

Village of Gates Mills
MINUTES OF A REGULAR MEETING OF COUNCIL
July 15, 2025

A regular meeting of the Council of the Village of Gates Mills, Ohio was held at the Community House on Tuesday, July 15, 2025, at 5:30 p.m. with Mayor Siemborski presiding. The meeting was live-streamed to the internet.

1. Roll Call starts at 2:10

Councilmembers present: Atton, Broome, Deacon (arrived at 6:27 p.m.), Onysko, Press, Steinbrink, Turner.

Other Village officials present were Assistant Treasurer Spear, Clerk DeCapite, Service Director Biggert, Police Chief Minichello, Fire Chief Majeski, Finance Administrator Mulh, Village Engineer Courtney, and Law Director Hunt.

2. Minutes of Regular Council Meeting of June 17, 2025 starts at 2:32

Councilmember Broome moved to approve the June 17, 2025 minutes and Councilmember Turner seconded the motion.

Ayes: Atton, Broome, Onysko, Steinbrink, Turner.

Abstain: Press

Nays: None

Motion carried.

Councilmember Atton noted the YouTube video did not work and he could not check the minutes against the video. Clerk DeCapite indicated technical difficulties were encountered and Town Hall Coordinator Misch continues to work on the problem. Note: Subsequent to the meeting, Town Hall Coordinator Misch clarified the June Council meeting video IS on the Village YouTube channel; however, it is not on the "Live" tab, it can be found on the "Videos" tab.

3. Pay Ordinance # 1299 \$464,579.22 starts at 5:19

Mayor Siemborski advised that going forward the Law Director will notify the Mayor in advance when items requiring a fair amount of research or anything written have been requested of him or his firm by a Councilmember. The Mayor can then be aware and determine if the Village can provide any non-legal information rather than incur cost.

Councilmember Press moved to approve Pay Ordinance #1299. Councilmember Broome seconded the motion.

Ayes: Atton, Broome, Onysko, Press, Steinbrink, Turner.

Nays: None

Motion carried.

4. Mayor's Report starts at 7:37

1. Flooding - Gates Mills Estates residents reported a recent heavy rain overwhelmed ditches and damaged yards. The system in place was built to keep the water off foundations and out of homes and garages. While the damage to yards is inconvenient at a minimum, the system worked the way it's supposed to. Having heard similar calls from a few other locations, the Service Director, Village Engineer, and Mayor met earlier this week to review the locations. All residents who called will be contacted and advised if there are things that can be done.
2. SRO Agreement - signed by Mayfield City School District last month.
3. GM 5K Fox Trot - GM Elementary PTC is sponsoring a 5K run and a 1 mile walk on Sunday morning September 21.
4. Encore - There will be one more event in late September/October. A written report from the Encore Board will be included in Council's August packet.

a. Senior Services starts at 11:38

In July, the task group was joined by a few additional people and met for the second time. The sense of the group is that a combination of services that are provided by the Community Partnership on Aging along with some reenergized efforts from the Village and village organizations - such as the Community Club, Improvement Society, Friends of the Library, and the Garden Club - would provide the needed framework that has process and discipline. The task group desires to determine what services are really needed and at what cost; but the Comprehensive Plan survey contained only one question on senior services, giving little direction to the group. It was agreed the group would all submit survey questions to be compiled and sent out to villagers. Presentation to Council in early fall could either get the program started or assure a place in the budget process for 2026.

Councilmember Atton added that the group's conversation centered around two services in particular - socialization and welfare/safety.

b. Sidewalk Project starts at 15:10

Village Engineer Courtney is finalizing the specs on lighting, signage, and placement. We are still working with the neighboring property owners.

c. Water Fountain starts at 15:28

The Elkay water fountain/bottle filler/dog bowl has been installed behind the new bathrooms by the tennis courts. Most of the \$10,000 was raised by volunteer contributions, and we've sent thank you notes to those individuals.

d. 4th of July Parade & Celebration starts at 16:41

We were fortunate to have a 1927 Ahrens-Fox fire engine brought out of the museum to join the parade. We had a record number in the crowd and participating, two bagpipe bands, the Mayfield High School band, and the Calliope. The Calliope needs a new home that has a 9'2" clearance.

e. Summer Concert - Sunday, July 20, 5:30 p.m. starts at 17:55

The Summer Concert takes place on the Village Green. The Service Dept sets up tables and chairs. Bring a picnic basket.

f. 2025 Priorities starts at 18:18

First, having committed at the last meeting to put together the priorities in the Comprehensive Plan that we chose not to proceed with, a paragraph on each of those four items has been distributed to Council tonight. We will have discussion later tonight.

