

**VILLAGE OF GRAFTON
REGULAR COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES
MAY 5, 2026
7:00PM**

Present for roll call were Romes, Campbell, Kitts, Kilgore, and McCort. Also present were Mayor Duke, Village Administrator Andrew Lipian, Law Director RJ Budway, and Clerk-Treasurer Hilary Whitesel.

MOTION TO APPROVE MINUTES

Kilgore makes the motion. McCort seconds. Vote: All AYES

MOTION TO PAY BILLS

McCort makes the motion. Kilgore seconds. Vote: All AYES

MOTION TO READ ALL ORDINANCES AND RESOLUTIONS BY TITLE ONLY

Kilgore makes the motion. McCort seconds. Vote: All AYES

DISCUSSION ITEMS

*BEACON PARK LAND CONSERVATION - REVIEW OF CONSERVATION EASEMENTS AND
FEE TITLE ACQUISITION OPTIONS IN COORDINATION WITH THE WESTERN RESERVE
LAND CONSERVANCY.*

Andy McDowell is with Western Reserve Land Conservancy and is part of the largest land trust in Ohio. They cover about 30 counties in northeast Ohio and are working to expand beyond those borders. With a staff of just over 50 people to preserve everything from parkland to farmland to natural areas and properties.

In Lorain County, they've preserved about 5,000 acres of land, some in the form of public parks, including the Aurora Oaks Reservation. Today, they have preserved about 80,000 acres across northeast Ohio, almost 1,000 different properties. Most are in the hands of private owners. In the crowd is Marie Stritzel, who preserved her 300-acre farm with her sister just down the road in Eaton Township against her Beacon Park land off Island Road there.

Most of the acres that they've preserved are in farmland. When they work on preserving farmland, it's usually with private owners. The tool they use for that is a conservation easement. A conservation easement is a legal restriction that goes on the property bound to the property in perpetuity, so all future owners of it would be bound to whatever those terms and restrictions are in that conservation easement.

An easement means a third party holds a legal interest in land limited in scope to whatever that easement is for. Whether it's a gas line, power line, right of way, whoever holds that easement has certain rights to that land and then the landowner of course retains certain rights to that land too. A conservation easement is similar in legal scope in that the land conservancy holds a legal interest limited in scope to the conservation easement, but the village of Grafton still would own the land long term. It doesn't necessarily even have to follow parcel lines.

With the village, there's no federal tax benefit for doing it, so we don't have to have IRS language in that conservation easement. This could be done as just an open space conservation easement, which means it could be farmland until the village decides it doesn't need to be farmland. It could become some form of park later in the future. The village could do

wetland restoration on it, as it retains open space. And there can be some limitations for future infrastructure too.

It always has allocations in it for passive park infrastructure like restrooms, parking lots, trails, visitor centers, things like that. Every year, someone visits these parcels to check the status though a lot of times they use drones and volunteer pilots who need to keep their pilot hours up. They fly over; we give them all the GPS coordinates and take photographs.

If there's a violation happens that wasn't consistent with the easement, it's usually just worked out amicably. Only in rare cases that they ever had to go to court. But they do annually monitor them, legally enforce them, and that lasts forever.

When the easement's close to its final form, a staff person comes out who has a handheld GPS unit. They walk all the borders of what is meant for the conservation easement, and they take a series of photographs, looking down at all the property lines, put together a bunch of maps, and they call that the baseline document. The baseline document serves as evidence of what the property looked like at the time the village granted that easement.

FIRE DEPARTMENT STUDY - PRELIMINARY DISCUSSION REGARDING A FIRE DEPARTMENT STUDY AS REQUESTED BY THE MAYOR.

Motion to move the Fire Department Study to the end of the discussion made by Romes, seconded by McCort. Vote: All AYES

VILLAGE FINANCIALS - DISCUSSION REGARDING CERTIFICATES OF DEPOSIT (CDS) MATURING IN MAY AND POTENTIAL REINVESTMENT OPTIONS.

There are two CDs that are maturing in May. The village has multiple options. They can just let it ride, let it roll over as a year, but the bank also recommended an eight-month CD because they have better interest rates, or they can cash it off and pay off the loan. The village also has four additional ones in November, but no decision has to made for now. They were very understanding and forgave our late fees for the late payment and they do want to continue the relationship with us in a positive way.

PROPOSED MORATORIUMS DISCUSSION OF POTENTIAL MORATORIUMS ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF DATA CENTERS AND NEW HOUSING DEVELOPMENTS (WITH A PROPOSED EXCEPTION FOR FOX RUN).

