

TONTOGANY VILLAGE COUNCIL

MEETING MINUTES FROM: June 16, 2025

Council called to order in regular session at 7:00 p.m. with President of Council Mark Smith presiding. Opening ceremony: Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag, led by President of Council Mark Smith. Roll call of members: Brenda Mackey, here; Connie Mehring, here; Mark Smith, here; Robert Bergfeld, absent; Lincoln Fox, here; Paul Neal, here. Also present were Utilities Superintendent/Meter Reader/Zoning Inspector Chad Johnson and Fiscal Officer/Utilities Clerk Ryan Harnishfeger. Minutes from the June 2nd meeting were approved as submitted.

FINANCE and CLAIMS: A spreadsheet of the current invoices was reviewed and approved by members. Councilwoman Mackey made a motion that these bills be allowed and orders drawn for same. Councilwoman Mehring seconded this motion. All were in favor; motion carried.

Fiscal Officer Harnishfeger read a letter that he received from the Wood County Sheriff's Office, stating new 2025 rates for employee salary and benefits packages, effective beginning in June, 2025: Wages: \$32.10 per hour; PERS Retirement: \$5.81 per hour; Health Benefits: \$12.15 per hour; Medicare: \$0.47 per hour; Workers Comp: \$0.34 per hour; Vehicle Usage: \$2.00 per hour. Total hourly cost for 2025 will be \$52.87 per hour. Mr. Harnishfeger noted that we were paying \$3,013.80 for 60 hours per month, whereas the new rate will increase that amount by \$158.40 to \$3,172.20 for 60 hours per month.

Fiscal Officer Harnishfeger reported that, as requested by Councilwoman Mackey, he had called Rumpke to make sure they know to pick up trash at the parks as part of the Village's contract with them. He said he was referred to a salesman, who told him that they might need to set up separate accounts for the parks' trash, since having different pickup locations on one account confuses the route scheduling process. The salesman was to look into it and call back, but has not called back yet. Mr. Harnishfeger asked members what their response would be to the suggestion of setting up multiple accounts, which would probably also increase the monthly cost for trash services. After a brief discussion, members asked Mr. Harnishfeger, when the salesman contacts him again, to request that our hall pickup be changed to the residential rate, rather than the business rate, and that another residential-rate account be set up for Centennial Park on North Street. Members decided that no account should be set up for Mehring Park, since there is seldom enough there to justify it; occasional trash from that park can simply be brought to the hall and put in the 95-gallon container there. Councilwoman Mackey asked Mr. Harnishfeger to request a 95-gallon trash can to be supplied for Centennial Park, to keep animals from tearing into the trash bags there. Councilman Smith commented that his only concern was making sure the can stays at the park. Councilman Fox responded that the cans are all numbered and the number is associated with the account. Mr. Smith suggested that it could be a possible Eagle Scout project to build a fenced-in area to keep the can safe and keep it from blowing away in high wind.

ZONING: Zoning Inspector Johnson reported that Habitat for Humanity is looking at the empty lots at the east end of Wall Street. He said there are actually two lots there, although one of the lots extends into the ditch. The executive of Habitat for Humanity intends to buy both lots. The lot by the ditch is not as wide as the other lot, but the potential buyer wants to split the lots evenly, so he can put two houses there, each with the same frontage. Mr. Johnson said he told the man he could try to do that at some expense, or Mr. Johnson suggested he could just build on the lots the way they are. Mr. Johnson told members that Mayor Shanahan was intending to talk to the property owners to find out if they are willing to sell to Habitat for Humanity. Mr. Johnson said he hasn't heard anything more about it for a week or two. Councilman Fox commented that either way would be okay, as long as they go through the proper channels. He added that it would probably be better than just having empty lots there. Mr. Johnson commented that he looked at the map of Tontogany and found that all of other properties along the Tontogany Road ditch have similar lot situations. He said he didn't know why we would allow a change in this situation when none of the others were changed. Councilwoman Mackey asked if they would have to go through zoning

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appeals. Mr. Johnson replied that they would have to get a variance, however, under zoning, the problem is that you can't go from conforming one lot to 66 ft. to now making both lots smaller.

Zoning Inspector Johnson reported that he did a fence permit for a house on a corner. He commented that they put up a fence and it looks nice. Councilman Smith commented that the fence solved some issues there between neighbors, as the saying goes, "Good fences make good neighbors." Mr. Johnson reported that he was supposed to do a permit tonight for a fence at 18560 Lincoln Street, but the owner didn't show up.