Second, we are preparing, internally, a midyear update to our residents on our progress with the 2025 priorities.

5. Financial Report attached and on the website starts at 19:43

Assistant Treasurer Spear reported the six-month results show real estate revenue will not meet the budget, income tax revenue will exceed the budget by about the same amount, and the traffic camera revenue is going down and is cause for celebration. Regarding investment returns, in the next 13-14 months, \$1,500,000 with below 1% interest rates will mature and will roll into 5% 10-year agencies. Overall, we're in very good shape.

6. Clerk's Report - None

7. Treasurer's Report - None

8. Police Department Report attached and starts at 24:57

Police Chief Minichello advised the Mayfield Road traffic cameras have to be recalibrated every year. The cameras will be removed tomorrow for about four hours while they are taken to Mayfield Village for the radar calibrations.

The Police Chief has identified a police officer who he hopes to add to the department within the next 30 days. The position has been in the budget since the beginning of the year, and the search process has been a long one as the volume of candidates is slim.

Councilmember Atton asked if the motor vehicle crash with injuries at Mayfield and Chagrin River Roads listed in the Fire Dept report was caused by speed. No, somebody stopped at the red light and was hit from behind.

9. Service Department Report attached and starts at 28:13

Service Director Biggert highlighted John Pata, Assistant Service Manager, reaching his 25th year of service. He's done a wonderful job for us.

Councilmember Press congratulated the P & Z Commission for doing a great job on the Spirk property variance request - it allows Mr. Spirk to go ahead and also preserves the interests of the Village.

Councilmember Press brought up the problem with residents not following the rules regarding permits and cited another instance of extensive tree cutting without a permit on County Line Road this week. He wonders how new residents building a new home would be aware of our ordinances. Councilmember Turner stated we highlight some of the important ordinances in the welcome packet for new villagers, and it might be time to revisit. The Service Director added there is a tendency by potential homeowners to contact him before they buy to talk about their plans and what permits are necessary, but we're not reaching 100% of them. Councilmember Onysko asked if a permit is needed to cut down dead trees, and Service Director Biggert clarified you're allowed to cut anything that's dead, diseased, or dying without a permit. You're allowed to cut down two healthy trees of any size per calendar year without a permit. You're allowed to cut any trees endangering your home without a permit.

Mayor Siemborski advised the county road paving work is substantially complete. Thanks to Chris Courtney and his team, we're intentionally ahead of schedule, so we can apply for and be reimbursed by the County this year. Repairs are done on Hillcreek and Andrews - perhaps by the end of July all the road work will be done. Guardrails are right behind it.

At 35:04 Councilmember Onysko noted a theme of one lot and one dwelling from what he has read. When a lot is really big, how do you address a second dwelling, like a carriage house or guesthouse? Service Director Biggert explained those properties with a carriage house are "grandfathered" and nonconforming until an alteration is desired, and then permission from P & Z to expand or change a nonconforming use is required. You can't have two homes on one parcel. Anyone wanting to build a guesthouse has to get a variance through the P & Z Commission, which in the past has not been successful. Village Engineer Courtney added a 5+ acre lot split request could be successful. Councilmember Steinbrink, P & Z Chair, stated the ordinances were put in place because residents generally don't like the idea of multiple homes on a property that are being rented out. Also, our safety forces need to know who is where.

Councilmember Atton asked for an update on 640 Chagrin River Road, and the Mayor answered a conditional building permit is being prepared right now. The permit runs nine months from the day it is issued.

10. Fire Department Report attached and starts at 40:14

Fire Chief Majeski proudly announced the promotion of nine Firefighters to Firefighter Engineer status at a swearing-in ceremony on July 4. We also have started to upgrade some of our water rescue equipment - updated life vests and throw bags.

11. Committee Reports starts at 42:16

Tree Canopy (Councilmember Turner)

The Committee's recommendation to remove invasives from two village-owned properties - the pump station at the corner of Chagrin River and Mayfield Roads, and a 4.94 acre parcel further east on Mayfield Road - at a cost of \$4,800 is before Council tonight as Resolution No. 2025-29.

