAINAGE IMPROVEMENTS: HAZELWOOD DR:** Mr. Layne stated he received an estimate from Grade Line Inc. for the replacement of a catch basin at the end of Hazelwood Drive at the intersection of Hemlock Road. Mr. Layne stated that Grade Line Inc. is very reputable and does excellent work and would recommend them to do this project. Mr. Layne stated that this must be done prior to the resurfacing work.

*Mr. Mueller made the motion to approve the project entitled CU-0241-A-2023, The Drainage Improvements of Section A of Hazelwood Dr, TR-0241, in Russell Township, Geauga County, by Grade Line Inc., of Montville Ohio, for up to \$18,825.00, as recommended by the Geauga County Engineer. Ms. Port seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.*

**ACCEPT DONATION:** *Ms. Port made the motion to accept the donation from Bonnie & Perry Howland of two \$75.00 Giant Eagle Gift Cards to the Fire Department. Mr. Mueller seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.*

*Mr. Mueller made the motion to approve the use of the Gift Cards for the Fire Department at the discretion of the Fire Chief. Ms. Port seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.*

**MS365 MIGRATION: THEN & NOW PO:** *Mr. Mueller made the motion, at the request of Fiscal Officer Karen Walder on behalf of Chief Frazier, to approve a Then & Now Purchase Order in the amount of \$6,173.50 to cover the Tectronic Office Products Inc, Invoice #2023123, dated February 27, 2023, for email accounts, Office 365 accounts, & labor to migrate old email to Office 365. Ms. Port seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.*

**EXPANSION OF WEST GEUGA SCHOOL RESOURCE OFFICER/SCHOOL SAFETY OFFICER:** Chief Swaidner brought the Board up to date on discussions with West Geauga Schools regarding a new School Safety Officer (SSO) initiative. West Geauga Schools approached Chief Swaidner with a request for a dedicated SSO at Westwood Elementary School, with the school contributing the cost of salary and benefits. They would like to have this new initiative in place for the 2023-2024 school year. Chief Swaidner addressed questions from the Board. Following this, the Board expressed support for this initiative, and asked Chief Swaidner and Fiscal Officer Walder to investigate further and propose a framework for an Agreement.

**POLICE DEPT: LEXIPOL:** Chief Swaidner stated that the Police Department received recognition for the 2022 Lexipol Connect Customer Recognition Program, in which the Department achieved the Gold Level. Lexipol is their policy manual software that they utilize. To achieve the gold level, you must have the top policy manual maintenance and training standards.

**DRUG TAKE BACK:** Chief Swaidner stated they had drug take back this past weekend and they received 97 pounds of prescription drugs. Those were turned over to the DEA for proper disposal.

**NOPEC COMMUNITY GRANTS:** Mrs. Palmer stated on behalf of the Police Department from the NOPEC Community Event Sponsorship, today we received a deposit for \$200.00 for support for their Coffee with a Cop event. Mrs. Palmer stated

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NOPEC also deposited \$800.00 for the community Document Shredding Event.

**PUBLIC RECORDS REQUEST POLICY/PROCEDURES:** Mrs. Walder asked regardless of who gets a public record request, they need to come to the Fiscal Office and should direct them to either herself or Jennifer. Mrs. Walder stated that the reason they need to come to the Fiscal Office is for 3 reasons:

1. The Fiscal Officer is responsible for the Township's records.
2. For each public record request, a determination needs to be made. Is this a record of the office? Does the request provide enough information so we can identify the records with reasonable clarity? Do any of the records require any legal review or redaction?
3. The Fiscal Office needs to log the request when it comes in, who handled it and when it was completed. That log is reviewed as part of the audit by the state.

Mrs. Walder stated that the time to respond to a public record request should be as expeditious as possible, given the time needed to retrieve, review, obtain legal advice and redaction if needed. Mrs. Walder reminded the Board that thoughts, conversations, and phone calls are not records of the office, however, voicemail, emails, texts, and social media posts may be a record.

**FIRE DEPARTMENT FULL-TIME STAFFING UPDATE:** Mrs. Walder stated that she and Mr. Rambo met with Chester and Bainbridge Township about their experience of moving to a full-time Fire Department, lessons learned, and any advice they would provide. Mr. Rambo shared a few takeaways. Mr. Rambo stated that the biggest takeaway from visiting those departments is they went from part-time to full-time because they had uncovered shifts. Mr. Rambo stated that Chester currently has 6 full-time and 29 part-time firefighters and the Chief is requesting 3 more full-time firefighters. Bainbridge currently has 20 full-time and 20 part-time firefighters. Mr. Rambo stated that both Township Fiscal Officer and Trustee said the cost for full-time firefighters was way more than they expected and only increases each year; the main cost being in overtime and collective bargaining. Stated that both departments went from a part-time Chief to a full-time Chief once they went full-time and asked the Fiscal Officer to include those costs in the budget estimate. Mr. Rambo stated that Bainbridge commissioned a study of their Fire Department by the Ohio Fire Chief's Association before they made the decision to transition to full-time and recommend that Russell does the same. Mr. Rambo thinks it would be a good idea for Russell to do the study but did say that the cost would probably be \$25,000-\$30,000. Mr. Mueller thinks that's a lot of money and could be spent elsewhere. Chief Frazier stated he has a copy of Bainbridge's study and Mr. Rambo said he has a copy and will pass it along to the other Trustees to review. Ms. Port would like to review the study and continue the discussion at the next meeting.