Zoning Inspector Johnson reported that he did some driving up and down the streets and noticed that behind Nathan Wallace's old house on Wall Street, they have torn out their old fence surrounding a pool and are putting up a brand-new fence. He said he wasn't made aware of their intentions to do this, but he didn't think it was a zoning issue, because they already had an existing fence and they are just upgrading it. Councilwoman Mehring asked if they would need a permit for this. Councilman Smith and Zoning Inspector Johnson replied that they wouldn't need a new permit, since they aren't changing anything, but just replacing the existing fence.

Zoning Inspector Johnson reported that the guy with the camper downtown moved out and has left town. He said he noticed that now they have a big pile of trash there. He said he happened to see the woman talking to someone and he asked her about the trash and told her he knew that the people moved out. Councilman Neal asked if the sheriff can just impound it and take care of it. Councilman Smith answered that that is not an option for law enforcement. Mr. Johnson commented that the best thing to do in this hot weather is to just haul it out of there. He said he had a couple other places he works at where he could dump it for free, so he could easily load it up and haul it away. He said he just wanted to let Council know what he was intending to do. Mr. Johnson told members that another thing he found out when talking to the woman was that, even though the guy moved out, he is still upstairs there doing work. She told him that he is up there working on the apartment in the back. Mr. Johnson told members that there is an apartment behind Susan Grosjean's, and the only access in and out of there is through the side onto the place of the neighbor who has already been complaining. Councilwoman Mehring remarked that you can't do that and she asked how Mr. Johnson was going to stop it. Mr. Johnson replied that he did not know, since he just found out about it. But the neighbor is the one who previously complained about them piling stuff up on his property. Members discussed how this situation could cause property-line issues. Mr. Johnson told members that a woman purchased the whole building from Susan Grosjean about a year ago, but she doesn't seem to know how issues like this need to be handled. Mr. Neal asked what the property is zoned for. Mr. Johnson said it is multi-family, even though it is in the downtown district. There are already three families living in it, two upstairs and one downstairs. Mr. Neal commented that the downtown is zoned as commercial and can only have residents living upstairs. Councilwoman Mackey explained that it was grandfathered in to allow residential upstairs and downstairs. Mr. Johnson agreed and said people were already living there when the zoning was changed, so it had to remain the same as before for that building. Councilman Fox commented that the next person shouldn't have been grandfathered in; it shouldn't have applied to them. Mr. Johnson replied that the zoning rules say that it has to be two years not used for residential purposes before you can enforce a change to commercial zoning with upstairs residents only. Mr. Johnson asked Utilities Clerk Harnishfeger to let him know the phone number of the current owner of that property.

Zoning Inspector Johnson reported that the father of the person who owns the home next to Jamin Roe came to him and got a permit for an addition on the side of the house. Councilman Smith added that the home is owned by Rosalinda Lee, who still lives there. Councilman Fox asked if the addition would present a problem with the allowable percentage of the property to be covered by the home. Mr. Johnson replied that it won't even be close to being too much coverage.

Zoning Inspector Johnson asked if the van previously discussed by Council had current plates on it or not. Members did not know. Mr. Johnson commented that we have that van and Hafner's. He said he also stopped at Margaret Deluca's and knocked on the door. He said he didn't know what he was going to say

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to her, since we have been putting up with her issues for about four years, but he also doesn't want to upset her. Councilwoman Mehring told Mr. Johnson that he had better get to her now, because she is leaving town again to travel to another country. Councilwoman Mackey told Mr. Johnson that she didn't think he needs to worry about upsetting Ms. Deluca. Ms. Mehring suggested that, if Ms. Deluca won't answer the door, Zoning Inspector Johnson should send her another certified letter. Concerning the van Mr. Johnson had mentioned at the back of Dennis Hafner's, Ms. Mackey told him it is at Brenda Martinez's and she doesn't think it is licensed anymore nor running. Councilman Neal asked if the Camaro had been mentioned. Mr. Johnson asked what Camaro he was talking about. Councilman Smith answered that it is the one that was sitting downtown. Mr. Johnson replied that it has a current plate on it and it is not disabled. Members commented that it doesn't move, but Mr. Johnson responded that it would be difficult to prove whether it has been moved or not. Mr. Smith added that you can't chalk tires anymore.