These two village-owned properties are adjoined by a parcel owned by the GM Land Conservancy (the “LoConti” property). The Land Conservancy at their last meeting decided to contract with Better Meadows & Woodlands to remove invasives from the “LoConti” property.

Contiguous landowners sharing information and working cooperatively to control invasives provides a better chance of preventing their spread.

The Committee’s original request for the four properties in the pilot program was \$88,200. To date we have spent \$46,645. We certainly have \$4,800 in the budget for the additional two village-owned properties, but because we are spending land conservation funds, the practice that Council has put forth is to approve all those dollars.

Bryan Kuchta, President of Better Meadows, explained the earlier he gets started, the better - the more regrowth after clearing and before herbicide application, the better the success, especially when doing the two village-owned and the one Land Conservancy property at the same time.

Moved to Agenda Item No. 16. **Resolution No. 2025-29 (First Reading)**

“A Resolution Authorizing the Mayor to Enter into an Agreement with Better Meadows & Woodlands, LLP for Additional Services Regarding Invasive Species Control on Village-owned Properties; and Declaring an Emergency”.

Councilmember Broome moved that the rules requiring ordinances to be read on three different days be suspended and that Resolution No. 2025-29 be placed on its final passage. Councilmember Steinbrink seconded the motion.

Ayes: Atton, Broome, Onysko, Press, Steinbrink, Turner.

Nays: None

Motion carried.

Councilmember Steinbrink moved to approve Resolution No. 2025-29 and Councilmember Broome seconded the motion.

Ayes: Atton, Broome, Onysko, Press, Steinbrink, Turner.

Nays: None

Motion carried.

Broadband (Councilmember Deacon) - see 2:13:47

12. **Ordinance No. 2025-18 (Revised 7/15/25) (Third Reading)** starts at 53:43

“An Ordinance Amending Chapter 131, Council, of the Codified Ordinances of the Village of Gates Mills” was read by the Mayor.

Law Director Hunt made revisions to the ordinance after the last meeting and sent to Council this weekend. Additional comments were made today and were incorporated into another version before Council tonight with an explanation as to why some comments were not adopted and others were. The Law Director urged Council

to read through the latest revision (document management number -5). There isn't any hurry to pass this. He emphasized the virtual attendance piece only applies to Council meetings (regular, special, and emergency) and Council Committee meetings (regular and emergency). There has to be a quorum present of at least 4 persons at Council meetings. If you're attending virtually, you can vote, but you're not counted as part of the quorum. You can only attend virtually three times in a rolling twelve-month period. If you attend virtually a fourth time within the twelve preceding months, you can not vote. With Council Committee meetings, only the presiding officer needs to be attending in person - the public can attend if they wish, but all other members could attend virtually. Giving notice has been expanded to include more up to date ways to provide notice.

Bottom line: Every meeting of the Village - any public body, committee, commission, board - is in person, but members can attend virtually if it's a Council meeting or Council Committee meeting. Virtual attendance at Board or Commission meetings are not included - it's very difficult due to the size of exhibits and plans.

Ordinance No. 2025-18 remains on third reading.

13. **Resolution No. 2025-24 (Second Reading)** starts at 58:50

"A Resolution to Adopt the Solid Waste Management Plan for the Cuyahoga County Solid Waste District" was read by Mayor Siemborski. The 30 or 40 municipalities within the District are required to review the Plan and decide if they approve.

Law Director Hunt added there is an August 11 deadline to make a decision, and approval by 60% of the political subdivisions is necessary for Plan adoption. The District had not quite met that level as of two weeks ago. There is no increase in the generation fee, which is \$2 per ton of waste produced, one of the lowest rates in the State.

Councilmember Broome moved that the rules requiring ordinances to be read on three different days be suspended and that Resolution No. 2025-24 be placed on its final passage. Councilmember Press seconded the motion to suspend the rules.

Ayes: Atton, Broome, Deacon, Onysko, Press, Steinbrink, Turner.

Nays: None

Motion carried.

Councilmember Turner moved to approve Resolution No. 2025-24 and Councilmember Press seconded the motion.

Ayes: Atton, Broome, Deacon, Onysko, Press, Steinbrink, Turner.

Nays: None

Motion carried.

