

**OTTAWA HILLS VILLAGE SPECIAL COUNCIL
MEETING MINUTES
March 3, 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
Interim Village Administrator April McDonald

Councilman Edward Shimborske III
Councilman John Lewis
Solicitor Kati Tharp

Citizen Attendees

Nasrin Afjeh
Yarko Kuk
Jessica Meade
Michele Myerholtz

Kelly Beadle
Lori Tomblin
Clayton Roach
Annaliese Roach

Proclamation

Mayor Thompson presented a proclamation to Michele Myerholtz recognizing March as Developmental Disabilities Awareness Month.

Ms. Myerholtz expressed gratitude to the Council, Village, and residents for their support. She highlighted the importance of not only raising awareness about developmental disabilities but also fostering a deeper sense of acceptance. Her goal is for the community to become more inclusive, welcoming, and focus on building meaningful relationships with individuals with disabilities. She emphasized that people with disabilities, like everyone else, have their own dreams and aspirations, and encouraged the community to view them simply as individuals within the broader society. Her challenge to the community was to embrace this mindset and take active steps toward inclusion.

Minutes

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

Citizen Comments

Ms. Meade introduced herself as a resident of Ashborne, near the high school, and shared that she had previously addressed parking concerns, which she believes have improved. However, she raised a new issue regarding speeding on Ashborne. While temporary measures like increased police presence and a speed sign were put in place, speeding is still a concern. Mayor Thompson noted the sign was malfunctioning and is being repaired. Ms. Meade has been proactive, reaching out to the schools since January 31, 2024, with reports of specific vehicles, license plates, and videos. She expressed concern about speeding during lunch breaks, especially when first and third graders are outside for recess. Her son, a first grader, is amongst those at risk, and she emphasized her desire to prevent a potential pedestrian accident. Despite her efforts, she feels the school has not taken her concerns seriously. After a year of hearing promises to address the issue, she shared

OTTAWA HILLS VILLAGE SPECIAL COUNCIL
MEETING MINUTES
March 3, 2025 7:00 PM

the footage on her Facebook page, which led to public outrage over the dangerous driving, especially near the playground. One driver yelled inappropriate comments at her, but that individual was still allowed to drive to school. While she appreciates the temporary measures, Ms. Meade is advocating for a more permanent solution to address speeding and improve safety. She emphasized that her main concern is ensuring the safety of all children in the village and suggested that consistent enforcement of traffic laws throughout the day, not just during lunch, could help encourage responsible driving behavior, benefiting both students and the wider community.

Ms. Tomblin, following up on Ms. Meade's concerns, shared that she lives on Brookside and has experienced similar issues with students speeding. She mentioned that students have passed her while she was driving at the speed limit, emphasizing the need for students to be more mindful of their driving behavior.

Ms. Beadle stated that she lives on Dundas and works in the elementary school lunchroom every day. She used to monitor recess and has witnessed students speeding down the road. She pointed out that the playground is not fenced in and balls often roll into the street, children are likely to chase them. She expressed concern that there are limited adults on the playground to prevent potential accidents. Ms. Beadle also noted that speed bumps have not been effective, as students are simply "catching air" rather than slowing down.

Mayor Thompson shared that he and Ms. McDonald had discussed the issue of speeding enforcement, particularly around the high school, with interim Police Chief Estok earlier that day. As a result, they are working on coordinating a meeting with the high school principal, Ms. Meade, and possibly the student council, to help students understand the concerns from a parent's perspective. This would also give the student council an opportunity to engage in something constructive and meaningful.

Additionally, Mayor Thompson acknowledged the community's desire for increased traffic enforcement. He recognized that while some people would support this initiative, others might not agree. However, he assured that the police officers carrying out these efforts would have the support of Council as long as the enforcement was done appropriately. Mayor Thompson expressed his full support for the initiative, though he noted that not everyone would share the same view.

Ms. Phillips clarified that, according to the Ottawa Hills Junior High/High School handbook, students could lose their driving privileges if they violated traffic rules. However, the school could only enforce this removal if the police department first acted and enforced the traffic violations.

Mr. Wimmers, who also lives on Ashborne, inquired if the area was considered a school zone during those times. Mayor Thompson responded that he had learned that it is a school zone, and during the appropriate hours, it is treated the same as Indian Road. Mr. Wimmers then pointed out that the sign currently posted indicates a 25-mph speed limit and suggested that a "school zone" sticker be added to the sign for clarity.

OTTAWA HILLS VILLAGE SPECIAL COUNCIL
MEETING MINUTES
March 3, 2025 7:00 PM

Finance & Future Planning – Mr. Lewis

Mr. Lewis stated the finance committee meeting took place last Thursday, where the discussion centered around the village's ongoing structural deficit and potential solutions for addressing it. The key topic was whether to propose to the citizens, in November, an increase in either income or property tax to raise additional revenue. The projections and data shared in the last meeting are included in the current council packet. The goal is to fully assess the situation before asking Council to make a decision on the need for additional revenue and whether to pursue an increase in income or property taxes. Both options would require a vote by the citizens.

