

**OTTAWA HILLS VILLAGE COUNCIL
MEETING MINUTES
June 2, 2025 7:00 PM**

Call to Order – Mayor Thompson

7:00 PM

Village Representatives in Attendance

Mayor Thompson
Councilwoman Heather Phillips
Councilman Dan Wimmers
Councilwoman Wendy Greeley
Clerk/Treasurer Mark Mockensturm

Councilman John Lewis
Councilwoman Dana Dunbar
Village Administrator April McDonald

Citizen Attendees

Nasrin Afjeh
Larry Nameche

Yarko Kuk

Minutes

A motion was made by Ms. Phillips and seconded by Mrs. Dunbar to approve the minutes from the May 5, 2025, Council meeting. The motion passed unanimously.

Citizen Comments

Mrs. Afjeh expressed concerns regarding a procedural issue involving Mayor Thompson. She stated that while all members of Council were present at the recent Finance Committee meeting, there was no time allocated to discuss the events that occurred later that day at the Zoning Commission meeting.

Following the conclusion of the Zoning meeting, Mayor Thompson reportedly spoke with the solicitor and Ms. McDonald for approximately an hour and a half without any other members of Council being present. Mrs. Afjeh emphasized that this raised procedural concerns, as Council was not informed about the content or purpose of the extended conversation between the Mayor and the solicitor.

She requested that Council address this matter directly with Mayor Thompson, citing the importance of transparency and proper procedure. Mrs. Afjeh noted that the lack of communication about the discussion bothers her, and she believes Council should be aware of such exchanges.

Finance & Future Planning – Mr. Lewis

Mr. Lewis reported that the Finance Committee met on May 27th to review financial projections and evaluate the potential need for additional revenue. The primary focus of the meeting was to consider recommending that the Council place an income tax increase on the November 2025 ballot. After a thorough discussion, the Finance Committee voted to recommend that Council consider a ballot measure to increase the Village's income tax rate from 1.5% to 2.0%. If approved by voters, the change would effectively apply an additional 0.5% income tax to all taxpayers with income subject to the Ottawa Hills tax.

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Although all Council members were present and provided comments, Mr. Lewis clarified that, because it was a Finance Committee meeting, only the Committee members voted on the recommendation. Mayor Thompson confirmed this and emphasized that while the recommendation originated from the Committee, the presence and participation of the full Council allowed for a broader discussion. He also highlighted the importance of timing, noting that the ballot language must be submitted to the Board of Elections within the 90-day requirement before the election.

There was additional discussion about how and when Council should take formal action on the measure. The next regular Council meeting is scheduled for July 7th. If Council were to pass the legislation on that date, it would need to be declared an emergency in order to take effect immediately. Mayor Thompson stated that he would prefer not to declare it an emergency and instead suggested holding a special Council meeting at least 30 days before the filing deadline. Mr. Lewis agreed, noting that a special meeting would allow the ordinance to pass under normal legislative procedures. Mr. Wimmer supported the idea, provided the ballot language is finalized in time.

Mayor Thompson indicated that he expects a draft of the ballot language to be ready by the end of the week. Solicitor Tharp had prepared an initial draft and forwarded it to another attorney for review. This step was taken to ensure the language meets all legal requirements and to allow time for revisions, if necessary. Mayor Thompson recommended waiting to schedule the special meeting until Council Member Shimborske is present but noted that a meeting will be scheduled regardless if needed. He concluded by stating that Ottawa Hills has not placed an income tax issue on the ballot in over 40 years, and the last ballot measure, concerning property tax, occurred in 2014. Given the significance of the proposal, he emphasized the importance of collaboration and thorough preparation moving forward.

Human Resources – Ms. Phillips

Ms. Phillips inquired about the status of the employee handbook. Ms. McDonald explained that the draft was sent to Mr. Wenzlick in 2023, with instructions to review and return any edits or suggestions. That review has not yet occurred.

Ms. McDonald recommended that the next step be a meeting with the HR Committee to determine necessary changes. Alternatively, the draft could be reviewed independently to identify sections worth incorporating. She noted the submitted draft is significantly more extensive, approximately five times the length of the current handbook, and will require a thorough review. While the Village may not need something quite so detailed, employment laws have evolved and warrant a careful evaluation.

Mayor Thompson added that much of the draft may not be applicable to the Village and acknowledged that Ms. McDonald is currently serving in two roles, making a detailed handbook review especially demanding. He emphasized the need to be mindful of workloads during this process, as the same considerations apply to other pending tasks.