14. **Ordinance No. 2025-27 (Revised 7/15/25) (Second Reading)** starts at 1:01:48

"An Ordinance to Amend Section 933.07 of the Codified Ordinances of the Village of Gates Mills Regarding Rates and Charges for Use of the Village's Wastewater Treatment Facility Services for Existing and New Customers" was read by the Mayor.

This is an update to the rates last approved in 2002. There was no need to change the rates since substantially all the flow was within the Village's own buildings. With the expansion of this to the Hunt Club, it was timely to update the rates. We have chosen to follow the Northeast Ohio Regional Sewer District published rates - they are the largest provider, and we already have residents in the western part of the Village that have access to sewers paying the same rate. As we apply to Ohio EPA for the design and construction loans for the conversion and consolidation of the facility, it's important that we have an updated ordinance demonstrating the rate that will be used to collect the operating and maintenance costs of taking on someone else's facility.

Councilmember Broome moved that the rules requiring ordinances to be read on three different days be suspended and that Resolution No. 2025-27 be placed on its final passage. Councilmember Press seconded the motion.

Ayes: Atton, Broome, Deacon, Onysko, Press, Steinbrink, Turner.
Nays: None
Motion carried.

Councilmember Turner moved to approve Resolution No. 2025-27 and Councilmember Press seconded the motion.

Ayes: Atton, Broome, Deacon, Onysko, Press, Steinbrink, Turner.
Nays: None
Motion carried.

15. **Ordinance No. 2025-28 (First Reading)** starts at 1:05:51

"An Ordinance to Approve Current Replacement Pages to the Gates Mills Codified Ordinances" was read by Mayor Siemborski.

Finance Administrator Mulh explained we typically update the codified ordinance book every year. Traffic and general offenses sections are updated to conform with current State law, along with any ordinances Council has passed since the last time we codified. Councilmembers can take a packet if you have a book at home; it is online; and there is at least one master copy at Village Hall.

Councilmember Broome noted these sections have already been updated on the Village website, and most sections are amended because the Ohio Revised Code changed. So, this would essentially make our punishments for these offenses mirror the punishments in the Ohio Code. Law Director Hunt indicated sometimes, and sometimes we can have a greater penalty than the state, but not a lesser. Councilmember Broome suggested one impetus for us is that if someone pleads to the municipal ordinance in court, then the Village gets the fine - but if someone pleads to the state offense, the Village only gets a portion of the fine and the rest goes to the state.

Councilmember Turner moved that the rules requiring ordinances to be read on three different days be suspended and that Ordinance No. 2025-28 be placed on its final passage. Councilmember Steinbrink seconded that motion.

Ayes: Atton, Broome, Deacon, Onysko, Press, Steinbrink, Turner.
Nays: None

Motion carried.

Councilmember Broome moved to approve Ordinance No. 2025-28 and Councilmember Deacon seconded the motion.

Ayes: Atton, Broome, Deacon, Onysko, Press, Steinbrink, Turner.

Nays: None

Motion carried.

16. **Resolution No. 2025-29 (First Reading)** - see 42:16

17. **Resolution No. 2025-30 (First Reading)** starts at 1:15:58

“A Resolution Authorizing the Mayor to Enter into an Agreement with Municipal Collections of America, Inc. for Collection Agency Services” was read by the Mayor.

Three or four collection agencies were interviewed that could assist the Village in the collection of judgements issued by Lyndhurst Municipal Court to individuals that failed to respond to first and second notices and pay their speeding violations. Municipal Collections of America (MCOA) was selected as they specialize in collection of traffic/parking/speeding violations. They are well-informed on what the state of Ohio allows in the pursuit of judgement collections arising from unpaid speeding violations. MCOA’s contract has been reviewed from a business standpoint, and it has been reviewed and approved by the Law Director.

The Mayor prepared an illustration of what the collections would be without a collection agency and what they would be with a collection agency. The collection fee, based on the level of speeding, would be on top of the fine that the speeder already has, so there would be no less income for the Village, Sensys Gatso, or Lyndhurst Muni Court. MCOA believes their collection efforts will produce an additional 20% of the cases turned over to them. Without collection efforts we have been able to collect about 67% of the fines assessed - 55% on first notice and 12% on second notice, leaving 33% able to collect. If MCOA can collect 20% of that remaining 33%, that gets us to a collection effort that is over 70%.

