

TOWN HALL

June 5, 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 was present. Fiscal Officer Karen Walder was absent.

The following Department Heads were present: Police Chief Tom Swaidner, Zoning Inspector Shane Wrench, Road Superintendent Gene Layne and incoming Road Superintendent Giovanni Maltese. Assistant Fire Chief Nick Sambula was present.

The Pledge of Allegiance was said.

**CLERK PRO TEM:** In the absence of the Fiscal Officer, Board of Trustees Chair Kristina Port appoints Jessica Ezzone to serve as clerk pro tem.

Mr. Mueller stepped away at 2:02 pm.

**MINUTES:** *Mr. Hare made the motion to accept the minutes of the Special Meeting held on May 15, 2025, as presented. Ms. Port seconded the motion, and it passed.*

*Mr. Hare made the motion to accept the minutes of the Special Meeting held on May 16, 2025, as presented. Ms. Port seconded the motion, and it passed.*

Mr. Mueller was back at 2:04 pm.

*Mr. Hare made the motion to accept the minutes of the Special Meeting held on May 17, 2025, as presented. Mr. Mueller seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.*

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

**ROAD DEPT: PLOW TRUCK:** Mr. Layne stated that the salesperson and APA are communicating with each other to sort out the state specifications but hasn't heard back from either.

**ROAD PROJECTS CONTRACT:** *Mr. Mueller made the motion to execute the contract with Karvo Companies, Inc. for the Asphalt Resurfacing of Various Roads in Russell Township. Mr. Hare seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.*

**CHAGRIN MILLS/306:** Mr. Layne stated that since this issue has been brought up, he has been paying more attention to it and has found out that if heading southbound on 306 right before Chagrin Mill drive, you go over a little hole and the road immediately pitches and pulls your vehicle some. It's not drastic but if not paying attention it can drag you off. Mr. Layne thinks that's the primary factor for accidents right there. Mr. Layne stated that he reached out to ODOT and explained the situation. ODOT stated that they came out and looked at it and said there was nothing wrong. Mr. Layne recommends a letter from the Trustees to be sent to ODOT. Mr. Mueller asked Mr. Layne to draft a letter explaining the situation and the Trustee's will sign it. Ms. Port asked Chief Swaidner if he could provide any backup data with accidents at that intersection.

**ROAD: LARSEN ARCHITECTS:** Mr. Layne stated that this is for Larsen to do a site study for a new road garage. Will look at the property next to the Police Station as well as the current site of the Road Department. Mr. Layne's thoughts were a new building for trucks and personnel on the property by the Police Department and keep the salt bins at the current location. Mr. Layne stated a big advantage of moving the Road Department would be on sewer system instead of septic. Ms. Port asked what

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the expectations for the old building are and Mr. Layne states that is up to the Trustees.

*Mr. Mueller made the motion to complete negotiations and accept the proposal for professional architectural design services, for a concept study for a Township Road Facility, by Larsen Architects, proposal #25000 dated March 28, 2025, for an amount of \$8,500.00 plus an additional sum of \$1,500.00 for reimbursables for a total of \$10,000.00. Mr. Hare seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.*

**RESOLUTION FOR ROAD SUPERINTENDENT GENE LAYNE:** The Trustees presented Mr. Layne a resolution for all his hard work and dedication to Township.

**INTRODUCE GIOVANNI MALTESE:** Mr. Layne introduced the new incoming Road Superintendent, Giovanni Maltese.

**FACILITIES:** Mr. Wrench stated this past Tuesday there was a Prebid walkthrough with Rob Morgan on the landscape design.

Mr. Wrench stated he had someone out last Friday to camera the sewer lines and went out 106' and found nothing wrong with the piping. Still need to figure out what is causing the basement to get wet.

**NE OHIO PLANNING & ZONING WORKSHOP:** Ms. Port stated that she is interested in going. Mr. Wrench stated that no one from the Zoning Commission can attend and hasn't heard back from anyone from the BZA.

*Mr. Mueller made the motion to approve reasonable and necessary expenses for up to 1 person to attend the NE Ohio Planning and Zoning Workshop in Niles, Ohio on June 13, 2025. Mr. Hare seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.*

**COUNTY BOUNDARIES & PRESCRIPTIONS:** Mr. Wrench stated that it's related to facility planning areas and really doesn't apply to the Township now, maybe in the future. Stated that the letter that was received was for transparency and needs no response or action. .

