

OTTAWA HILLS VILLAGE SPECIAL COUNCIL
MEETING MINUTES
April 7, 2025 7:00 PM

Call to Order – Mayor Thompson

7:00 PM

Village Representatives in Attendance

Mayor Thompson	Councilman Edward Shimborske III
Councilwoman Heather Phillips	Councilman John Lewis
Councilman Dan Wimmers	Councilwoman Dana Dunbar
Solicitor Kati Tharp	
Interim Village Administrator April McDonald	

Citizen Attendees

Nasrin Afjeh	Yarko Kuk
Larry Nameche	Erica Silk
Judd Silverman	Adam Smidi

Acting Clerk

A motion was made by Mr. Lewis and seconded by Mrs. Dunbar to appoint Ms. McDonald as acting clerk. The motion passed unanimously.

Swearing In

Chief Estok introduced Officer Suarez and Mayor Thompson swore in Officer Suarez.

Minutes

A motion was made by Ms. Phillips and seconded by Mr. Wimmers to approve the minutes from the March 3, 2025, Council meeting. The motion passed unanimously.

Mr. Shimborske entered at 7:05 PM

Citizen Comments

Ms. Afjeh inquired why Officer Suarez was on duty this afternoon, noting that she had not yet been formally sworn in. Mayor Thompson clarified that Officer Suarez is currently participating in our field training. He further explained that she has been officially hired, is on the Village payroll, and is already certified as a peace officer in Ohio. Ms. McDonald added that Officer Suarez is accompanied by another officer each day as part of her field training process.

Finance & Future Planning – Mr. Lewis

Mr. Lewis stated that there will be a Streets Committee meeting tomorrow morning. He expressed his intent to continue developing a clearer understanding of the long-term costs associated with maintaining the roads in the Village. This information will be a key factor in considering whether to approach voters in November for additional revenue to address the Village's capital deficit.

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Human Resources – Ms. Phillips

Ms. Phillips reported that the committee met to review offers for employee health insurance, including a renewal option from Anthem with a 2% increase over the current contract. She noted that the Village had budgeted for a 20% increase, so the renewal falls well within expectations. The committee recommends renewing the regular plan with the Village covering 90% of the premium, regardless of coverage type (single, spouse, or family), and continuing to offer the high-deductible plan at no cost to employees, with 100% of the premium covered by the Village.

Mr. Wimmers raised concerns regarding the equity of the benefit structure. He noted that under the current setup, a single employee and a family both receive 90% premium coverage, but the value of the benefit is significantly higher for a family, potentially equating to about \$20,000 more in fringe benefits. He questioned why the Village absorbs such a large portion of the cost for families, stating that in many organizations, only the employee portion is covered, and dependents must pay the difference.

Ms. Phillips responded that she did not have the exact figures at hand but stated that approximately two-thirds of employees choose the high-deductible plan, which is fully covered by the Village. Mr. Lewis suggested this might be a result of historical precedent and the need to remain competitive with other municipalities. He also pointed out that some employers don't allow opt-outs if they contribute a portion of premiums.

Mr. Wimmers reiterated that the difference in value between single and family coverage is significant, and questioned whether the single plan should receive a proportionally greater benefit. Mrs. Dunbar acknowledged both perspectives, stating that while families do use the benefit more (e.g., doctor visits), the financial disparity is still notable. She asked Mr. Wimmers if he had a recommendation, to which he responded that a graduated scale might be worth considering, such as covering 100% of premiums for single employees, 80% for those covering a spouse, and 60% for families.

Ms. Phillips noted that when Mrs. Kincade presented plan options to the Village, the available choices were limited due to the Village's small size.

Mr. Shimborske concluded that of all the available offers, the recommended plan appeared to be the best option. Ms. McDonald added that, in all honesty, no employee seems especially satisfied with either plan compared to what other employers offer. She emphasized that fringe benefits are one of the most commonly asked-about topics during interviews and it can be a deciding factor for candidates.

Safety – Mrs. Dunbar

No report

Services & Environment – Mrs. Greeley

No Report

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Streets & Bridges – Mr. Shimborske
Mr. Shimborske

Utilities, Equipment, Buildings & Grounds – Mr. Wimmers

Mr. Wimmers reported that the committee has met twice since the last Council meeting. During the meeting on the 27th, the committee received one estimate for White Field remediation. They are currently waiting for one additional estimate and have one more company scheduled for a meeting.

Ms. McDonald noted that the upcoming meeting with the final company, Clean Wood Recycling, is scheduled for this Wednesday. As of today, the second estimate, submitted by Ohio Excavating, has been received. It came in at approximately \$400,000, but it included only a brief summary, so further review is needed.