This resolution authorizing the contract with MCOA to be entered into was drafted by our prosecutor, Michael Cicero. The resolution is being reviewed by the Lyndhurst Muni Court Judge to determine if the language is conforming. Discussion:

Turner - Any fees that MCOA retains is on top of the fine?

Siemborski - Yes, the Village will still keep the fine percentage negotiated with Gatso. Some may wonder what MCOA is doing for their money. Primarily they use their extensive databases to chase down bad addresses and pursue collection.

Press - Have you considered adding some discretion to this? Putting a collection agency on somebody is a relatively draconian thing to do. He would be more inclined to do it for repeat offenders than one-time offenders.

Siemborski - MCOA will pursue the files that we send, and will treat all of them the same.

Turner - There was a lot of difficulty coordinating the computer systems between Lyndhurst Muni Court and Sensys Gatso initially causing a delay in getting the program

up and running. What do we know about the potential for these two systems to coordinate?

Siemborski - The system going into place is there will be a judgement issued by the court when the second notice is not responded to. By Ohio law the individual has 30 days to appeal that decision. At the 31st day, if the judgment has not been satisfied or objected to, then we will turn the file over to the collection agency to do its job.

Steinbrink - Part of the technology issue was the court changing their software.

Press - To what extremes does MCOA go to collect? Are they calling people in the middle of the night? Are they calling their employers?

Siemborski - Soft collection efforts. They know what the state of Ohio will permit and not permit. There are things that you cannot do as a collection agency in the state of Ohio that you could do in other locations. MCOA will follow Ohio state law.

Press - What does the state of Ohio allow? It would be interesting to know that before we vote on it.

Onysko - Having used collection agencies, Ohio is one of the more restrictive/soft. If an individual is ticketed for speeding down Mayfield Road, pay the ticket.

Atton - The resolution doesn't explicitly say that this applies to the Mayfield Road traffic camera program. Neither does the contract. Does it apply to anybody who is not paying their bills to the Village?

Siemborski - No, it applies to the file that the Village gives them of traffic enforcement tickets that have not been paid through their second notice just on Mayfield Road.

Atton - It should be explicit.

Siemborski - If you've got a word or two you want to mark up, send them over.

Steinbrink- Expressed concern that Sensys Gatso might be under the impression they are going to get their percentage of the collection fee on top of the fine.

Siemborski - The only other benefit they get is \$1.35 for postage and mailing.

Deacon - When the second notice goes out, does it indicate that the individual could be subject to collection if they don't pay?

Minichello - Yes.

Press - If we decide to put traffic cameras at other locations in the Village, would you propose to use MCOA on that as well?

Siemborski - We would want to see how they do for us. This is an annual contract that we can cancel on an annual basis.

Turner - Has MCOA worked with other Gatso clients?

Minichello - Willoughby Hills. Their experience has been good.

Broome - Has some questions about the contract and will circulate those.

Press - Where do we stand on the issue of looking at traffic cams on other roads?

Siemborski - We have no effort underway within the Village to look at any other location other than the school zone on Mayfield Road outside St. Francis.

Turner - We had a lot of discussion about whether or not we were going to put up a traffic camera on Mayfield and what that meant in terms of our community and surrounding communities. Now you seem to be raising an issue about putting cameras on multiple streets throughout the Village. I am not in favor.

Steinbrink- I agree with that. Mayfield Road was done for a very specific reason because of the difficulty in policing that road safely.

Resolution No. 2025-30 remains on first reading.

18. Other Council Matters starts at 1:36:46

Over a year ago, Council approved the Mayor's recommendation to group the priorities that came out of the Comprehensive Plan into strategic or operational categories. Several priorities were not pursued, and Councilmember Press made a point of making sure that Council has a view on what those were and if they want some work done. As promised last month, the Mayor wrote a paragraph on each of the four items for discussion today.

Item #1 - Negative view on school district. This has been negated by a five-star performance of the District as evaluated by the State of Ohio. Further, the four municipalities that comprise the school district passed a new operating levy demonstrating their support of the school district. GM Elementary School continues to rate as one of the best elementary schools in the state. Gates Mills residents should follow this lead in any comments about the quality of the District. Discussion:

Turner - Agrees with the Mayor's paragraph. The levy in November that was passed by the Village, after many years of not passing the school levy, points to the feelings of villagers. What the Comprehensive Plan revealed was a bifurcated response about the schools - one end said the school was a negative and the other end said the school was a gem that was one of the highlights and positive attractions in the Village. She is convinced we have reviewed this issue many times and to raise it for discussion again is a move in the wrong direction.