UTILITIES: Utilities Superintendent Johnson reported that we had a water line break on Main Street, and then overnight had a second break near the original break, which flooded the road. Those breaks were fixed, but there is a related problem that nobody has ever talked about. Every time we have Palmer excavate to do a repair like this, nothing is done afterwards to restore the area the way it was before digging. He gave an example on Tontogany Creek Road where he said he was surprised the property owner hasn't complained because the excavated spot there has settled quite a bit. Similarly, Ms. Bader has a large bare spot where we installed a new meter pit three or four years ago. Mr. Johnson said he went around and filled a lot of holes with sand, and he still has some more to do. He also reported that we had a leak problem at Thelma Wires' house, which turned out to be an old service line of some sort. It was difficult to find. He said we had it fixed and he asked if Palmer's bill for \$7,192.50 on the invoice list included it. Councilman Smith said he expected we would be getting another bill for the repair at Thelma's place. Fiscal Officer Harnishfeger affirmed that we have not yet received a bill for that.

Utilities Superintendent Johnson reported that he read the meters in three batches. He told members that the last thing he does is check the percentage of meters that have been read, so he can then go around and finish any he has missed. When all done, he closes it out and puts the handheld in the stand for the utilities clerk to download the new readings into the billing program. The next day, when Mr. Harnishfeger came in to do billing, the handheld died and he could not get any of the new readings to download. Mr. Harnishfeger told members that he got on the phone with Sensus technical support and had them remotely access the computer. After various attempts failed to get the data to download, the technician concluded that the firmware in the handheld went bad. He also let Mr. Harnishfeger know that the handheld model we are using is no longer serviceable and has been that way for about five years. He advised that we call Core & Main immediately and order new equipment that they would recommend. Mr. Johnson called Core & Main and got a quote and then Mr. Harnishfeger went ahead and ordered the equipment because of the emergency situation. Members asked if we do not have a handheld meter reader now. Mr. Harnishfeger answered that that is correct, and he said that he asked Core & Main to put a rush on our order because of our situation. However, the salesperson told him that it might be two months before we can get the new equipment. Mr. Harnishfeger told members that he had to estimate all of the readings for the June billing, except for some school meters that Mr. Johnson was kind enough to re-read so he didn't have to estimate those large accounts. To avoid multiple estimating of meters until the new equipment is received, Mr. Johnson offered to read all of the meters and write down all of the readings on a list that Mr. Harnishfeger provided to him. Then Mr. Harnishfeger said he will manually enter all of the readings, one by one, into the billing software. He told members that this method of manually reading and recording and entering meter readings will take a lot of extra time, but it will give customers real readings instead of estimates. Mr. Johnson remarked that the first year and a half when he started reading meters, he did it manually. Councilman Fox asked about how Mr. Johnson would read the meters below the meter pit covers. Mr. Johnson replied that he still has the touch-read device, so he can touch the sensor, look at the reading, and then write it down. For electric meters, he said he will have to

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physically go into the back- and side-yards of customers and take the reading off of the meter. It will take more time.

Utilities Superintendent Johnson reported that he did the CCR (Consumer Confidence Report) and metrics, which is an EPA requirement by the end of June. He said that this year is also the year for our three-year sanitary survey. He voiced his consternation that the EPA decided to require documentation for all of this by the end of June, adding a third deadline in June. So, he will be working on that through June, plus the EPA will probably be asking about the valves.

Councilman Fox reported that Council had talked about the fire hydrants at the last meeting. He asked Mr. Johnson if he exercises those. Mr. Johnson replied that he hasn't done that in a while, and that the fire department used to do it. Councilwoman Mackey asked why the fire department doesn't do that. Mr. Johnson answered that he doesn't know why they quit doing it. Ms. Mackey wondered if we, as a village, should make a request of the fire department to resume regular exercising of the fire hydrants. Members discussed the matter a little more and concluded that the fire department is who should be exercising the fire hydrants, not Mr. Johnson.