Mr. Wimmers added that the first estimate, which was more detailed, came in at around \$600,000. Both estimates are significantly lower than the original estimates provided by the engineers during earlier stages of planning.

Mr. Wimmers noted that there has been ongoing discussion regarding Hardman Field, specifically about obtaining quotes for new seating or potentially switching to bench-style seating.

Ms. McDonald shared that she visited the field this past Friday and took photos of the current condition. She reported that many of the seats have cracks, several need to be repainted, and there may be some underlying foundation issues as well. She plans to work on this project throughout the week and will begin gathering quotes for various materials that could be used for repairs or replacement.

Mr. Wimmers shared that there has been ongoing discussion regarding the recent community survey distributed by the foundation. White Field emerged as one of the top priorities among survey respondents, indicating strong public support for its remediation. To enable the foundation to begin fundraising efforts, Mr. Wimmers noted that a formal motion from the committee would be required to proceed with a partnership.

Mayor Thompson then provided additional context, noting the presence of foundation representatives Mr. Silverman and Erica Silk, who were available to offer further insights. He explained that the foundation had approached the village with a strong understanding of the challenges facing White Field and expressed their willingness to make it a focal point of their upcoming capital campaign.

While initial engineering estimates placed the remediation cost at over \$1.4 million, the village has since received a few significantly lower quotes. These estimates are currently being reviewed and refined with the goal of arriving at a more feasible figure. The project will eventually need to be bid out in accordance with formal procedures.

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The foundation is prepared to commit up to \$500,000 toward the project, contingent on a matching contribution from the village. This would provide a total of \$1 million in funding. Should the final cost exceed that amount, the village would be responsible for the difference. The foundation hopes to begin fundraising later this year and is seeking a clear commitment from the village in order to begin campaign planning.

Mayor Thompson emphasized the positive implications of this opportunity, stating that having an outside organization willing to invest in village infrastructure is significant. He highlighted that White Field was the only project among those considered by the foundation that would expand existing facilities; the others were focused on enhancing current assets. He called this a unique opportunity to turn a long-standing issue into a community asset that could bring people together for decades to come.

Mr. Silverman then addressed the committee, explaining that the foundation's intent is to find a solution for White Field that honors the longstanding partnership between the village and the local school district. He cited examples of past collaboration, such as the KB Family Fitness Center and the elementary school gym, and expressed appreciation for the village's continued support.

The foundation has identified additional areas of need, including the elementary school playground, the Little League baseball diamonds, and the girls' softball field, all of which would be included in the capital campaign alongside White Field. Mr. Silverman stressed that these initiatives are being pursued with respect to the original gift of the White Field property from Dave White Sr. He noted that if improvements include adjoining areas such as Geresy and the elementary school fields, the usable space could increase by approximately 58%, making it an even more impactful project.

The foundation will hold a board meeting on Monday to review the community survey results and discuss their next steps. A consultant hired to assist with the campaign has already interviewed approximately 35 families. According to the consultant's findings, the elementary school playground ranked as the top priority, followed closely by White Field.

Mr. Silverman expressed that, from a timing perspective, it would be helpful for the village to formally commit to the partnership soon so that White Field can be officially included in the capital campaign.

Mayor Thompson opened the floor for any objections or concerns. Mr. Lewis remarked that the village had long struggled with the estimated \$1.5 million price tag for remediation, but the new, more realistic figure of approximately \$500,000 makes the project far more attainable. He added that without moving forward, the only alternative would be to give the property back, which would be counterproductive. Mr. Shimborske expressed appreciation for the foundation and support, calling it a "lifeline" for finally bringing the project to fruition. Mrs. Dunbar echoed that sentiment, expressing gratitude for the partnership.

Mr. Silverman acknowledged the many ways the village has supported the foundation in the past and reiterated the foundation's commitment to return that support through this effort.

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Mayor Thompson concluded by stating that it is safe to say the village is looking forward to partnering with the foundation. Mr. Silverman asked about timing, explaining that the foundation board could approve White Field's inclusion in the capital campaign at their upcoming meeting on Monday. However, the fundraising process will take time, and the earliest the foundation would be able to provide funds to the village for bidding and construction would likely be spring 2026.

Mayor Thompson stated that the proposed timeline works well for the village, providing sufficient time for planning and preparation. He emphasized that this is the foundation's initiative, and it's a strong reflection of the long-standing partnership and close relationship between the village and the school system.

Mr. Silverman added that the foundation will continue to update the council on the progress of the capital campaign. Mayor Thompson assured them that the village will also keep the foundation informed, so they can report back to their board as needed.