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Ms. McDonald reported that approximately 15 resumes were received for the Finance Director position. After reviewing the applications, she has narrowed the pool to five candidates for initial interviews. She expressed interest in having Mr. Lewis or Mr. Mockensturm participate in the second round of interviews for the top finalists. She is aiming to begin scheduling initial interviews later this week or early next week.

Mr. Wimmers raised a concern regarding the employee handbook, specifically asking whether the consultants or drafters are willing to identify any employee laws that have changed since the original draft was submitted. He emphasized that noting these updates would help ensure the handbook is current and compliant moving forward.

Mrs. Dunbar agreed, stating that it was an excellent point. She further questioned why the current draft includes items that are not relevant to the organization. She suggested that the initial review should be focused on what Mr. Wimmers proposed, identifying legal updates, before including unrelated content.

Mayor Thompson supported both comments, stating that the team responsible for the draft should be actively filtering out non-relevant material. He added that there must have been some direction previously provided outlining the organization's expectations for the handbook, and that this guidance should be followed more closely.

Safety – Mrs. Dunbar

No report

Services & Environment – Mrs. Greeley

No Report

Streets & Bridges – Mr. Shimborske

Ms. McDonald reported that she expects to receive confirmation this week regarding the start date for the tennis court resurfacing project. As of now, the project is still scheduled to begin on June 16. She assured the school will be kept informed and will be able to continue using the courts up until construction begins.

Mayor Thompson referenced recent discussions at the Street Committee meeting about the possibility of installing a 4-way stop at the intersection of Indian Road and Orchard Drive. Currently, Indian serves as a through street, while only Orchard has a stop sign.

Mrs. Dunbar confirmed that the committee did recommend the change. Ms. McDonald noted that she and Mrs. Holdren reviewed meeting records from the past 10 to 15 years and found no ordinance or resolution authorizing a previous stop sign change, suggesting any such action may have been approved by motion rather than formal legislation.

Mr. Lewis recalled the last known change was the addition of a stop sign at Indian and Westchester and offered to help estimate a timeline based on when the resident who advocated for it lived there. Mr. Wimmers added that residents near that intersection report that the stop sign is

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frequently disregarded. Mayor Thompson emphasized the importance of following a clear and authorized process for traffic control changes, noting the need for a consistent methodology.

Mrs. Greeley inquired whether the proposed stop sign was prompted by pedestrian safety concerns, particularly for children. Mr. Lewis explained that increased traffic in the area, driven in part by school traffic and Google Maps routing, makes the intersection more dangerous. Drivers use Orchard and Indian as a shortcut to avoid the main five-way intersection at Bancroft.

Mrs. Dunbar noted that residents have raised concerns for years about heavy traffic on Indian. Even if vehicles do not come to a complete stop, she pointed out, slowing down through rolling stops could improve safety for pedestrians. She also highlighted the lack of sidewalks on Orchard, between Indian & Bancroft. Drivers use the slip lane at Secor & Indian to bypass the traffic signal & turn on Orchard where pedestrians regularly walk. Mayor Thompson acknowledged the issue warrants further consideration, and Mr. Lewis stated that the aim is to have the stop signs installed before the start of the new school year in the fall.

A motion was made by Mrs. Dunbar and seconded by Ms. Phillips to approve a 4-way stop at the intersection of Indian and Orchard. The motion passed unanimously.

Mayor Thompson noted that, based on the village's prior experience with the stop sign installation on Westchester, it may be beneficial to include additional signage or visual cues to alert drivers of the change. He emphasized that the primary goal is public safety, and it's important that drivers traveling on Indian Road are clearly aware of the new stop requirement.

Mr. Wimmers asked whether the residents living near the intersection had been surveyed regarding the proposed stop sign. Mrs. Dunbar responded that she had spoken with a resident at the corner several years ago, who was supportive of the idea. Ms. Phillips added that a resident had recently reached out to her with questions about the potential change, indicating continued community interest in the proposal.

Mr. Lewis asked if a timeline had been established for the upcoming walk path work. Ms. McDonald reported that the installation of lighting along the Wicklow path began earlier today, as all lighting materials are now on hand.

She and Mr. Pelland have also spoken with approximately four residents regarding the installation of gates along the path, and nearly all expressed support for having a gate added. Stump removal will occur in conjunction with the concrete work, and the village is now awaiting scheduling confirmation from the contractors. Feedback from residents has been very positive, with many expressing satisfactions about the color of the fencing and the project's full reach to the end of the path.