Councilman Campbell wanted to investigate moratoriums for data centers, and the Law Department is currently working on draft legislation for a moratorium on data centers. Any moratorium on housing developments would have to be discussed by Council, as it is a temporary halt on development, and the housing moratorium is with a proposed exception for Fox Run. A poll will be made to gauge interest.

MAIN STREET GRAFTON

Motion to add to the agenda made by McCort, seconded by Kilgore. Vote: All AYES

This year, we are celebrating 250 years of American independence. They are moving forward with a student window painting contest where art students from Midview will be paired with a downtown business to create an America 250 themed storefront display. During the parade, there will be QR codes displayed to vote for the favorite window and to which the winning student will win a \$200 cash prize. The village will also soon begin seeing Grafton's Fireworks throughout the village. These banners will include a QR code for fireworks donations,

At Garing's Tavern, they are planning a three-day revolution fundraising event designed to bring people together while raise funds for the celebration and the fireworks. One dollar from every item sold over those three days, in addition to all the proceeds from the Founding Fathers Bourbon Raffle and the Midnight Ride Challenge will all be donated to the Village of Grafton for fireworks and the celebration. They will also be launching a business contest with the winning business who receives the most money from their patrons will receive six months of free radio advertising donated through WOBL.

VILLAGE ADMINISTRATOR'S REPORT

And as you know, they've been battling the blades of grass as they've been sprouting up. They're really thankful to the Grafton Midview Hot Stove. They upkeep that field over there in Reservoir Park, and they're just so thankful for it. They keep it looking so beautiful, and they love them for that, and they thank them for that.

I'd just like to clarify that they are very thankful that the Village of Grafton was able to overcome the adversity that it faced when Spitzer Hardware caught on fire. They are very thankful for the response and that the fire was extinguished. And they're also very grateful to the Spitzer family and business that they're going to be reopening their business in a temporary location at 906 Railroad Street, and they believe that they can get it open by July 4th.

And they're even going to take their Spitzer Hardware sign, the iconic sign, and move it over there as a touchstone of their growth and return to our community, and they believe they can get the original store remodeled and reopened within a year. All of the proceeds from that donation, Spitzer said he will donate back to the fire department, which is a wonderful, charitable, selfless gift. So that is really my main report there.

POLICE DEPARTMENT REPORT

They had 648 calls to service last month and 22 assists to other agencies. They're working with the DFW currently for the Memorial Day Parade. Line up at Roosevelt Park. Tentatively, the time is 11 to line up and 12 to step off. Before the conclusion, the police department business, every year the Police Department Benevolent Association donates a check for \$2,000 for the fireworks.

FIRE DEPARTMENT REPORT

Total calls this year to date, 156, 37 fire, 119 EMS, and they've had 17 trainings. The Mutual Aid received is 5 total from LaGrange with 3 EMS and 2 for fire. They've received 6 total from Eaton, 4 EMS and 2 fire, and given Eaton 2 Mutual Aids. And then they also had Grafton PD assisted them with two lift assists. The Bay Door at Station Two was fixed today. The Middle Rear Door at Station One will be repaired tomorrow. It needs a capacitor.

In approximately 2-3 weeks, they will be getting our MARCS radios from Ohio Department of Corrections and Rehab. They have decided to donate those 25 radios along with the extra batteries and chargers. With that donation, the fire department will save approximately \$54,000 out of the allotted that was in the budget. They just need someone to come out and program for us.

Just a reminder to all members, policies and procedures are still in place. If someone hasn't signed them yet, please get in and sign them. There's still a handful of members who haven't signed them. They've been out for approximately two years now. They would like to thank the

following communities for their response to the Spitzer Fire. Carlisle, LaGrange, Elyria, Eaton, Columbia, Grafton Township, and Valley City.

OTHER REPORTS

REPORTS AND COMMENTS FROM SERVICES SUPERINTENDANT

In two weeks, the village is going to be inspected by the EPA for maintenance and they will pass the water tower. There is an issue with a pump station. One of the actuators for one of the pumps are not operable. For it to work, that means they have to put it on manual.

They are at 75% at staff. So to manually operate it, they're down to 50% staff. And with the way the weather is, grass cutting, weed cutting, it's going to be tough. The administrator did sign off to have a company replace the actuator to get that pump in service. One pump is servicing two of our water towers.