To summarize, it appears that the most variable and significant area of expenditure is capital projects, particularly road repair and replacement. Estimating a reasonable budget for maintaining the roads at their current standard has proven challenging. An initial review of the Village's road expenditures over the past decade shows an average annual cost of just under \$2 million. When considering the cost per mile, a "mill and fill" repair averages \$360,000, while a full rebuild can cost approximately \$3.2 million. Mill and fill repairs are expected to last 15 years, with a complete rebuild every 45 years, which aligns with the village's past experiences. Based on these figures, maintaining the roads would require about \$2 million annually.

This leaves the Village with a significant funding shortfall, which would quickly deplete its cash reserves. To address the gap, an additional \$1.35 million would be needed to break even going forward. Mr. Lewis acknowledged that this is a substantial request, equivalent to a 6-mill property tax increase or a 0.5% increase in income tax. Both options are considerable, and he is not yet ready to present a final recommendation to Council. Therefore, the current focus is on refining the projections for road rebuilding costs before making a final decision.

Mr. Lewis mentioned that he hopes to meet with the Streets Committee and our engineer to strengthen their case. Additionally, Ms. McDonald and Mr. Lewis have a scheduled meeting tomorrow with the school's treasurer to discuss the school's plans for future revenue. Since both school and municipal taxpayers are the same, they aim to ensure that their efforts align and don't overlap, fostering a collaborative approach. One of the key objectives is to gather comparative data from similar districts or municipalities to understand where their tax rates stand relative to peers. While progress is being made, further work is needed. If additional revenue is to be requested, it must be done by the July meeting to be included in the November ballot.

Mrs. Greeley mentioned that one of the slides from the State of the District presentation for Ottawa Hills School District indicates that by August 2026, the district will assess the need for a new levy and determine the types of levies required. The final decision is expected by December 2026, with the levy potentially appearing on the May 2027 ballot. Mr. Lewis explained that this is why they are meeting with the treasurer tomorrow to gain a clearer understanding of the situation. Mrs. Greeley inquired if this timeline assumes the current situation remains unchanged, to which Mr. Lewis confirmed. However, he noted that this plan does not account for the Village campus, which he believes should be addressed separately. He emphasized that the Village campus would likely require a bond issue, typically funded through a property tax for a specific term.

OTTAWA HILLS VILLAGE SPECIAL COUNCIL
MEETING MINUTES
March 3, 2025 7:00 PM

Human Resources – Ms. Phillips

Ms. Phillips mentioned that a meeting has not yet taken place, but one should be scheduled soon to discuss the health insurance benefits needed for the April meeting.

Ms. McDonald stated that they will be reviewing the health insurance quotes at the next committee meeting and deciding on the direction they want to take for this year. Action would be needed at the April meeting.

Safety – Mrs. Dunbar

Mayor Thompson mentioned that they are working to schedule a safety committee meeting, which will include two or three items on the agenda.

Services & Environment – Mrs. Greeley

No Report

Streets & Bridges – Mr. Shimborske

Mr. Shimborske stated that a meeting with the engineer will be scheduled in the near future.

Utilities, Equipment, Buildings & Grounds – Mr. Wimmers

Mr. Wimmers shared that a meeting will be held on Wednesday, March 5th, to discuss the walk paths and Hardman Field backstops.

Solicitors Report – Mrs. Tharp

No Report

Administrator's Report

Ms. McDonald reported that the 2024 financials were submitted to the State of Ohio today and will soon be sent out to everyone and posted on the website.

Regarding Pedestrian Safety Week, the walk will take place on March 11th at 6:45 PM at the flagpole, the same location as last year.

Additionally, the tennis bid opening is Thursday morning. A few contractors have called in with questions and the engineer will be present to open the bids.

Mayor Thompson stated that he is unsure if any of the audience members have participated in the Pedestrian safety walk, but given their interest in pedestrian safety, it would be a great opportunity for them to join. Ms. Phillips suggested that in future years, the police could collaborate and speak with high school students about pedestrian safety, especially with regard to drivers. Mayor Thompson agreed and suggested that this could be a topic for discussion during the upcoming meeting.

Mayor's Report

No Report

**OTTAWA HILLS VILLAGE SPECIAL COUNCIL
MEETING MINUTES
March 3, 2025 7:00 PM**

Old Business

None

New Business

A motion was made by Mr. Lewis and seconded by Mr. Shimborske to approve the payment to Kati Tharp in the amount of \$2,772, for the period of January 2025. The motion passed unanimously.

Ordinances & Resolutions

Mayor Thompson read Resolution 2025-5:

Resolution 2025-5	Authorizing the purchase of property, casualty, and liability insurance for the Village of Ottawa Hills, and declaring an emergency.
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Motion to waive three readings:

Motion –	Mr. Lewis
Second –	Ms. Phillips
	Unanimous Approval

Motion to declare an emergency:

Motion –	Mr. Lewis
Second –	Ms. Phillips
	Unanimous Approval

Motion to adopt legislation:

Motion –	Mr. Lewis
Second –	Ms. Phillips

Yeas (5) –	Mr. Wimmers, Ms. Phillips, Mr. Lewis, Mr. Shimborske, Mrs. Greeley
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Nays (0) –	
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Mayor Thompson read Resolution 2025-6:

Resolution 2025-6	Authorizing the transfer of \$200,000 from the General Fund of the Village of Ottawa Hills, with \$125,000 to the Capital Projects Fund, and \$75,000 to the Police Pension Fund, and declaring an emergency.
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Motion to waive three readings:

Motion –	Mr. Lewis
Second –	Ms. Phillips
	Unanimous Approval