Mayor Thompson asked whether all contractors involved in the project were under contract. Ms. McDonald confirmed that Mr. Pelland is waiting on one final contract update, and a purchase order is expected to be issued by the end of the week. The village is purchasing the lighting

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equipment directly, and the contractor will handle installation. Additional lighting units will also be purchased as spares in case replacements are needed.

Utilities, Equipment, Buildings & Grounds – Mr. Wimmers

Mr. Wimmers inquired about the status of the third bid for the White Field project. Mayor Thompson clarified that the village has received three contractor quotes, though these are not formal bids. The quotes were based on on-site meetings where the contractors were asked to evaluate the issue and offer solutions. All three contractors proposed a similar approach: removing minimal material, installing a fabric barrier to prevent subgrade migration, then applying topsoil and raising the irrigation system to the new grade.

The estimates ranged from approximately \$400,000 to \$700,000, which is significantly lower than the original \$1.5 million estimate. However, Mayor Thompson stressed that these are informal quotes and do not yet account for elements such as silt fencing and project contingencies, items that would be required in a formal bidding process.

Mr. Lewis reminded the group that any project exceeding \$75,000 must go through a formal public bid process. Mr. Wimmers raised concerns about the vagueness of the lowest quote and asked whether there had been follow-up with that contractor. Ms. McDonald explained that the village has not followed up yet, as the next step is to engage a qualified engineer who can develop a formal set of specifications. Once specs are in place, they will be shared with all potential bidders and the public to proceed with a proper bid.

Mayor Thompson added that last week they met with an engineer recommended by one of the contractors. While the firm had worked with the village before, they declined to take on the project, citing a full workload and concerns about becoming involved in a potentially controversial project. However, they did provide referrals to other firms that may be interested. The village remains committed to finding an engineer to lead the project design and specification phase. Ms. McDonald noted that it's been challenging to engage contractors for a project that is still a year away from construction.

Mrs. Greeley asked for an update on potential school foundation support for the project. Mayor Thompson confirmed that White Field has been included as part of the foundation's upcoming fundraising campaign, which has not yet officially launched. Preliminary surveys conducted by the foundation showed strong support for the White Field project. Notably, it was the only proposed project that would expand usable space, as opposed to simply improving existing facilities. Ms. McDonald added that a campaign manager has already been assigned to lead the foundation's efforts, and based on recent history, the foundation has had strong fundraising success with similar initiatives.

Solicitors Report – Mrs. Tharp

No report

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Administrator's Report

Ms. McDonald reported that she and Mr. Pelland met with Ms. Decker from The Nature Conservancy (TNC) earlier today. TNC had previously requested a delay in mowing until a certain point in the season, which has now been reached. Due to the overgrowth, taller stakes will be installed along the path to guide mowing (approximately 8 feet wide), and in the large recreation areas to designate zones for running, play, and picnicking.

Mr. Lewis raised concerns about muddy conditions along the path near the new mound, where erosion has occurred and small rocks have washed away from the stepping areas. Ms. McDonald noted the need for stabilization, possibly with railroad ties or large boulders to retain the rocks and improve safety.

A new sign was delivered today and is expected to be installed at the trail entrance within two weeks. Ms. McDonald praised Ms. Decker's expertise and noted the remaining grant funds will be used for additional deer deterrents and weeding efforts. Tree survival remains low, with only an estimated 10% of the original 5,000 trees expected to survive, which was expected.

Mr. Pelland will assess whether the Village should handle the mowing or if it should be contracted out to Kester. Once the initial mowing is completed, the Village service crew will take over ongoing maintenance.

Ms. Phillips inquired about a potential grand opening once the sign is installed. Ms. McDonald and others agreed this would be a great idea, and Ms. Decker expressed interest in participating. Mr. Lewis emphasized that education has always been a key part of the project. An article from TNC will be included in the upcoming newsletter. Mayor Thompson asked about project funding. Ms. McDonald confirmed there are no additional funds from the Village, and all progress has been supported by The Nature Conservancy. Mrs. Dunbar reminded the group that there is an ongoing annual contract with TNC.

Ms. McDonald shared that Stratford in The Hills generously provided lunch for the office about two weeks ago. It was a welcome opportunity for everyone to sit down together, even if just for 30 minutes, to enjoy a meal and time in each other's company.

