

VILLAGE OF HIGHLAND HILLS, OHIO
MINUTES OF A REGULAR COUNCIL MEETING
February 12, 2025
6:00 p.m.

The Regular Meeting of the Council of the Village of Highland Hills, Ohio was called to order at 6:00 p.m. by President Cassandra Pride in Room No. 14 of Village Hall. It was also broadcast via Zoom Video Communications.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE: Everyone stood for the Pledge of Allegiance, which was recited by all.

ROLL CALL: Present were Council President Cassandra Pride and Councilpersons James McManus, David Mills and Robert L. Wright, II. Also present: Mayor Michael L. Booker and Law Director Thomas P. O'Donnell. Absent was Councilwoman Geavona Greene.

Moved by President Pride and seconded by Councilman Mills to excuse Councilwoman Greene from the meeting. All voted aye and the **motion carried.**

DISCUSSION BY PUBLIC: None.

APPROVAL OF CONSENT AGENDA: Items listed under the Consent Agenda are considered routine. Each item will be read individually into the record and the Consent Agenda will then be enacted as a whole by one motion and one roll call. There will be no separate discussion of these items. If discussion by Council is desired on any item on the Consent Agenda, that item will be removed from the Consent Agenda by Council motion and considered in its normal sequence under the Regular Order of Business.

a. *Approval of minutes: January 8, 2025

Moved by Councilman Wright and seconded by Councilman Mills to accept the Consent Agenda. All voted aye and the Consent Agenda was **approved 4 – 0.**

COMMUNICATIONS: None.

REPORTS AND COMMUNICATIONS FROM THE MAYOR: Mayor Michael Booker reported the sad news that former Councilman David Scott passed yesterday. Mr. Scott did a lot for the community, including his efforts with recycling. He was a great friend to Mayor Nash and will be sorely missed.

Mayor Booker reported that there was another water main break on Alameda, with water coming from the curb. Water main breaks are happening everywhere due to the weather; the Water

Department was out today and will be back out tomorrow morning. The streetlights on Alameda have been replaced.

The Mayor commented that as we celebrate Black History Month, we are reminded of another former resident on Alameda who is a famous artist, H. DaVinci Bullock, Sr. His works are on display in the African American Museum of Boston, Massachusetts and here at Village Hall.

The County Land Bank is building houses in North Randall. Mayor Booker related that he is a member of the Board and will find out more information and how to apply the building to our community.

The Village received a \$240,000 grant from the County for road repairs at Richmond and Harvard. Movie with the Mayor will be held on Friday, celebrating Valentine's Day and Black History Month.

Mayor Booker showed a buzzer to Council members, and advised that the Police Department recently gave a class to seniors, and they asked for the buzzers. When they arrived, the department delivered the buzzers to the residents who attended the class. They have since received many calls with requests for buzzers and are ordering more. It has already saved the life of one resident, who fell and had the buzzer with her. A neighbor heard the sound and called for help. Mayor Booker thanked Chief Golston for the safety classes and for the buzzer distribution.

Turning to the Fire Department, Mayor Booker explained that the Village is in need of a new fire truck. The two we have are 1991 and 2003 models and the older one has to be replaced. The Chief has identified a decked-out, brand new truck which was ordered and not picked up by another community. These trucks generally run \$600,000 to \$1 million, and the Village would be able to purchase it at a discounted rate. Mayor Booker advised that our debt will come off the books in 2026 and we will be able to finance the truck, with payments starting in 2026. The Law Director has set up a bond meeting for next week to discuss a lower interest rate and payments of \$40,000 to \$50,000 over the next ten years. The Fire Chief is very excited about the prospect of a new truck, and Mayor Booker said they will keep pushing for grant money, as well.

DEPARTMENT HEAD REPORTS: Law Director Thomas O'Donnell advised there is no need for Council action this evening on the fire truck. Details will be coming in the Finance Committee meeting in March, with the goal of having the financing wrapped up.

REPORT FROM PRESIDENT OF COUNCIL: President Cassandra Pride requested Council members be mindful that when urgent matters come up, they may have to schedule special meetings. She told Mayor Booker that Council will make themselves available when it is necessary to move at a faster pace.

REPORT FROM COUNCIL COMMITTEES:

Finance	Cassandra Pride – met and a report is on file
Properties/Buildings	David Mills – met and a report is on file
Public Works	James McManus – met and a report is on file
Rules	Geavona Greene – President Pride advised the committee met and a report is on file
Safety	Robert Wright, II – met and a report is on file
Committee of Whole	Cassandra Pride – did not meet

REPORT FROM COUNCIL REPRESENTATIVES TO REGULATORY OR OTHER BOARDS:

Audit	Geavona Greene – President Pride advised the board did not meet
Board of Control	Cassandra Pride – did not meet
Board of Zoning Appeals	Robert Wright, II – did not meet
Fair Housing Commission	Geavona Greene – President Pride advised the board did not meet
Human Resources Committee	David Mills – did not meet
Planning Commission	James McManus – met and a report is on file
Senior Advisory Board	Cassandra Pride – did not meet
Tax Incentive Review Council	Geavona Greene – President Pride advised the board did not meet

ORDINANCES AND RESOLUTIONS:

- a. **THIRD READING CONSIDERATION: None**
- b. **SECOND READING CONSIDERATION:**

Ordinance No. 2025-03: An Ordinance Approving the Village Comprehensive Plan Update Completed by the Cuyahoga County Planning Commission.