Mr. Wimmers asked whether signage could be posted at White Field stating "Use at Your Own Risk" to allow public use. Mrs. Tharp responded that while it's an option, it should be discussed with the village's insurance provider first. She advised against it, noting that although such signs may deter some use, they do not eliminate liability and could still leave the village open to legal risk.

Mr. Wimmers also questioned the effectiveness of the current split rail fence and whether "No Trespassing" signs should be posted instead. Mrs. Tharp recommended placing "No Trespassing" or "Caution: Potential Glass" signs as a safer legal precaution. She explained that while casual entry onto the field (e.g., walking across the grass) may not seem hazardous, officially opening the field to the public, even with warning signs, raises the village's liability.

Mayor Thompson added that the risk of injury, such as someone being cut by glass, seems low. However, Mrs. Tharp emphasized that while signs aren't legally required, from a legal standpoint, posting them is the safest approach.

Mayor Thompson stated the walk path improvements are ready to begin, but the project is delayed due to two unresolved questions: the color of the fencing (white or black) and how far out the fencing should extend. On Brookside Road, the fencing goes out to the right-of-way, while on Indian Road, it stops near the homes.

Mr. Lewis recalled that the committee had agreed on black fencing, as it blends in better, and to follow the Brookside Road layout. Ms. Phillips added this setup helps prevent people from exiting the path into driveways. Mr. Lewis also mentioned the idea of offering adjacent residents the option to have gated access to the path, with placement coordinated through agreements with the village.

Mayor Thompson asked whether the fencing on Indian Road should also extend to the right-of-way. He added that progress should be visible soon. Ms. McDonald said tree removal will begin

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shortly, and closure signs have been ordered. Ms. Phillips asked about advance notice, and Ms. McDonald confirmed the signs were ordered today.

Mrs. Dunbar inquired about signage and naming the path. Ms. Phillips noted there hadn't been a discussion on that yet, and Mr. Lewis added that while a name hadn't been finalized, there was some talk about placing a street sign indicating the path.

Solicitors Report – Mrs. Tharp

Mrs. Tharp explained that an amendment to Ohio Revised Code 149.43, effective April 9th, now permits municipalities to charge for the time spent reviewing, redacting, and producing video records in response to public records requests. Previously, municipalities were not allowed to charge labor costs for these services.

Under the revised law, municipalities may charge up to \$75.00 per hour, not to exceed \$750.00 per request. However, to implement this locally, the Village must amend its public records retention policy to include this provision. In addition, specific timelines and procedures outlined in the statute must be incorporated, including the requirement to provide a cost estimate within five business days of the request.

Mayor Thompson clarified that this is a new statutory change, and an amendment to the Village's retention policy is necessary in order to apply the new charges. He offered an example: in the case of body camera footage from a police officer, significant time is required to review and redact non-public content. Until now, the cost of this labor was a taxpayer expense; under the new law, the requester will bear the cost, up to the maximum of \$750.

Mr. Lewis inquired whether this amendment would be included on the agenda for the May council meeting. Mayor Thompson confirmed that it likely would, as council action is required to officially amend the retention policy. Mrs. Tharp noted that this change does not apply to court subpoenas or criminal discovery processes.

Administrator's Report

Ms. McDonald reminded Council that the Glass City Marathon is scheduled for April 27th.

She also announced that the Village will hold a Shred Day on May 17th. This event, which occurs every two years, was hugely successful during its last occurrence and is anticipated to be well-received again.

The Streets Committee will meet tomorrow, and the Village Engineer will be present to answer questions regarding the 10-Year Mill and Fill Plan and other upcoming construction projects. In addition, U.S. Utilities has begun work on the Secor Road lighting project. This project is weather-dependent, and progress will continue as conditions allow.

Mayor's Report

No Report

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Old Business

None

New Business

A motion was made by Mrs. Dunbar and seconded by Ms. Phillips to approve the payment to Kati Tharp in the amount of \$1,701, for the period of February 2025. The motion passed unanimously.

Ms. Phillips led a discussion on the importance of establishing a clear and intentional vision for community engagement within the Village. She explained that in order for the Village Administrator to effectively carry out engagement initiatives, Council must first identify what the community values in terms of outreach, what practices should continue, be modified, or be discontinued. A strong engagement strategy, she noted, must focus on reaching all residents, not just those connected to the school system, and should aim to strengthen both digital communication and in-person community connections. Ms. Phillips also suggested that long-term engagement goals should inform how municipal space is utilized and potentially redesigned, especially if new programs or services are introduced that require additional space.