Utilities Clerk Harnishfeger reported that the lady from Tyler Technologies did call him to answer his questions about ERP Pro, their upgrade solution for the expiring Fundbalance utility billing software. He said he asked her why they were giving a deadline of 6/30/25 to decide to switch to ERP Pro, since they will be supporting Fundbalance through 12/31/26. She responded that they would prefer an upgrade decision by June 30th, but if Council wants more time to make a decision and decides on ERP Pro later, there will not be a problem with getting their assistance in the upgrading process. Mr. Harnishfeger said he asked her about training and she told him they would provide remote training to current or new employees, and they are available to answer questions and give guidance on using the program. Mr. Harnishfeger said he asked how billing would be done with ERP Pro, since we currently use a postcard bill. She told him that the way you bill is up to you. They can make the software print bills on your current postcard stock or any way you choose, such as a combination of paper billing and electronic billing. Mr. Harnishfeger said he asked how the cost of using ERP Pro would compare to the price of using Fundbalance. She told him that Fundbalance support was about \$3,000 per year, whereas ERP Pro would be \$10,500 per year, which includes them maintaining the software in the cloud and providing security and technical assistance for your use of the program. Councilman Fox asked how much we spend in postage for billing. Mr. Harnishfeger answered that he didn't have the exact figure, but he uses about 350 postcard stamps per month on the bills. Mr. Fox asked how much we spend on the postcards. Councilman Smith pointed out that a new batch of 5,000 cards happened to be on the current invoice list for \$350.02. Mr. Harnishfeger commented that we will still have to print bills for a good percentage of customers, even if some opt for electronic payments. Mr. Fox replied that he was just trying to figure roughly how much we might save in mailing costs, if half of the customers opted for paperless billing. He said he could only estimate a savings of around \$1,000, which would not offset the \$10,500 cost of ERP Pro very much. Mr. Fox asked if this is the program that Grand Rapids said they thought they would probably go with. Mr. Harnishfeger answered that it is not; ERP Pro is the program that Tyler Technologies, also the creator of Fundbalance, is offering as an upgrade solution. He said that Muni-Link is the program that Krystal said she thought Grand Rapids would probably go with, which is also used by Whitehouse. Mr. Fox said he would be interested to hear what Muni-Link's price is. Mr. Harnishfeger agreed, but said we had not sought more information from them yet. He added that he thought Councilman Neal would be involving the Utilities Committee to help research this matter and provide recommendations for Council. Councilman Neal commented that we may invite utility software companies to send someone to give Mr. Harnishfeger a presentation and go over the details of what they have to offer. Mr. Fox asked if we had the name of another utility software company to consider. Mr. Neal found in the June 2nd minutes that a utilities solution called Inhance (inHANCE) was another option that Krystal Beyer had considered. Mr. Harnishfeger said he didn't know anything about inHANCE, but he knew Krystal really liked Muni-Link. Mr. Fox asked Mr. Harnishfeger if he had mentioned a timeline on when he was thinking about retiring. He

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responded that he had only said, "sometime in the not-too-distant future." He said, ideally, he would like to retire by the end of the year, but he didn't think that would probably happen; we would really have to step things up to get replacements for both the utilities clerk and the fiscal officer jobs by that time. Mr. Fox said he was concerned about splitting the jobs between two people. Mr. Johnson and Mr. Harnishfeger replied that it was done that way previously and it really doesn't present a problem. Mr. Harnishfeger commented that the ideal solution for a replacement fiscal officer would be to find a person already familiar with UAN, perhaps someone like Lisa Heft of Haskins, if she would be willing and able to take on Tontogany as an added source of income, similarly to how Krystel Beyer serves both Grand Rapids and Washington Township. Councilman Neal told members that he definitely proposed that we have the Utilities Committee begin planning and putting the pieces of the puzzle together for the upgrade process, as Mr. Harnishfeger had previously suggested. Councilman Smith agreed that we will have to do that because we can't have Mr. Harnishfeger retire one day and have his replacement start the next day. Members discussed some thoughts about possible people and what qualifications would be needed for the jobs. Mr. Johnson commented that there are various people who could do the job, but he thought it would be difficult getting them to do it in the daytime.

Utilities Superintendent Johnson reported on the recent power outages. On the first one, Mr. Johnson said he sent a text to Bowling Green Electric Superintendent John Stewart and he immediately responded and said he was on it. Councilwoman Mackey agreed and said he was here within 45 minutes. Mr. Johnson commented that Mr. Stewart had told him the outage was caused by someone putting in a wrong fuse at the Legion, so it should not happen again. Ms. Mackey commented that it had affected all of her end of North Street and the north end of Crom Street. Mr. Johnson continued that then there was another outage on Main Street, so he contacted Mr. Stewart again, but this time he didn't respond. After waiting a while, Mr. Johnson said he sent an email to Mr. Stewart, asking for a dutyman's number. Mr. Johnson said he had called Bowling Green Police before emailing Mr. Stewart, but he found out that they no longer do this. He said Mr. Stewart then immediately called him and said his guys in Bowling Green were finishing up a job and would be over in Tontogany in an hour, which Mr. Johnson thought was strange. Ms. Mackey remarked that they usually are really quick about coming. Councilman Smith commented that it would be good to get a couple of phone numbers of people who actually get the work done, in case of a delayed response from Mr. Stewart. Mr. Johnson added that he would like a secondary number for Superintendent Stewart too.