The annual street program, same company as last year. They were \$20 an hour cheaper than another company I looked at. They start sweeping curb streets a couple days after the beautification day of the month to clean up everything.

Hyanis' quote was \$27,000 but they had another bid. Specialized is at \$14,500. Plymouth was at \$68,500. Specialized was at \$52,800. The chief will testify that the dump trucks are illegal. They have no tarps. And they're aluminum body trucks, so they don't hold the heat. Asphalt is a perishable product. Once it's cold, it's no good.

By law, they are legally obligated to locate our own utilities. Power, storm sewer, sanitary sewer, and water. If our locates are beyond 18 inches either way, the village are liable for the repairs and a loss of service for that utility.

RESOLUTIONS

RESOLUTION NO. 26-031 AUTHORIZING A CHANGE ORDER TO THE CONTRACT WITH KLEINFELDER, INC. FOR THE VILLAGE OF GRAFTON ENVISION WAYFINDING AND TRAILHEAD IMPROVEMENTS PROJECT IN THE AMOUNT OF \$5,250.00.

The village is going to have village signs that direct residents that pass through the village to go to find historic landmarks and important places in the Village of Grafton. And this would include a brand new sign at Indian Hollow Reservation, which means the sign that has the little black and yellow striped border around it will be replaced by a brand new sign, a brand new trailhead, two handicapped parking spaces, and they are working to dovetail that improvement with Comstar Credit Union's improvements.

Motion to approve made by McCort, seconded by Campbell. Vote: All AYEs

MOTIONS

MOTION TO ADOPT THE 2027–2029 NON-COLLECTIVE BARGAINING WAGE SCHEDULE FOR THE SERVICE SUPERINTENDENT AND VARIOUS LABORER POSITIONS

Motion to move to the end of the agenda made by McCort, seconded by Kilgore. Vote: All AYEs

MOTION TO APPROVE SERVICE DEPARTMENT PURCHASE: 90-GALLON WATER TANK/SPRAYER FOR DOWNTOWN FLOWER MAINTENANCE (\$1,699.99)

Motion to approve made by McCort, seconded by Romes. Vote: All AYEs

MOTION TO APPROVE SERVICE DEPARTMENT PURCHASE: TRAILER MOUNTED ASPHALT HOT BOX FROM ASPHALT KINGDOM (\$21,800.00)

Motion to approve made by McCort but sees no second. The motion dies.

*MOTION TO APPOINT MS-4 STORM WATER COMMITTEE: NICK BALDWIN (CHAIRMAN),
NICK PAPPAS, AND D. BURDETTE*

Motion to approve made by McCort, seconded by Kilgore. Vote: All AYES

*MOTION TO APPROVE SERVICE DEPARTMENT PURCHASE: UNDERGROUND UTILITY
LOCATOR FROM C&S SOLUTIONS INC. (\$8,028.99)*

Motion to approve made by Kilgore, seconded by McCort. Vote: All AYES

*MOTION TO APPROVE WATER RECLAMATION FACILITY EQUIPMENT PURCHASE: ONE
DECANTER AND TWO MIXERS FROM AQUA-AEROBIC SYSTEMS, INC. (\$86,305.49)*

Motion to approve made by Romes, seconded by Kilgore. Vote: All AYES

Motion to suspend the rules and pass on emergency is made by Romes, seconded by Kilgore.
Vote: All AYES

*MOTION TO APPROVE WATER RECLAMATION FACILITY VEHICLE PURCHASE: KUBOTA
UTILITY VEHICLE WITH 78" V-BLADE PLOW FROM KTS EQUIPMENT, INC. (\$36,562.58)*

Motion to table until another quote is obtained made by Kilgore, seconded by Campbell. Vote:
All AYES

*MOTION TO APPROVE WATER RECLAMATION FACILITY SYSTEM UPGRADE: SCADA
SYSTEM INSTALLATION BY DMYTRYKA JACOBS ENGINEERS, LLC (\$74,900.00)*

Motion to table until another quote is obtained made by Romes, seconded by Kilgore. Vote: All
AYEs

*MOTION TO REFER ZONING REQUEST: PROPOSAL TO RE-ZONE LAND NEAR
RESERVOIR PARK TO AGRICULTURAL USE, REFERRED TO THE PLANNING
COMMISSION*