President Pride requested the Ordinance be moved to Third Reading so that Council has an opportunity to review and discuss the recommendations of the Village Planning Commission.

Moved by Councilman Mills and seconded by Councilman McManus to **move Ordinance No. 2025-03 to Third Reading and the Finance Committee. All voted aye and the motion carried.**

c. **FIRST READING CONSIDERATION:**

Ordinance No. 2025-04: An Ordinance Authorizing Referral of a Proposed Amendment to the Highland Hills Charter by Amending Article IX, Section 5 Finances and Taxation and Submitting Same to the Cuyahoga County Board of Elections for Placement on the November 4, 2025 Ballot, Directing the County Board of Elections to Submit a Ballot Question to the Electors.

Law Director Thomas O'Donnell advised there is no emergency clause on the three Charter amendment ordinances, and they all should go to Second Reading. The amendments are due to the Board of Elections in August.

Moved by Councilman Mills and seconded by Councilman McManus **to move Ordinance No. 2025-04 to Second Reading and the Rules Committee. All voted aye and the motion carried.**

Ordinance No. 2025-05: An Ordinance Authorizing Referral of a Proposed Amendment to the Highland Hills Charter by Amending Article IX, Section 7 Periodic Review and Submitting Same to the Cuyahoga County Board of Elections for Placement on the November 4, 2025 Ballot, Directing the County Board of Elections to Submit a Ballot Question to the Electors.

Moved by Councilman Mills and seconded by Councilman Wright **to move Ordinance No. 2025-05 to Second Reading and the Rules Committee. All voted aye and the motion carried.**

Ordinance No. 2025-06: An Ordinance Authorizing Referral of a Proposed Amendment to the Highland Hills Charter by Amending Article III, Section 3 Vacancy and Removal and Submitting same to the Cuyahoga County Board of Elections for Placement on the November 4, 2025 Ballot, Directing the County Board of Elections to Submit a Ballot Question to the Electors.

Moved by Councilman Mills and seconded by Councilman McManus **to move Ordinance No. 2025-06 to Second Reading and the Rules Committee. All voted aye and the motion carried.**

Ordinance No. 2025-07: An Ordinance Authorizing the Mayor to Enter and Execute an Amendment to the Contract with the City of Beachwood to Share the Cost of Design Engineering for Rehabilitation of the Culvert under Chagrin Boulevard, and Declaring an Emergency.

Moved by Councilman Mills and seconded by Councilman McManus to waive the three reading rule and referral to committee. All voted aye and the **motion carried.**

Moved by Councilman Wright and seconded by Councilman Mills to approve Ordinance No. 2025-06.

Discussion: President Pride recalled that she was on Council when the original agreement was approved, and this is the second part of the construction.

Mayor Booker noted that half of Chagrin Boulevard is in Highland Hills and the other half in Beachwood, so there is a 50/50 split. The Village agreed to split the engineering costs and the State will pay for the repairs. The total is about \$80,000, with the Village's portion being \$40,000.

Law Director O'Donnell explained that the engineering costs will be submitted to the Northeast Ohio Regional Sewer District for reimbursement. This work pertains to a 10- foot wide culvert under the road which the State had, for some time, deemed it to be 9 feet, and 9/10- inches. State law requires ODOT to make repairs if there is 10 feet or more. Engineer Susan Hamilton did a great job in persuading the State to pick up the tab.

There being no further discussion, all voted aye and Ordinance No. 2025-07 was **adopted 4 – 0.**

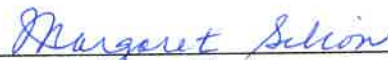
MISCELLANEOUS PUBLIC COMMENT: Mayor Michael Booker reported that Village employees took part in Ethics Training yesterday. The in-person presentation by the Ohio Ethics Commission was very informative and the room was packed. The staff learned a lot and it is always good to have a refresher course. Councilman McManus and Clerk Sikon attended from Council. Gift giving was discussed with the presenter and the Mayor told her that our policy is set at \$50. She said we might want to lower that amount to \$25.

Law Director O'Donnell said he thought the amount was at \$25, and he will look into it. He recalled the Village follows State law in Sections 102.02 and 03. He will review Chapter 104 and draft legislation, if necessary.

ADJOURNMENT: There being no further business, it was moved by Councilman Mills and seconded by Councilman McManus to adjourn the meeting. All voted aye and the meeting concluded at 6:26 p.m.



Cassandra Pride, President of Council



Margaret Sikon, Clerk of Council