Currently, the Village communicates with residents through multiple channels, including the website, email newsletter, social media, printed postcards, The Stroll magazine, and the resident handbook. Of the approximately 1,800 households in the community, 1,251 are subscribed to the newsletter, meaning about 70% of residents are receiving updates directly, while approximately 30% are not. Social media metrics, such as 839 views for a tornado drill post and 588 views for a Lucas County update, also suggest that engagement varies and does not reach the full population.

Council members discussed whether the current reach is sufficient or if additional efforts should be made to connect with more households. Suggestions included exploring new methods such as mobile apps or text alert systems. Mrs. Dunbar supported a diversified communication approach, noting that residents have different preferences for how they receive information. While some prefer digital formats, others respond better to physical mail. She cited the success of recent postcard mailings, such as those promoting the Glass City Marathon, and emphasized that the cost of print materials can be worthwhile for broader reach.

Ms. McDonald shared that the Police Department is planning to send out updated information this year via mail and noted that efforts are underway to improve the visibility of the newsletter signup on the Village website. Mr. Wimmers echoed concerns about accessibility, sharing that many residents he spoke with while campaigning were unaware of the newsletter or found the website difficult to navigate, particularly for tasks such as signing up for yard waste services. Mrs. Dunbar agreed that the website presents usability issues, especially on mobile devices.

Ms. Phillips suggested that future Village mailings include a reminder for residents to subscribe to the email newsletter. She also proposed that the Village consider sending a printed newsletter or informational postcard once or twice per year. These mailings could serve to highlight Village services, share important updates, and promote community resources, particularly benefiting residents who are not active online. She emphasized that a physical mailer remains an important outreach tool, as there are residents in the Village who do not regularly use the internet. Council

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members expressed agreement that improving communication accessibility across platforms is vital to fostering a more engaged and informed community.

Ms. Phillips inquired about the distribution of the resident handbook, asking whether the Police Department currently delivers it to new residents. Ms. McDonald confirmed that they do. Ms. Phillips noted that the handbook typically changes every two years to reflect updates from Council and asked whether there were plans to make it available online in a searchable format. Ms. McDonald responded that this is a priority and will be addressed upon the return of Carly, the Police Administrative Assistant, from maternity leave. It will be her first project upon resuming duties. Additionally, Ms. Phillips mentioned the Village is exploring other ways to increase contact points with residents, including the potential distribution of a magnet with key contact information as a quick-reference resource.

Ms. Phillips introduced the second part of the community engagement discussion, focusing on in-person connection opportunities. She referenced prior conversations held during a Human Resources Committee meeting last year, where the idea of hosting a summer series was discussed. However, due to current staffing limitations, particularly with Becky's availability, Ms. Phillips expressed uncertainty about whether that initiative could move forward this year.

She reviewed existing Village-sponsored events, including the Bike Rodeo (geared toward families and children), Music at the Point (all ages), fitness classes (for all ages), Village Life (children), and Nature Conservancy programs. While additional events occur through volunteer organizations, their frequency and consistency vary, as these groups tend to evolve or disband over time. Ms. Phillips referenced past events like the community picnic, ice cream social, fireworks display, and fall festival, noting that while they were once popular, they haven't been held in recent years.

She raised an important question to Council: Does the Village view community programming as a municipal priority, independent of volunteer or school-led initiatives? If so, it would be appropriate to begin allocating resources, both funding and staff time, for planning and implementation. If not, that direction should be clearly communicated to community groups that have previously filled that role.

Mrs. Dunbar reflected on earlier discussions about creating a community-centered space and expressed support for revisiting the concept, even if the events don't follow previous formats. She encouraged trying new ideas to spark engagement, noting that creative, small-scale efforts might generate meaningful participation.

Ms. Phillips suggested low-cost initiatives, such as hosting a food truck day with lawn games, as a practical way to bring residents together without significant resource investment. Mayor Thompson supported this direction, emphasizing the importance of ensuring all residents feel welcomed and included, particularly as the demographics of the community continue to change. He acknowledged that fostering a sense of community identity and ownership goes beyond the traditional role of government but is crucial to enhancing the overall quality of life. He encouraged identifying a few pilot events that could be implemented with minimal cost and broad appeal.

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Mr. Wimmers highlighted a key engagement gap: many Village events are family and child focused, yet approximately 50% of households do not have children. He stressed the need for programming that engages the broader population. Ms. Phillips agreed, reiterating the importance of finding inclusive and appealing activities that reflect the interests and needs of the entire community.