Ms. McDonald reported that Mrs. Holdren reached out today to inquire about food trucks used by Mrs. Hauck, who previously coordinated Music at the Point. Mrs. Hauck noted that while there is no cost to use the food trucks, some have failed to show up in the past. She emphasized the importance of firm commitments and consistent follow-up if we plan on scheduling food trucks for future events.

Discussion also included the idea of offering board games in the council chambers for children, supervised by a couple of police officers for about an hour. This would be a low-cost event since there is currently no budget allocation for community activities this year. Ms. McDonald encouraged others to share ideas and expressed openness to promoting events to gauge turnout, especially with school being out. Ms. Phillips suggested expanding such events beyond children to include new residents, helping them engage with the community.

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Regarding after-prom donations, Ms. Phillips proposed linking the donations to community service activities, potentially coordinated through The Nature Conservancy. This would establish a structured way for students to contribute community service in exchange for support. Ms. McDonald suggested weeding at the sled hill as a possible project. Other potential locations for community service include flower beds at White Field and projects at Joy Cemetery, which Mayor Thompson recalled had previously involved Eagle Scouts. Ms. McDonald highlighted the ongoing use of an Eagle Scout project and utilizing the reference books in council chambers.

Mayor Thompson supported having a clear plan that states community service requirements in exchange for donations, possibly communicated in advance to encourage participation for the following year. Ms. Phillips noted that the student council is already considering locations for next year's prom, which may integrate with these ideas.

Mayor's Report

Mayor Thompson addressed concerns raised by Ms. Phillips about inaccurate information published in the recent issue of Stroll Magazine. Since being made aware of the issue, the village has engaged extensively with the magazine's staff.

The published content contained numerous inaccuracies, with none of the event details appearing correct. Mayor Thompson expressed frustration over the lack of clarity regarding how such an error could occur, noting that this was not a simple oversight but a page full of misinformation. Efforts to obtain an explanation from the magazine have been unsuccessful.

Mrs. Greeley observed that it seemed as though events from another locality, such as Sylvania, were mistakenly attributed to Ottawa Hills. The magazine staff suggested they may have confused Ottawa Hills, Ohio, with another location, possibly in Michigan, but were unable to clarify how this confusion happened. Ms. Phillips highlighted that many residents, especially those not connected to social media or the village newsletter, were unaware of the subsequent retraction, and suggested the possibility of posting notices at key community locations to inform residents that these events are not scheduled. There is also concern about the village's reputation, as some residents mistakenly believe the magazine is produced by the village and may associate the editorial errors with the village's quality of work. This concern is amplified by the village's regular column in the publication.

Mrs. Dunbar recommended requesting the magazine to issue a retraction via postcard or letter to residents, reflecting the original method of distribution. Ms. McDonald agreed to follow up with the magazine on this matter.

Mayor Thompson expressed disappointment in the magazine's response but suggested deferring any decision about discontinuing participation in the publication. It was noted that the Stroll Magazine is a franchise operated by a Texas-based company without local staff, which may contribute to communication challenges.

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Old Business

Ms. Phillips mentioned the TARTA Student Summer Pass, in which they did not get information to students before school release. It is still up on the TARTA website, and they can still get the passes, she mentioned maybe including it in our newsletter. Mrs. Dunbar asked if that is something we could do, Ms. McDonald stated we can do that. Ms. Phillips stated the students can ride free until August 31st; they just need to fill out the form online to get the digital pass. Ms. Phillips stated the Fall Fest has been scheduled for September 20th.

New Business

A motion was made by Mr. Lewis and seconded by Ms. Phillips to approve the payment to Kati Tharp in the amount of \$2,520, for the period of April 2025. The motion passed unanimously.

Ordinances & Resolutions

Mayor Thompson read Resolution 2025-12:

Resolution 2025-12	Authorizing a contract with Lucas County Engineer for Construction Inspection of the Evergreen Road Bridge Replacement, and declaring an emergency.
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Motion to waive three readings:

Motion –	Mr. Lewis
Second –	Mrs. Dunbar
	Unanimous Approval

Motion to declare an emergency:

Motion –	Mr. Lewis
Second –	Mrs. Dunbar
	Unanimous Approval

Motion to adopt legislation:

Motion –	Mr. Lewis
Second –	Mrs. Dunbar

Yeas (5) –	Mr. Wimmers, Ms. Phillips, Mr. Lewis, Mrs. Dunbar, Mrs. Greeley
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Nays (0) –

Next Meeting Date

June 9, 2025

Adjournment

7:57 PM



Mayor Thompson