

TOWN HALL

December 7, 2023

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

The following Department Heads were present: Asst. Fire Chief Nick Sambula, Asst. Fire Chief Sam Brown, Road Superintendent Gene Layne, Zoning Inspector Shane Wrench, and Police Chief Tom Swaidner.

The Pledge of Allegiance was said.

SWEARING IN CEREMONY: OFFICER NEIL J. NEMETZ

Chief Swaidner stated that Officer Nemetz is a 2018 graduate of the Police Academy. He is currently a full-time Ranger for the Geauga Parks. Trustee Chair, Mr. Rambo, swore in Officer Nemetz in the presence of his family and colleagues.

MINUTES: *Ms. Port made the motion to accept the minutes of the Regular Meeting held on November 2, 2023, as presented. Mr. Mueller seconded the motion and it was passed unanimously.*

Mr. Mueller made the motion to accept the minutes of the Special Meeting held on November 13, 2023, as presented. Ms. Port seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

Mr. Mueller motion to accept the minutes of the Regular Meeting held on November 16, 2023, as presented. Ms. Port seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

POLICE DEPARTMENT: Chief Swaidner stated that Cram the Cruiser just ended and all the donations were delivered to Geauga County Job and Family Services, along with the items collected for the Toy Drive.

VALUATION OF PROPERTY: Chief Swaidner stated that he would like to place his 2017 Ford Explorer on Gov Deals. He looked at Kelley Blue Book and CARFAX to get the trade-in values and took the lower of the two trade-in values. Chief Swaidner stated that he also has some leftover radios from previous trade-ins, and they have been cleared and are ready to be sold. Mr. Rambo asked how long the explorer will be on Gov Deals, and Chief Swaidner stated that it is for 14 days and is awarded to the highest bidder, as long as it meets the reserve price of \$6,235.00.

Ms. Port made the motion, at the recommendation of the Police Chief, to set the value of the 2017 Police Ford Explorer AWD at \$6,235.00 based on two pieces of documentation, the Kelley Blue Book and the CARFAX Value, presented to the trustees by Police Chief Swaidner in an email dated December 4, 2023. Mr. Mueller seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

GOV DEALS: DISPOSITION OF PROPERTY WITH A RESERVE: *Mr. Mueller made the motion, at the recommendation of the Police Chief, to dispose of the 2017 Police Ford Explorer AWD with the reserve value of \$6,235.00, as established by the Board of Trustees, as the item is not needed for public use, is obsolete, or is unfit for public use. Ms. Port seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.*

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GOV DEALS: DISPOSITION OF PROPERTY: *Mr. Mueller made the motion, at the recommendation of the Police Chief, to dispose of township property presented to the trustees by Police Chief Swaidner in an email dated December 4, 2023, as each item is no needed for public use, is obsolete, or is unfit for public use. Ms. Port seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.*

FIRE DEPARTMENT: Asst. Fire Chief Brown stated that the Fire Department received recognition for the 2023 American Heart Association Lifeline Gold Award, and this is the 3rd year in a row for receiving it. This demonstrates value and outcomes for stroke and heart attack patients. Often RFD has to partner with other communities to get the number of calls that are necessary, but this demonstrates their commitment to the community and the standards the American Heart Association. Asst. Fire Chief Brown extended recognition to all members of the Department for this award.

ACCEPT DONATION: *Mr. Mueller made the motion to accept the donation of a \$100.00 gift card to Farmer in the Deli from Mark and Renee Bitto, of Sunrise Lane, to the Fire Department. Ms. Port seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.*

Ms. Port made the motion to approve the use of the \$100.00 gift card for the Fire Department at the discretion of the Fire Chief. Mr. Mueller seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

VOLUNTEER FIRE FIGHTERS' DEPENDENTS FUND BOARD: *Mr. Mueller made the motion to appoint Trustee Port and Trustee Rambo as the Township Trustee representatives to the Volunteer Fire Fighters' Dependents Fund Board for 2024. Ms. Port seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.*

G&G FITNESS EQUIPMENT PROPOSAL: Asst. Fire Chief Sambula stated that they received a quote back for fitness equipment for the Assistance to Firefighters Grant, which is a 95% reimbursement grant. Asst. Fire Chief Sambula stated he reviewed the documents with Mrs. Walder and is looking for authorization to purchase the equipment from G&G Fitness Equipment. The Township will be responsible for 5% of the cost of the equipment, which is about \$1,500.00.