**OHIO ASSOCIATION OF PUBLIC TREASURERS:** *Mr. Mueller made the motion to authorize reasonable and necessary expenses for two Fiscal Office staff members to attend the OAPT Annual Fiscal Officer Training Program, in Sandusky, OH, from June 8 – 9, 2023. Ms. Port seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.*

**CLEARGOV CAPITAL BUDGETING MODULE:** Mrs. Walder recapped the activity in the last week, which included 2 demos of the capital budgeting module that were made available to all department heads and Trustees. They were also recorded for anyone that was not able to attend the demos. Mrs. Walder summarized and sent out the questions and answers that were asked in both sessions. Mrs. Walder reached out to ADP and received their review and approval for purchase. Mrs. Walder's request to the Board is to implement the capital budgeting module starting in July - a 6-month subscription for this year. The full subscription for next year will be \$6,200.00. Mrs. Walder would like to include the operations module and digital budget book for 2024.

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*Ms. Port made the motion, at the Fiscal Officer's request, to authorize the purchase of a 6-month subscription of the Clear Gov Capital Budgeting module at a cost of \$3,100.00 with a one-time setup fee of \$1,800.00, for a 2023 total of \$4,900.00, approved by Geauga County Automatic Data Processing Board. Mr. Mueller seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.*

**BUDGET UPDATE:** Mrs. Walder reiterated to the Trustees that if there are any initiatives that they would like to see included in the 2024 budget or in the next 5 years, she would like information regarding cost and scope of work in order to include it in the budget.

Mrs. Walder wanted to discuss the Town Hall projects. She said last year in the 5-year plan, the Board had designated \$125,000 for improvements to the Town Hall and that's in addition to the recommended reserve items, which would be covered under the reserve study. Mrs. Walder said working with Mr. Wrench, that's another \$156,000. Mrs. Walder said that our APA has alerted her to ORC 511.01 that says, "If, in a township, a town hall is to be built, improved, enlarged, or removed at a cost greater than \$50,000, the board of township trustees shall submit the question to the electors of such township and shall certify their resolution to the board of elections not later than four p.m. of the ninetieth day before the day of the election." Mrs. Walder said it indicates that if our project is estimated to be greater than \$50,000, then the Trustees need to go to the voters, not to approve the money but to approve the project. Mrs. Walder said she did ask the APA for clarification on what they mean by improvements.

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

**COMMUNITY MEETING BLDG:** Mr. Rambo is still waiting for the final contract but is hoping to have it back soon. Suggested to have a special meeting if needed to approve the contract. Mr. Rambo asked the other Trustees if they wanted to have a working session and Mr. Mueller said they only thing he wants changed is on the west side of the existing parking lot is to have like 3 poles with downlights going back to the new building with lights, so the parking lot is better lit for safety.

**MEMORIAL DAY SERVICE:** The Trustees have agreed to take over and plan the Memorial Day Service for this year and going forward. Mr. Rambo stated he will contact Newbury Honor Guard to see if they are available.

**PUBLIC BUDGET HEARING:** Mrs. Palmer asked if the Trustees would be available for June 22<sup>nd</sup> at 6:00pm for a special meeting to approve the budget. The June 15<sup>th</sup> regular meeting is not enough time for Mrs. Walder to make any adjustments to the budget after having the budget workshops on June 12 & 13. The Trustees stated that they were all available on June 22<sup>nd</sup>.

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

The meeting moved into executive session at 3:36 pm.

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

The meeting moved into regular session at 3:51 pm.

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

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**LEADERSHIP GEAUGA SPONSORSHIP AGREEMENT:** *Mr. Mueller made the motion to approve the Leadership Geauga Sponsorship Agreement, dated May 4, 2023, between the Russell Township Trustees and Russell Township employee & Leadership Geauga candidate Police Lieutenant Scott Lillash. Ms. Port seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.*

**SARA WOODIE-SUSTIN: WG COMMUNITY JOINT RECREATION DISTRICT:** *Mr. Mueller made the motion to reappoint Ms. Sara Woodie-Sustin to the West Geauga Community Joint Recreation District Board for the three-year term ending April 30, 2023. Ms. Port seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.*

**REVISION: ZONING INSPECTOR COVERAGE: TEMPORARY EMPLOYMENT:** *Mr. Mueller made the motion to revise the term of the appointment made April 20, 2026, of David Dietrich, as Assistant Zoning Inspector, at the rate of \$25.00 per hour, effective May 10 through June 30, 2023, for approximately 10 hours per week as needed. Ms. Port seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.*

*Mr. Rambo made the motion to adjourn. Ms. Port seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.*

The meeting was adjourned at 3:53 pm.

Matthew Rambo, Chair

Karen Walder, Fiscal Officer

Recorded by: J. Ezzone