Press - Thinks we should reenact the outside perspective subcommittee, have them go back to the same realtors, ask them the same question, and see if the perception has changed. If the perception is negative, it's a problem, whether that's the reality or not, and perhaps there's something positive we can do about it. He thinks Mayfield School has made some headway in the right direction, but they are not back at the level of Orange, Chagrin, and Solon where they were ten years ago. Look at the performance test rating.

Onysko - What would we do?

Press - I don't know. I'm not the one who went out and looked at it in the first place, but I listened to the two issues brought to our attention and we've ignored them both - the schools and the run-down houses.

Deacon - That came from the realtors. If the community feels good about the schools, isn't that the most important thing?

Press - That was not the conclusion of the outside perspectives. We were trying to figure out why people choose to buy here versus there, and that's a pretty good source.

Deacon - At some point, don't we just say how much do we really care if there's a few people who don't understand that?

Atton - The realtors were asked to portray what people's perceptions were of our school district as they considered where to live in Northeast Ohio. It was not the realtor's point of view. The realtor was the conduit.

Press - Our school is a lot better than most of the schools in Cuyahoga County, but the people we're trying to attract are looking at areas like Chagrin, Orange, Solon, Gates Mills, and Hunting Valley. They're not looking at broader Cuyahoga County. We're not looking to attract those people and they're not looking to live here.

Turner - You didn't answer John's question.

Press - What was the question?

Onysko - I don't know what we would do.

Press - I don't know what we would do either. So there's a problem. So we don't know how to solve it. So we'll shove it under the rug and pretend that it doesn't exist.

Siemborski - It's here for discussion. Do you have any specific things that you want to do? Does anybody on Council want to pursue this?

Press - I can't solve the problem without understanding it.

Siemborski - I don't know that there is a problem. If there was a problem, it was three years ago, and it's been resolved. The School District is a five-star district. We should just accept that because it has been published and it's been rated by the state. The elementary school is rated one of the best in the state. We should accept what we hear.

Press - I'm happy to go off the state ratings. Let's look at the performance test rating.

Siemborski - It's not our job. Our job is not to evaluate the school district. Our job is to run the Village. The school district is part of it, but we don't control the school district. And they're doing a good job.

Press - If the perception is incorrect, we may not be able to address that and improve the perception.

Turner - We have had a school liaison committee since 2011. If you've got comments or recommendations, I would suggest that you offer that to them.

Press - I've tried and others have tried, but it doesn't do any good.

Councilmember Steinbrink moved that Council does not need to explore anything further regarding the Mayfield School District given the fact that it has a five-star rating and that the elementary school is one of the top elementary schools in the state. Councilmember Broome seconded the motion.

Ayes: Atton, Broome, Deacon, Onysko, Steinbrink, Turner.

Nays: Press

Motion carried.

Item #2 - Housing Stock as "Projects". starts at 1:46:55 Mayor - There are a few homes in the Village (say 25 of 900) that look sad. There are other homes that are historic/aged that are attractive to people because of that. There was a comment that the community undertake some type of Habitat for Humanity project or that we create a tax incentive to get people that have sad homes to fix them up. There are so few of these structures. A formal program may be redundant and less attractive than the rehab professionals and the financing offered by the Cleveland Restoration Society (CRS). This council supports the CRS and two of our residents participated in the process in 2024 - I don't think either pursued home remodeling or changes through the CRS system. CRS did a seminar in the Village last month. In my view, this is not something that needs to be further considered or reviewed by Council. Discussion:

Steinbrink - We have talked in Planning & Zoning over the last number of years on having some sort of a point-of-sale in-home inspection. It has not been well-favored by the members of P & Z to have Building Inspector Biggert go around home to home as homes are being sold. Longer term it probably starts to address some of these things. But unless Council is going to direct P & Z to take up point-of-sale inspections, I don't know much else that can be done.

Press - How about a tax abatement program where if somebody were to put a six-figure improvement to the exterior of their home, for example, the Village would give them a tax abatement for a few years?

Broome - The market tends to take care of itself. People buy the house at a good price because it shows deferred maintenance and then they splurge to bring it up.