Mr. Mueller made the motion to approve the proposal from G&G Fitness Equipment, for the purchase of fitness equipment to include dumbbell sets, weight plate sets, an erg bike, a treadmill, and a Stairmaster, further described in the proposal dated November 16, 2023, for an amount of \$30,377.51, and approved by the Geauga County Prosecutor's Office with modifications. Ms. Port seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

AUTHORIZED SIGNATORY: *Ms. Port made the motion to authorize Matthew Rambo to act as the Authorized Signatory for Russell Township for the G&G Fitness Equipment proposal dated November 16, 2023, which fulfills items identified for purchase and to be largely reimbursed by the FEMA Assistance to Firefighters Grant awarded in 2023 to the Russell Township Fire Department. Mr. Mueller seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.*

2023 ROAD PROJECTS: HUNTING HILLS DR & SQUIRE LA: *Ms. Port made the motion to approve Resolution 2023-29, a Resolution of Convenience and Necessity for the Improvement of Various Roads in Russell Township (Hunting Hills Dr and Squire Lane) which authorizes the Geauga County Engineer to prepare*

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engineering plans. Mr. Mueller seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

ROAD PROJECT: CHANGE ORDER APPROVAL: *Mr. Mueller made the motion, at the recommendation of the Geauga County Engineer, to approve Change Order No. 1 to the Asphalt Resurfacing to Various Roads, RS-RUS-V-2023, reflecting a net decrease of \$29,295.80, for a revised Geauga Highway Co Contract Value of \$647,904.20, based on the letter from the County Engineer dated December 5, 2023. Ms. Port seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.*

ROAD PROJECT: PAYMENT APPLIC: *Mr. Mueller made the motion to approve Pay Application No. 2 & Final for the Asphalt Resurfacing of Various Roads, Contract RS-RUS-V-2023, in the amount of \$17,295.75 to Geauga Highway Co., as recommended by the Geauga County Engineer in the letter to the Board of Trustees dated December 5, 2023. Ms. Port seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.*

ZONING DEPARTMENT: Mr. Wrench stated that he received an email from the prosecutor's office that they are sending over more violation notices on the Caves Road issue.

Mr. Wrench stated that Laurel Schools' conditional use modification for their traffic gates was approved. Mr. Wrench said they will be back soon for their Environmental Science Justice building, and that they are working with their architect to get all the conditional use areas dealt with before they came in.

Mr. Wrench stated next week they are meeting with Dave Dietrich and the Zoning Commission to finalize the last review of the Zoning Resolution. Mr. Dietrich has submitted his invoice.

Mr. Mueller asked Mr. Wrench for any updates regarding Blackford Road. Mr. Wrench stated that he hasn't gotten any zoning permit applications yet. Mr. Wrench said that he and Mr. Layne were at the Storm Water Taskforce meeting and spoke with Nick Gorris regarding the water and sewer issues. Mr. Wrench said the builders will have to go through Soil and Water and get approval from them before they can build.

FACILITIES: Mr. Wrench gave a heads up regarding the Recycling Center. Mr. Wrench stated that the last pickup will be Wednesday, December 20. The haulers are taking Christmas Eve off on December 22 and then are closed Monday for Christmas, so they will not be picking up till December 27th. Mr. Wrench said he would talk to Mr. Layne and see if needed to park a bigger truck to block off the entrance if the bins get full.

FISCAL OFFICER: Mrs. Walder wanted to remember with gratitude Gerri Heck, who passed away recently. She faithfully served as Russell Township Fiscal Officer for 24 years. Mrs. Walder extends sympathy to Ms. Heck's family.

FISCAL OFFICER – AMENDED RATE RESOLUTION 2023-25: Mrs. Walder shared an update from the Geauga County Auditor's Office. Of the entities in the county, the county participation is 100% in the mitigation of the impacts of the windfall. 14 of 16 Townships are participating, 4 out of 6 municipalities are participating and 1 out of the 10 school districts are participating. Russell Township residents will benefit from all three entities' participation: County, Township and West Geauga School District.

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Mr. Mueller made the motion to adopt the Amended Rate Resolution accepting the amounts and rates as determined by the Budget Commission and authorizing the necessary tax levies and certifying them to the County Auditor, as recommended by the Fiscal Officer. Mr. Rambo seconded the motion, and the votes are as follows: Mr. Mueller no; Ms. Port yes; Mr. Rambo yes and motion passed.

NEW RESERVE FUNDS: Mrs. Walder stated that this resolution is to establish a special revenue fund, pursuant to R.C. 5705.13(B) which deals with accumulating resources for the payment of accumulated sick leave and vacation leave, and for payments in lieu of taking compensatory time off. The resolution is to establish 2 new funds; one for the Police Department and one for the Road Department and stipulates a funding of \$10,000 per eligible employee with 20 or more years of service. Mrs. Walder stated that since we are doing it so late in the year, the resolution calls for the establishment of the funds with the actual transfer of the money as part of 2024 permanent appropriations.

Mr. Mueller made the motion to adopt Resolution 2023-27, a resolution authorizing the creation of two new Capital Project Funds, one for the Road Department and one for the Police Department, for accumulated resources for the payment of accumulated sick leave, vacation leave, and in lieu of taking compensatory time off upon termination or retirement and authorizing the funding for TY2024 and subsequent years as described. Ms. Port seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

RESOLUTION – TAX ADVANCE REQUEST: *Mr. Mueller made the motion to approve Resolution 2023-28, a Request for Advance of Taxes Collected for 2024. Ms. Port seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.*

INSURANCE: Mrs. Walder stated that for the first time that she can recall, there is no increase in benefit costs for 2024.