Motion to approve made by McCort, seconded by Kilgore. Vote: All AYES

*MOTION TO APPROVE PLYMOUTH DRIVE PAVING: WORK BY CROSSROADS ASPHALT
RECYCLING, INC. (\$68,496.00)*

Motion to amend to value of \$52,800 made by Romes, seconded by Campbell. Vote: All AYES

Motion to approve made by Kilgore, seconded by Romes. Vote: All AYES

*MOTION TO APPROVE HYANIS DRIVE REPAIRS: WORK BY CROSSROADS ASPHALT
RECYCLING, INC. (\$27,934.25)*

Motion to amend to value of \$14,500 made by Kilgore, seconded by McCort. Vote: All AYES

Motion to approve made by Romes, seconded by Campbell. Vote: All AYES

*MOTION FOR THE ANNUAL LINE DEPT MATERIAL AND TRANSFORMERS BID-NOT TO
EXCEED 120 THOUSAND DOLLARS*

Motion to approve made by Romes, seconded by McCort. Vote: All AYES

PUBLIC COMMENT

Marie Sretzel - Her grandfather on the fifth came from Austria to America where you can make anything happen. And he did. They have almost 300 acres, 290. As the administrator mentioned, she can do whatever she wants with the agricultural thing. She can tear all the buildings down and start over within certain parameters of the same size. She can grow all trees and then 50 years later, great-grandchildren of somebody here could grow back soybeans.

Stephanie Rivera - Reservoir Park is their home fields to 42 teams, with kids ages 3 to 18 that play there all summer. The dugout roofs are slated to be started very soon. They have West Roofing working on that project. They are giving them the labor for free.

Joe Fillipiak - Below is a transcription of the speaker.

"I'll begin by examining administration statements that nothing has changed with the fire department and only ordinance was passed on April 7th to clarify alignment with the village charter. Appreciate the efforts towards clarity. However, claiming that nothing has changed is not the whole truth.

The reality of the situation is that for the past two years, up until this past April 17th, there were EMS and fire personnel manning the village fire station daily from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Other members still responded under the volunteer arrangement. Occupied station greatly improved response time, which can mean a difference between life and death. Multiple times, the members manning the station were en route to an incident before the information even came across our digital paging system.

Other times, they were en route with first apparatus before I even got to the station. I've been out for 22 years and I live less than a block away. That's very quick response from the members. The station was manned during the day basically to help with the generally higher call volume during the times and also to ensure service to the community because past experience showed us that without a committed schedule, most department members are gone during the day working other jobs outside of town and we had to rely on mutual aid or life care. So the reality of no longer having a manned fire station in town during the day does put life and property of our residents and businesses at a little greater risk. As to aligning with the charter, I was referred to chapter 246.

This was written in 1938 and was last amended in 1979. There is nothing in there that states it must always be only volunteers nor does it state there cannot be part-time or full-time members serving in conjunction with volunteers. The section is titled Volunteer Fire Department. There is no clarification on how that word is being used. Most people would understand the word volunteer to mean that no one ever gets paid for performing these duties, but clearly that's not the case. There is a room for movement within the charter.

Clearly the village council can make additions to improve the services, whether through ordinance or proposing charter changes. I believe ordinances were passed in the past allowing for part-time pay of chief and other officers. That goes back decades before Chief Cutter. You currently have a posted job position for a part-time fire chief, even though this council clearly stated in an ordinance 20.16 on April 7th that all fire department positions are volunteer paid per call. Let's make sure we're figuring out our verbiage. These are examples of building on the charter to adjust as time goes on.

There's room for a variety of solutions. Perhaps it's time to update the charter that was written 88 years ago, last amended 47 years ago. I do understand council is looking at different concepts of the fire department.

That's good. Please also clarify our command structure. We need a chief appointed. We have a confusing chain of command right now. Meanwhile, services that our neighbors have come on to rely on throughout our community during the day, those services have been reduced. That is a fact.

The funding was already allocated by the group before it was decided through emergency action to pass a resolution ending a program already in place. I urge you to reinstate the program where there are emergency personnel stationed during the day while you're doing the decision-making process."

Motion to allow one more minute made by Romes, seconded by McCort. Vote: All AYES

"I urge you to reinstate the program. A month has already passed since the council decided to end the daytime coverage. Tonight, the agenda states you have preliminary discussions. This change can take a while. These changes do take a long time. Finally, I hope the council's decision for the fire department are at least as good or better than the daytime staff station coverage. An inferior paid-on-call solution of paying volunteers around \$4 an hour to wait at home for emergencies is not good, especially when Ohio's minimum wage is \$11.