**ZONING UPDATES:** Mr. Wrench stated that he received a call about a property on Music Street that had some semi-truck trailers. Stated that it took a while to get in contact with the new owner. Stated that the owner is growing mushrooms, and they need to be in a climate-controlled area. Mr. Wrench talked with the APA and Planning Commission, and the owner is protected under the Agriculture ORC.

**GCTA MEMBERSHIP:** Mr. Wrench stated that a few of the Zoning Commission members would like to receive the monthly newsletter from OTA. Mrs. Palmer stated that the deadline has passed to become an Affiliate Member with GCTA but would try and add a few members if possible. The cost is \$35 per person and the Trustees agreed to add up to 5 members.

*Ms. Port made the motion to authorize membership in the Geauga County Township Association for 5 additional affiliate members for 2026. Mr. Mueller seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.*

**COMMUNITY ROOM: ASCOUTIC UPDATE:** Mr. Wrench said that Kevin from Audimute was having an issue getting the work order so there was a delay, but the order is in as of last Friday. Stated that it will take about 3-4 weeks for the material to come in.

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**OHIO FIRE CHIEFS' FIRE STUDY:** Asst. Fire Chief Sambula stated that they received the final version of the strategic plan and are excited about the results. Stated it's a guiding stone for the next 5 years. Stated that there are some hefty initiatives, but a number of those items have begun prior to the study. Asst. Fire Chief Sambula wants to clarify that if every goal is not completed through 2030 that they can have some flexibility with the timeframe. Some of the goals have monetary values tied to them or another analysis may have to come into play to complete the goal. States it a great guiding stone for them for the next 5 years but may need to push some things out if need be and wants the Trustees to understand that. Ms. Port understands his concerns and appreciates the study. Ms. Port also appreciates the acknowledgement of Honorable Judge Mary Jane Trapp.

*Mr. Mueller made the motion to accept the Russell Township Fire Department Strategic Plan 2025 – 2030, as prepared by the Ohio Fire Chiefs' Association, received in an email to the trustees dated May 28, 2025. Mr. Hare seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.*

**SMITH & OBY: FIRE DEPT BOILERS:** Asst. Fire Chief Sambula stated that they are replacing 4 boilers, and this was part of the reserve study. The reserve study estimated the cost around at \$120,000 but the total cost is \$63,354.

*Mr. Hare made the motion to accept the township's standard agreement with vendor's proposal attached dated May 1, 2025, for four Weil-McLain boilers at the Fire Department by The Smith & Oby Company, for an amount of \$63,354.00, approved by the Geauga County Prosecutor. Mr. Mueller seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.*

**FIRE: DISPOSITION OF PROPERTY:** *Mr. Mueller made the motion, at the recommendation of the Fire Chief, to dispose of the 2007 Ford Expedition identified in the document entitled "Fire Department June 5th Property Items for Disposition" 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.*

**FIRE: DISPOSITION OF PROPERTY:** *Mr. Mueller made the motion, at the recommendation of the Fire Chief, to dispose of the SCBA equipment identified in the document entitled "Fire Department June 5th Property Items for Disposition" as the items are not needed for public use, are obsolete, or are unfit for public use. Mr. Hare seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.*

**POLICE DEPT:** Chief Swaidner stated this past Saturday was Coffee with a Cop and thanked everyone that attended.

**CITIZENS POLICE ACADEMY:** Chief Swaidner stated that applications opened today. It is a free education program for Russell residents that will cover an 8-week period starting August 26. It will be from 6:30 pm – 8:30 pm. Applicants must be a Russell Township resident, at least 18 years of age and pass a limited background check. The size is limited to 12 applicants. Mr. Hare brought up again about applying an expense to the Opioid fund.

**AMENDED CERTIFICATE:** *Mr. Mueller made the motion to accept the Amended Certificate of Estimated Resources #4 for Russell Township for the fiscal year beginning January 1, 2025, as revised by the Budget Commission and dated May 19, 2025. Mr. Hare seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.*

**RESOLUTION 2025-16: ADVANCE OF FUNDS:** *Mr. Hare made the motion to approve Resolution 2025-16: a resolution requesting the advance of funds in the*

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*amount of \$8,333.33, pursuant to AOS Bulletin 1997-003. Mr. Mueller seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.*

**RESOLUTION 2025-17: ACCEPT RESERVE STUDY:** Asst. Fire Chief Sambula asked the Trustee's to not accept the reserve study because they would like more clarification on how the vehicle reserve fund is being handled. Asked if it could be discussed at the budget workshops. Asst. Fire Chief Sambula stated they are afraid of overfunding the vehicle reserve fund if they transfer what the study is saying and it effecting their regular budget. Trustees agree to discuss at budget workshop and will put the motion on the June 18<sup>th</sup> meeting.

