

RUSSELL TOWN HALL

August 13, 2021

The meeting was called to order at 11:30 am. Trustee Port, Trustee Gabram and Trustee Mueller were present. Trustee Assistant Melissa Palmer was present.

The following Department Heads were present: Fire Chief John Frazier.

Fiscal Officer Karen Walder was absent.

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

The board discussed the concerns with the original MOU with the 511 Park Board for the lease of the Upper Chagrin Preserve. Recital #6 had some inconsistencies that were corrected regarding the history and background. There was clarification that this will be a two-year lease not a five-year lease.

The Park Board will be obtaining liability insurance which will start on the lease commencement date of August 19, 2021, but the lease will be signed and dated with today's date as the approval date.

The Trustees Assistant clarified that the APA's original objection to the MOU is fixed and no longer an issue since there is now a lease in place.

CITIZENS PARK 511: LEASE AGREEMENT *Mr. Mueller made the motion to approve the Lease Agreement between the Russell Township Citizens' Park District and the Russell Township Trustees, entitled "Lease Agreement", dated August 13, 2021, as approved by the Geauga County Prosecutor's Office. Mr. Gabram seconded the motion.*

The Vote: Mr. Mueller – Yes, Mr. Gabram – Yes, Ms. Port – Abstain

TRUSTEE AUTHORIZATION: *Mr. Mueller made the motion to authorize Trustee James Mueller to sign the document entitled "Lease Agreement" dated August 13, 2021, between the Russell Township Citizens' Park District and the Board of Trustees, on behalf of the Russell Township Board of Trustees. Mr. Gabram seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.*

CITIZENS' PARK 511: MOU: AMENDED: *Mr. Mueller made the motion to execute the Memorandum of Understanding between the Russell Township Citizens' Park District (RTCPD) and the Russell Township Board of Trustees, previously approved on 3/17/2021, as amended, pending approval by the RTCPD, & pending insurance coverage being bound by RTCPD as indicated on the lease property. Mr. Gabram seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.*

FIRE LEVY & UPCOMING BUDGET HEARING: Ms. Port advised the board that she reviewed the webinar that the County Auditor put on in June about budget hearings and the Budget Commission and scheduled a meeting with the Fiscal Officer to clarify some questions before the Budget Hearing on August 16, 2021. The Budget Commission sent out a check sheet prior to the hearing with items that they look for in the proposed budget and there was nothing on Russell's proposed budget that came back as red flagged.

Ms. Port told the board that the concerns with the fire levy were that according to the spreadsheet that years four and five looked under financed, also that the salary and benefits were a concern. Ms. Port said that the fire bonds final payment will be next year even though tax collection has stopped. Ms. Port asked the Fire

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Chief if he was confident with the figures on his spreadsheet and he said yes to the best of his knowledge.

Ms. Port advised the board that the amount of funds in the road budget was high. The board discussed whether that was due to the new truck purchase being moved up to this year instead of next year.

Ms. Port asked Mr. Mueller why he voted opposed the budget, and he advised that he will never be in favor of moving the Town Hall or taking down the Old Fire Station and there is money budgeted for those things so he is not for it.

The board discussed the storage building project. Mr. Mueller said that in his opinion the state legislature and the budget commission have cost the township one hundred thousand dollars in this project.

Ms. Port asked Mr. Mueller why he wasn't going to attend the Budget Hearing on Monday August 16, 2021. He stated that he went last year as the Chairman and he was "beat up" for over a half hour so he will not be attending this year. He told the Budget Commission last year that the reason there was so much money in the budget was because no one knew what would happen with COVID so he was being conservative with the spending and slowing it down since no one knew what was going to happen, and they didn't like that the township wasn't spending money. Mr. Mueller said that not six months after the hearing he was sent a letter from the budget commission saying that townships needed to stop spending due to COVID, and said that the Budget Commission were fools because he knew that the township should be saving money not spending it and they should have listened to him.

The board discussed the opioid settlement money that might be given out. The application is due by August 20, 2021. Mr. Mueller said he would like it if all townships would give any money they are given to the Health Department for their drug programs. The Trustees assistant advised the board that they should hold any further discussion on this topic until their regular meeting on Wednesday (the 18th) as this topic was not sunshined for this special meeting. Mr. Mueller continued the discussion saying he would like to see the GCTA coordinate all the townships' applications and donations to the health board or a non-profit. Ms. Port acknowledged that further discussion should wait and be held at the next regular meeting. The trustees are in support of the idea that the money should go to someone who can put it towards a drug program.

Mr. Mueller made the motion to adjourn. Mr. Gabram seconded the motion and it passed.

The meeting was adjourned at 12:12 pm.

Kristina Port, Chair

Karen Walder, Fiscal Officer

Recorded by: J. Dorka