Press - It came out as a negative when the outside perspectives committee talked to realtors about choosing Gates Mills versus other communities in the Chagrin Valley.

So, are you saying that outside perspectives came to the wrong conclusion? The market is taking care of itself in all these communities and they were wrong? Or is there something different about our community?

Spear - I think they were wrong. We have the benefit now of having gone through the sexennial assessment where the county sent people to every property in the community, and they didn't just do the number - they put a rating on homes. We had less than 20 houses in Gates Mills that were rated fair or poor. So to size this problem, there's really not a lot.

Broome - We have a little bit older housing stock. It doesn't always look like HGTV Frisco, Texas suburban housing. Perhaps some people have an expectation that everything should look like that and every house should be a Chuck Fazio design palace. Not all that way doesn't mean bad houses. Go back to John's comment - what would we do?

Spear - When we did the Comprehensive Plan, and I did 30% of those entries, we were coming off a time when it was pretty hard to sell a house, and now we're at a point where there are very few houses on the market and they're selling at much higher prices than they were then. So, we can think about what the Comprehensive Plan found out, but we can also look at the results of sales, which have been very strong.

Turner - That's a good point. We can all think of homes needing exterior clean up, some of which come under existing ordinances. Maybe those could be better enforced.

Hunt - We have the ordinances and Building Inspector Biggert is good at enforcing them.

Press - I'm talking about something, not clean up, to encourage investment in housing. Owners have to volunteer to make the investment. We can't make it for them, but we can incentivize them to improve their house.

Onysko - If we put something in place to incentivize, I would apply for it, and I don't think that I'm your target audience. That might be biting off more than we can chew.

Press - We would have to have the power to approve whether a house qualifies for a tax abatement.

Hunt - The Village does not have the authority to give tax abatement outside of what's in the state code.

Siemborski - It's not an issue if it affects less than 2% of our property.

Councilmember Broome moved that Council does not need to undertake any type of Habitat for Humanity project or create a tax incentive to encourage owners to fix up their home based on the facts that there are so few properties that would be eligible, that the market will take care of itself, and that we have zoning ordinances to cover issues. Councilmember Turner seconded the motion.

Ayes: Atton, Broome, Deacon, Onysko, Steinbrink, Turner.

Nays: Press

Motion carried.

Item #3 - Downtown Development. starts at 1:56:23 There is some merit to further consider this. In the last two years, post Covid and post Comprehensive Plan, Sara's has been busy, the coffee shop is a hit, the Old Livery Tavern seems to be more occupied with tenants, and there is a buzz in the town center anchored by the library, post office, Marston Park, and pickleball. We would need to very clearly have a discussion on what scope that is, how far it goes geographically, what's included in the study, what report we would want back. Comments?

Onysko - One of the reasons I wanted to be on Council was the revitalization of our downtown area - in particular, the buildings that the police, fire, and service departments occupy. I don't know how to do this, and I am looking for a mentor to guide me through the steps to assemble a committee that would explore either renovation or rebuild to bring us up to par with the downtown areas in surrounding communities, and then present the information gathered to our residents.

Siemborski - Half of the buildings in town center are municipal buildings, and they need work. A lot of it is deferred. Then we have other village-owned buildings that need some work and perhaps some could be expanded in some way. By downtown development I'm talking about from the Community House to the bridge and from the river to behind the Mills Building. We have done a lot to fix and to promote what we currently have, but there is not a comprehensive plan dealing with downtown development, both the municipal buildings and the commercial buildings. We do have a plan for revitalizing downtown that was done 10-15 years ago. There's a lot of good information in there about statistics and demographics and who uses the downtown area and why. That's probably a good study piece to start with and then look at consultants/experts that could update that or give us a new one. If Council wants to do that, we form a committee and appoint a chairperson and move forward.

Onysko - I'd like to do that.

Broome - I think we should keep it on the agenda. We also might expand it to include activities - how we better use the Community House - senior socialization activities.

Steinbrink - I think it merits a larger discussion. I worry what residents are going to think about we're going to start changing downtown, doing things to buildings, and changing some of the historic structures. I think a committee is fine. The devil's in the details. There were people against putting a coffee shop in. Slower is always better.

Deacon - I think some of the spaces - in particular, spaces occupied by our village employees - could use an upgrade. It's worth looking at to ensure they have good working spaces that are safe.