Mrs. Dunbar remarked that the front lawn of the municipal building could serve as a great venue for live music, suggesting it would be a welcoming and accessible space for community gatherings. Ms. Phillips agreed and emphasized the value of initiating “easy wins”—low-effort, low-cost events that can help gauge public interest and participation. By starting with a few simple events, the Village can assess turnout and gather feedback on what types of activities residents, including those without children, would like to see in the future.

Mrs. Dunbar noted that some residents already hire local bands for private events, indicating there is interest and demand for that type of entertainment. Ms. Phillips added that local bands have performed at past Village events, such as the community picnic and fall festival, and she believes that if the Village organizes and sponsors events, it provides a greater sense of stability and consistency than relying solely on volunteer-run efforts.

Mayor Thompson echoed the need to consider programming for “empty nesters” and other adult residents not engaged through school- or family-focused events. However, Mr. Shimborske raised concerns about the practical aspects of organizing such programming, noting that the Village currently does not have an entertainment coordinator or dedicated staff for event planning.

Ms. Phillips acknowledged the resource limitations and stated that Council would need to determine how much staff time and funding can realistically be committed to community events. If the Village wishes to expand its offerings, consideration should be given to whether resources should be added in future budgets to support those efforts. Mayor Thompson concluded by suggesting that the next step should be the development of a specific proposal, enabling Council to make a clear decision on whether to move forward with a more structured and resourced community event initiative.

Ordinances & Resolutions

Mayor Thompson read Resolution 2025-7:

Resolution 2025-7

Authorizing a contract with Henry W. Bergman, Inc. for the 2025 tennis court construction project, and declaring an emergency.

Motion to waive three readings:

Motion –	Mr. Wimmers
Second –	Mr. Lewis
	Unanimous Approval

Motion to declare an emergency:	Motion –	Mr. Wimmers
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Motion to adopt legislation:

Second –	Mr. Lewis
	Unanimous Approval
Motion –	Mr. Wimmers
Second –	Mr. Lewis
Yeas (5) –	Mr. Wimmers, Ms. Phillips, Mr. Lewis, Mr. Shimborske, Mrs. Dunbar
Nays (0) –	

Mayor Thompson read Resolution 2025-8:

Resolution 2025-8	Authorizing a contract with Henry W. Bergman, Inc for the 2025 mill and fill street project, and declaring an emergency.
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Motion to waive three readings:

	Motion –	Mr. Shimborske
	Second –	Mr. Wimmers
		Unanimous Approval
Motion to declare an emergency:	Motion –	Mr. Shimborske
	Second –	Mr. Wimmers
		Unanimous Approval
Motion to adopt legislation:	Motion –	Mr. Shimborske
	Second –	Mr. Wimmers
	Yeas (5) –	Mr. Wimmers, Ms. Phillips, Mr. Lewis, Mr. Shimborske, Mrs. Dunbar
	Nays (0) –	

Mayor Thompson read Resolution 2025-9:

Resolution 2025-9	Authorizing an agreement with Anthem Blue Cross Blue Shield to provide health insurance benefits for village employees, establishing the amount of employee premium share, and declaring an emergency.
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Motion to waive three readings:

Motion –	Ms. Phillips
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	Second –	Mr. Wimmers Unanimous Approval
Motion to declare an emergency:	Motion –	Ms. Phillips
	Second –	Mr. Wimmers Unanimous Approval
Motion to adopt legislation:	Motion –	Ms. Phillips
	Second –	Mr. Wimmers
	Yeas (5) –	Mr. Wimmers, Ms. Phillips, Mr. Lewis, Mr. Shimborske, Mrs. Dunbar
	Nays (0) –	

Mayor Thompson read Resolution 2025-10:

Resolution 2025-10	Authorizing a contract with the Ohio Department of Transportation for Salt for the 2025/2026 Winter, and declaring an emergency.
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Motion to waive three readings:

	Motion –	Mr. Wimmers
	Second –	Mr. Shimborske Unanimous Approval
Motion to declare an emergency:	Motion –	Mr. Wimmers
	Second –	Ms. Shimborske Unanimous Approval
Motion to adopt legislation:	Motion –	Mr. Wimmers
	Second –	Ms. Shimborske
	Yeas (5) –	Mr. Wimmers, Ms. Phillips, Mr. Lewis, Mr. Shimborske, Mrs. Dunbar
	Nays (0) –	

Executive Session

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At 8:14 PM Mr. Shimborske made a motion to move into an executive session to consider the appointment, employment, dismissal, discipline, promotion, demotion or compensation of a public employee, Mr. Wimmers seconded the motion, which passed unanimously

At 8:40 PM Council returned to regular session.

Next Meeting Date
May 5, 2025

Adjournment
8:42 PM

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Mayor J. Thompson", written over a horizontal line.

Mayor Thompson