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

**TREE CITY GUESTS:** ODNR Forestry Manager Matt Leiden and resident Jack Davidson were present. Mr. Leiden stated that there are four standards that need to be met. The next step that Township would need to take is to establish a Tree Board/Commission and create a resolution. The Tree Board should try to have at least 6 meetings a year, but most boards meet quarterly. Mr. Leiden stated he provided the Trustees with a sample resolution, and he can help the Board with language if needed. Mr. Davidson volunteered to be on the Tree Board if the Trustees wanted him. Mr. Leiden stated there needs to be an annual Arbor Day ceremony and have a proclamation. Mr. Leiden stated there is a standard quota that must be met each year, which is \$2 per capita for planting, care and removal of trees. Mrs. Palmer asked if any tree work done by the Road Department could go towards that capita, and Mr. Leiden said yes some can. Mr. Leiden keeps track of the capita each year and helps the Tree Boards meet those goals. The Trustees are considering starting the Tree Board this year and work towards the establishment of Tree City in 2026.

Mr. Hare stepped away at 4:18 pm.

**GEAUGA SAFETY COUNCIL:** *Mr. Mueller made the motion to approve the payment of \$300.00 to the Geauga Safety Council for the annual regular meeting registrations and lunch expenses, July 1, 2025, through June 30, 2026. Ms. Port seconded the motion, and it passed.*

**AUTHORIZED SIGNATORY: SAFETY COUNCIL:** *Mr. Mueller made the motion to authorize Chair Kristina Port to act as Russell Township's authorized signatory for the Geauga Safety Council regular meeting registrations. Ms. Port seconded the motion, and it passed.*

Mr. Hare returned at 4:21 pm.

**PARK 511: 2026 BUDGET:** *Mr. Mueller made the motion to designate funds in the 2026 Russell Township Budget, in the amount of \$6,000.00, for the Russell Township Citizens' Park District, ORC 511. Ms. Port seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.*

**WRLC STEWARDSHIP WALK:** Mrs. Palmer stated that Pete McDonald did a walkthrough on West River Drive and has identified a few issues. Mrs. Palmer stated that the Trustees need to send out some letters. Stated that there is a deer feeder that needs to be taken down ASAP.

**INDEPENDENCE DAY PARADE PLANNING:** Ms. Port stated that she will participate in the 4<sup>th</sup> of July parade and asked if other departments are able to please participate as well. Chief Swaidner stated that the Police Department will, and Mr. Maltese stated that the Road Department will be participating. Ms. Port stated that

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she would donate some candy.

**BUDGET HEARING RESCHEDULE:** Ms. Port would like to move the Budget Hearing to July 1<sup>st</sup> instead of June 18<sup>th</sup>. Mr. Hare and Mr. Mueller are ok with rescheduling it for the July 1<sup>st</sup> meeting.

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

The meeting moved into executive session at 4:30 pm.

*Item #1: Melissa Palmer & Jessica Ezzone  
In at 4:30 pm; out at 4:31 pm  
Item #2: Melissa Palmer & Jessica Ezzone  
In at 4:31 pm; out at 4:32 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 4:32 pm.

Mr. Mueller stepped away at 4:33 pm.

**#1 BENEFITS for Incoming Road Superintendent:** *Mr. Hare made the motion to grant paid vacation for 2025 in the amount of 3 weeks, with Seniority benefits to be assigned at the 15-year level for new Road Department employee Giovanni Maltese. Ms. Port seconded the motion, and it passed.*

**#2 FIRE HIRE:** *Mr. Hare made the motion to hire Jared Eaton as a part-time Firefighter/EMT at the beginning rate, per Salary Schedule 40, effective June 16, 2025. MS. Port seconded the motion, and it passed.*

Mr. Mueller returned at 4:35 pm.

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

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

The meeting was adjourned at 4:38 pm.

Kristina Port, Chair

Karen Walder, Fiscal Officer

Recorded by: J. Ezzone