There are reasons why all of our departments that are our neighboring fire departments have gone to either full-time staffing or have a daytime staff station. Please, let's move forward with them and let's not go backwards. It's good for our leadership, you all, to be concerned about specifics of village operations.

I respect that. It's also important, though, that our leaders show compassion for the people that live, work, and visit here to do what's best to help us take care of each other. Thank you for your time."

Jennifer Fillipiak - Below is a transcription of the speaker.

"I came last meeting and asked a few questions, and not all of them were answered because of disruption. I thank both Councilman Romes and Kilgore for answering some of my questions that I sent you in an email. I am still waiting for your response, Mayor Duke. I want to understand how many of us, what the long-term vision is for our village. So, right now, current research and statewide discussions on emerging response models suggest that different staffing structures can significantly impact the response time and the service availability.

Because of that, I want to ask you guys. You guys are the one that are voting. What do you hope? What do you want our fire and EMS to look like when we get done? Second, what is the data, research, metrics that you will use to guide these decisions? And then what factors, such as response time of day, time availability, mutual aid, staffing levels, are those gonna be things that you consider? And then finally, timeline. You should have a timeline. You already got rid of something before you have told us the timeline. What is it? That's it. Thank you, and I look forward to your answer. If you need me to repeat any of my questions, I've got them right here."

Cassie Crick - She mentions reading the ordinance verbatim. The council states there was an amendment and she requests said amendment.

"According to what you gave me today, made copies of today, if it was interpreted correctly, then part-time staffing could resume immediately. And my question would be, who is responsible for implementing the continuation of scheduled staffing since we don't have any interim chief? And additionally, how can we have gone an entire month without scheduled staff personnel on the station? And over the past month, this gap has had real consequences."

EXECUTIVE SESSION

GRAFTON VILLAGE COUNCIL MAY RECESS INTO EXECUTIVE SESSION TO CONSIDER THE APPOINTMENT, EMPLOYMENT, DISMISSAL, DISCIPLINE, PROMOTION, DEMOTION, OR COMPENSATION OF A PUBLIC EMPLOYEE OR OFFICIAL, ALONG WITH ANY OTHER MATTERS AS SPECIFICALLY IDENTIFIED BY MOTION IN ACCORDANCE WITH ORC 121.22(G)(I-8). UNLESS EXPRESSLY STATED OTHERWISE DURING EXECUTIVE SESSION, MATTERS DISCUSSED IN EXECUTIVE SESSION ARE DESIGNATED BY THE VILLAGE COUNCIL AS CONFIDENTIAL. BECAUSE THE CONFIDENTIALITY OF SUCH MATTERS IS NECESSARY FOR THE PROPER CONDUCT OF GOVERNMENT BUSINESS, ANY DISCLOSURE OUTSIDE OF EXECUTIVE SESSION IS PROHIBITED BY ORC 102.03(B). WHILE IN EXECUTIVE SESSION, VILLAGE COUNCIL MAY DISCUSS AND DELIBERATE ON THE MATTERS AT ISSUE, BUT NO VOTES MAY BE TAKEN UNTIL OPEN SESSION RESUMES.

Motion to go into executive session made by McCort, seconded by Romes. Vote: All AYEs

Motion to return from executive session made by Kilgore, seconded by Romes. Vote: All AYEs

Present for roll call were Romes, Campbell, Kilgore, and McCort. Also present were Mayor Duke, Village Administrator Andrew Lipian, Law Director RJ Budway, and Clerk-Treasurer Hilary Whitesel.

Kitts is excused for personal reasons from the rest of the meeting. Motioned by Kilgore, seconded by McCort. Vote: All AYEs

APPROVAL OF THE PERSONNEL SUMMARY SHEET

Kilgore makes the motion to approve. McCort seconds. Vote: All AYEs

FIRE DEPARTMENT STUDY - PRELIMINARY DISCUSSION REGARDING A FIRE DEPARTMENT STUDY AS REQUESTED BY THE MAYOR.CONT.

“On April 7, 2026, the Village of Grafton formalized fire department operations to align with the village charter and proper approval processes. This action restores the department’s historical structure while maintaining consistent on-call staffing and reliable emergency response for the community. Council is not opposed to part-time staffing and will consider the recommendations of the next fire chief as we remain committed to providing dependable safety services and keeping Grafton on track.”

ADJOURNMENT

Romes makes the motion to adjourn. Kilgore seconds. Vote: All AYEs