Mr. Mueller made the motion to approve the following insurance benefits for Russell Township officials and full-time employees for the year 2024:
Health Insurance – Medical Mutual HRA 6750
Life Insurance – Principal Financial
Dental – DentaSelect Plus Plan C476
Vision – PHI VSP Option #4
Ms. Port seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

HRA FUNDING 2024: *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 2024. Ms. Port seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.*

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

ADP'S ROLLOUT OF MS DEFENDER: Mrs. Walder stated that they had their quarterly meeting with ADP this morning and discussed the roll out of their new Microsoft Defender, which is an additional email defense system. Email users may receive an email from Microsoft that you have an email in quarantine, and it gives you the option to review the email, release the email or block the sender.

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COMMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC RECEIVED

COMMUNITY BUILDING: PROJECT UPDATE: Mr. Rambo stated that 8 bids were received and opened yesterday. Mr. Rambo stated that the 3 lowest bidders will be reviewed by the architect. The architect will have a recommendation for the Trustees by early next week. Mr. Rambo asked the Board for their input on the alternate, which was for heated sidewalks for snow melt. The Trustees all agree that it is not necessary to add in for heated sidewalks. Mrs. Walder mentioned that it was recommended from a liability standpoint. Mrs. Walder stated that a supplemental appropriation will need to be adopted following the recommendation of the architect and award by the Board.

TRUSTEE MEETING SCHEDULE: *Ms. Port made the motion to approve the Trustee 2024 regular meeting schedule as presented by the Board Administrator. Mr. Mueller seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.*

STATE OF OHIO CAPITAL FUNDING REQUESTS: Mr. Rambo stated that he, Mrs. Palmer, and Jennifer Dorka attended a meeting with state representatives regarding the state having an additional \$700 million in their capital funding budget for FY2025-2026 and the opportunity for local governments to apply for funding for projects that benefits the community, and that does include fire trucks. The entity would have to shoulder at least half of the funding. Mr. Rambo said applications are due on December 18. Mr. Rambo said that he will work with Mrs. Palmer on filing out an application. Mrs. Palmer told the Asst. Fire Chief's that if they are interested in filing one out as well, she will forward the application to them. Mr. Rambo told the Department Heads to let Mrs. Palmer know if they have any suggestions and she will provide them with the application.

2024 CONFERENCE ATTENDANCE: *Ms. Port made the motion to approve reasonable and necessary expenses for Trustees Matthew Rambo and Kristina Port to attend the OTA Winter Conference, February 7 – 9, 2024, in Columbus, OH. Mr. Rambo seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.*

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) AND to prepare for negotiations and bargaining sessions with public employees pursuant to ORC 121.22 (G)(4). Ms. Port seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.*

The meeting moved into executive session at 2:58 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 3:31 pm.

PURCHASE ORDERS AND BILLS WERE APPROVED AS ATTACHED.

VACATION BUYBACK: *Mr. Mueller made the motion to accept the Memorandum of Understanding, signed on November 25, 2023 by local OPBA representative Mike McIvor, to approve payment for the equivalent of 120 hours of vacation for employee Vincent A. Valerio. Ms. Port seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.*

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Mr. Mueller made the motion to accept the Memorandum of Understanding, signed on November 27, 2023 by local OPBA representative Robert Bialosky, to approve payment for the equivalent of 120 hours of vacation for employee Daniel Fracci. Ms. Port seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

RESOLUTION 2023-26: RUSSELL OPERS: *Mr. Mueller made the motion to approve Resolution 2023-26, accepting repayment of OPERS employee contributions by employee Kenneth Russell. Ms. Port seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.*

AGREEMENT: *Mr. Mueller made the motion to accept the agreement between Russell Township and OPBA (Patrol Officer Unit) as drafted by Clemans, Nelson & Associates to expire December 31, 2026. Ms. Port seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.*

Mr. Mueller made the motion to accept the agreement between Russell Township and OPBA (Sergeants) as drafted by Clemans, Nelson & Associates to expire December 31, 2026. Ms. Port seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

SALARY SCHEDULE: *Mr. Rambo made the motion to adopt Salary Schedule 38, content approved, and effective January 1, 2024. Mr. Mueller seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.*

Mrs. Walder advised the Board that she will be giving her staff the 5.5% salary increase as well, effective January 1, 2024.

RESOLUTION – UNIFORM POLICY REVISION: *Mr. Rambo made the motion to authorize uniform allowance changes to the Russell Personnel Policy Manual effective calendar year 2024, reflecting increases to the uniform allowances for Police Officers, Police Chief, Police Lieutenants, & Road Department employees. Ms. Port seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.*

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

The meeting was adjourned at 3:39 pm.

Matthew Rambo, Chair

Karen Walder, Fiscal Officer

Recorded by: J. Ezzone