STREETS and ALLEYS: Nothing to report.

SIDEWALKS and TREES: Councilman Smith reported that he still needs to contact Abe Rowe about the tree previously discussed. He asked Mr. Johnson if the dead tree on Tontogany Creek Road, where the ditch comes across the road, is our tree. Mr. Johnson replied that Scott Coon had asked us about that tree because he is afraid it is going to fall and take out the electric wires. He added that he thinks it is the county's tree, but he didn't know how we would get them to cut it down. Mr. Smith asked if we were good with just taking care of it ourselves; he said he was intending to ask Abe to cut it down to where it is safe, chip what he can, and haul out the rest. Mr. Johnson agreed that that would be a good idea, because it is ready to fall. Councilwoman Mackey commented that we wouldn't need to ask Abe to take out the stump. Mr. Smith agreed and said he would ask Abe to just cut it down to a safe level. Members did not voice any objections to this plan.

DRAINS and SEWERS: Nothing to report.

CITY HALL and PARKS: Councilman Fox reported that he took a picture of the high water that pools in the corner of Centennial Park when it rains. He said we can use the picture if we contact Palmer or someone to look at the drainage situation there. Mr. Fox said he didn't consider it a huge issue, but maybe we

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should look into improving the drainage at that spot. Councilman Smith replied that it is something we could definitely get an estimate for.

Councilman Smith reported that GOBA (The Great Ohio Bicycle Adventure) happened this weekend and it was a huge success. Councilwoman Mackey remarked that it was a lot of work. Councilman Fox told members that the gentleman with the food truck that he had reached out to did not show up. Mr. Smith commented that his loss was our gain; for the most part, we were the only game in town and it turned out great for us. Members commented that outside vendors had very high prices, but the fundraising efforts of the 150th Committee brought in close to \$1,300 in profits.


Councilman Smith reported that he had floated the idea of going to Stevens Disposal for garbage and recycling and he received a positive response from several people. So, if we decide we want to go to a single supplier for the village in the future, we know that the idea was attractive to at least five people he spoke with. Councilman Fox suggested having an open-forum meeting, inviting the general public, and seeing if we can get some interest and see what their feedback is on the issue. Mr. Smith added that he would even go as far as putting it on the ballot to let people vote on whether they do or don't want a single trash solution for the village. Councilman Neal told members that he had spoken to the president of NAT and asked if he would be willing to bid on doing trash for Tontogany. He responded that he would be willing to participate in a bid, only if the billing would be handled by the Village instead of NAT.

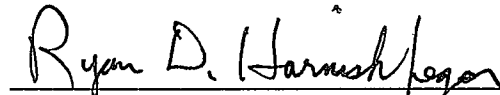
Councilman Neal reported that there was a lot of activity on the website over the last two weeks. He said the information for Tontogany Calvary Church (TCC) was put on the website this past week and we are now talking to Peinert Funeral Home whose information will probably be posted on the website in about two weeks. He told members that Haley is already working on the pictures of the hall that he took a few days ago, to get them posted on the website. And he said that we are adding all of the August Togany Fest dates to the Events calendar on the website.

Councilwoman Mackey asked if Councilman Smith had contacted the company that is supposed to be spraying our parks. Mr. Smith answered that we took care of it quickly that night. Ms. Mackey responded that we previously had TruGreen do the whole parks and we were going to have the new company do the same, but it hasn't been done yet, as evidenced by clover all over Centennial Park. Mr. Smith answered that he would call them and see, but he said that we took care of the weed problem at Mehring Park quickly that night after discussing it. He said that GSI (Ground Services, Inc.) had told him a couple of months ago that we were on their schedule, but he would call them again.

Councilman Neal asked if we know of a person who paints flagpoles. He told members that our flag pole at the hall looks bad. Councilman Smith responded that we have talked about it several times and we were thinking about renting a lift and painting it ourselves. However, we could hire it out if we wanted to. Mr. Neal said that, if we found someone to do it, he could find people who would make donations to pay for it. Mr. Johnson commented that the township probably has some sort of lift that they use for taking care of trees that break off and hang over the roadway. Mr. Smith answered that they probably just call in Abe Rowe and have him deal with it.

With nothing further to discuss, President of Council Smith declared the meeting adjourned at 8:12 p.m.


Matthew Shanahan, Mayor


Ryan Harnishfeger, Fiscal Officer