Atton - This was a deficiency in the Comprehensive Plan. There were no ideas about what to do with downtown except for the coffee shop. We should go ahead with this.

Turner - This is a big issue. It is exciting and John is excited. I'd like to see the idea flushed out a bit more among Council. When you talk about a committee without a scope or mission, it feels premature for that. Further discussion and what the scope might be are warranted. Think about other groups - recreation committee, architectural review, historic review - and how we get them involved.

Press - It's more about a blueprint of what kinds of things we would like and wouldn't like. I don't really want to stimulate development of downtown any faster than it would happen on its own. We are living in a town where there are some things we don't control. We don't control what happens to the Hunt Club, to Gates Mills Elementary, and the Livery Tavern. Those things could change, and we ought to give some thought to what we would do.

Onysko - I like a cafeteria style too. Contingency plans would encompass an entire platter of what we have to work with. Coming back full circle, I would address the downtown area in terms of safety of the buildings, usability of the buildings, presentation of the buildings, and interaction with the community.

Turner - A way to start might be a special Council meeting to get some parameters among Council for what the committee is going to work on.

Siemborski - So this is viewed as pretty positive. My sense is Council is asking the Mayor and administration to give further thought to a downtown development effort with a scope and objectives to be determined and shared with Council.

Onysko - Offered to meet with the Mayor and hash out the details.

Item #4 - Reshape the historic district. starts at 2:09:22 Comments were made during the Comprehensive Plan and are often raised when owners are looking to approve plans to build or remodel their house, about the curiosity of the shape and breadth of the historic district designation. Going back many years, there was a huge undertaking supported by research, affidavits, and filings with regulatory authorities to define the historic district. That has served us well for the last 30 years. To my knowledge, there has been no serious interest in looking at this. I don't see the benefit of reevaluating the historic district, and I don't know what issue we would address. Rather, we might want to highlight our historic places. Discussion:

Deacon - That's a great idea to spend time on highlighting. But, to your point, we do get a lot of questions, and I'm not sure we have a really good answer other than that's the way it was drawn. It might be worth going back, taking a look at it, really understanding what the thought process was - because I'm not sure there's anybody still around who does know what that is. That way, if we are going to leave it alone, at least we are able to explain the rationale to people.

Turner - From the Architectural Review Board perspective, being in the historic district comes up as well. It is more expensive if you want to make renovations and your home is in the historic district - the materials and requirements to meet the prior standards are expensive. I would support taking a look at it, understanding it, and if there's changes, recommend making changes.

Siemborski - Having heard no other comments, I'm going to take this as understand and explain the historic district. Our previous law director, Chuck Riehl, and others that were around in the 90's when this was all put together are resources.

19. Business from the Audience - None

11. Committee Updates (continued) starts at 2:13:47

Broadband (Councilmember Deacon)

Meeting tomorrow with CVG engineers and construction folks, John Onysko, the Mayor, and myself to learn exactly how the construction is going to work, as well as talking about beginning to roll out the pricing and the subscriptions to residents.

20. Executive Session starts at 2:15:05

Councilmember Broome moved to go into Executive Session for purposes of seeking legal advice from our Law Director dealing with real estate. Councilmember Steinbrink seconded the motion.

Ayes: Atton, Broome, Deacon, Onysko, Press, Steinbrink, Turner.

Nays: None

Motion carried. Executive Session commenced at 7:44 p.m.

Mayor Siemborski reconvened the meeting at 7:56 p.m.

Councilmember Turner moved that if the Village of Gates Mills is offered property of the deceased resident Dan Kish from his estate, that we accept the property

and authorize the Mayor to enter into a real estate contract with Berkshire Hathaway for the sale of that land. Councilmember Steinbrink seconded the motion.

Ayes: Atton, Broome, Deacon, Onysko, Press, Steinbrink, Turner.

Nays: None

Motion carried.

Councilmember Onysko and Mayor Siemborski mentioned a last-minute email sent by resident Jerry Bohinc to all of Council regarding his views on Section 1160. Once read, Councilmembers may have comment on it.

21. Adjourn

There being no further business, it was moved by Councilmember Broome, seconded by Councilmember Steinbrink, and unanimously carried, that the council meeting be adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,



Beth DeCapite, Clerk

Approved:



Steven L. Siemborski, Mayor