

Village of Gates Mills
MINUTES OF A REGULAR MEETING OF COUNCIL
February 17, 2026

A regular meeting of the Council of the Village of Gates Mills, Ohio was held at the Community House on Tuesday, February 17, 2026, at 5:30 p.m. with Mayor Siemborski presiding. The meeting was live-streamed to the internet.

1. Roll Call starts at 5:50

Councilmembers present: Broome, Greco, Onysko, Perez, Steinbrink, Turner, Young.

Other Village officials present were Treasurer Spear, Clerk DeCapite, Service Director Biggert, Police Chief Minichello, Fire Chief Majeski, Finance Administrator Mulh, Village Engineer Courtney, and Lisa Mack of Roetzel & Andress (Acting Law Director).

2. Minutes of Regular Council Meeting of January 20, 2026 starts at 6:00

Councilmember Steinbrink moved to approve the January 20, 2026 minutes and Councilmember Broome seconded the motion.

Ayes: Broome, Greco, Onysko, Perez, Steinbrink, Turner, Young.
Nays: None
Motion carried.

3. Pay Ordinance # 1306 \$679,010.52 starts at 6:34

Councilmember Broome moved to approve Pay Ordinance #1306, and Councilmember Greco seconded the motion.

Ayes: Broome, Greco, Onysko, Perez, Steinbrink, Turner, Young.
Nays: None
Motion carried.

4. Mayoral Appointments to Boards, Commissions and Committees starts at 7:09

Planning & Zoning Commission for Term Ending 12/31/2027:
Kendra Howley (fill unexpired term of Emily Hamilton ending 12/31/27)

Councilmember Broome moved to approve the Mayoral Appointment to the Planning & Zoning Commission. Councilmember Steinbrink seconded the motion.

Ayes: Broome, Greco, Onysko, Perez, Steinbrink, Turner, Young.
Nays: None
Motion carried.

Other Committees - see Committee listing

Mayor Siemborski asked Councilmembers to submit by February 28 their desire to serve on other committees or make suggestions of residents with expertise to serve on other committees.

5. Gates Mills Land Conservancy Report to Council starts at 8:52

Under the agreement between the Village and the Land Conservancy, on a semiannual basis the Conservancy updates Council on its activities. Conservancy President Jamie Carracher read the written report covering the last six months of 2025 previously provided in Council's packet and on the website.

Mr. Carracher corrected the 2025 levy fund receipts from the village amount listed on page 3 of the report. It should read \$142,279 - not \$122,279.

Questions and comments starts at 19:04:

Greco - Do you think it might be a good idea to add to your website things individuals could be doing on their own properties to remove and identify invasives?

Carracher - Definitely. Not wanting to replicate expertise from entities that do it better, providing links to that information is our focus, as well as sponsoring events where folks can come and learn.

Broome - The Conservancy has submitted the EQIP funding request not only for funding reasons but to learn the application process in order to become a resource for helping other residents apply for EQIP money.

Perez - Is there an estimated timeframe for completion of the conservation easements on the first two properties?

Carracher - Filing the documentation is complete. Councilmember Broome is our expert on the other necessary processes.

Broome - We can't hold both the title to the property and the easement, or they merge. So we have to transfer it to a LLC in which the Conservancy has 100% ownership. The property becomes taxable again, and we have to apply for the tax exemption at the County again. This can take a while to happen as the County has many applications and transfers. Ideally, we like to get it done before tax bills come due, because then the Conservancy would have to pay something out and have to apply for a refund. We think we can get these two properties done before the end of the year, then do an offset. We waited until just before the end of last year to file the deeds and file the conservation easement to give us the most time to get processed by the County.

Perez - And then are you staggering the other 55 properties across that 5-year period?

Carracher - Yes, but it won't be 55. It will be 20ish and only on our fee owned properties. Some properties we already own conservation easements on, yet we don't own the property. Some properties we own, but conservation easements are held by others. Some are too small.

Young - How much does the EQIP program provide for invasive removal once an application is approved?

Carracher - Estimates 60% to 80% of the costs will be reimbursed once the work is completed.

Steinbrink - Going forward, will any new purchase of a property by the Conservancy go through this new process?

Carracher - Correct.

Broome - In the Comprehensive Plan, people said one of the most important things is keeping the village the way it is, and the Conservancy is probably the most consequential organization to keep the village the way it is.

Siemborski - The Conservancy and the Village can accomplish a lot more working together than doing it individually. We now have access and cooperation with the Metro Parks, Chagrin River Watershed Partners, and Holden Arboretum. We're aware of grants that are out there either to a municipality that a nonprofit isn't entitled to or the opposite - a nonprofit, such as the Conservancy, that a municipality isn't able to have. It's nice to have both organizations moving in the same direction.

6. Mayor's Report starts at 27:06

a. Aging Well

For six months the Aging Well group has acted informally, and it is now appropriate to organize the group as a committee for the purpose of analyzing the community needs of the village's aging population including supplementing the services to be provided by the Community Partnership on Aging (CPA). For example, starting in March, we will have a luncheon or breakfast once a month led by a village leader, and senior residents will have a chance to hear what's happening and raise questions on topics of their choosing. Baking Christmas cookies at the Community House and doing intergenerational activities with students from local schools are other examples.

Moved to Agenda Item No. 18. **Resolution No. 2026-16 (First Reading)**

"A Resolution Confirming the Mayor's Formation of an Ad Hoc Committee to be Known as the "Aging Well Committee" and the Appointees Thereto and Declaring an Emergency" was read by Councilmember Broome. Since we've already approved the contract with CPA and everyone is ready to get working, and given the quality of the appointees, there is no useful purpose to subject this to three readings.

Councilmember Broome moved that the rules requiring ordinances to be read on three different days be suspended and that Resolution No. 2026-16 be placed on its final passage. Councilmember Greco seconded the motion.

Ayes: Broome, Greco, Onysko, Perez, Steinbrink, Turner, Young.

Nays: None

Motion carried.

Councilmember Broome moved to approve Resolution No. 2026-16, and Councilmember Greco seconded the motion.

Ayes: Broome, Greco, Onysko, Perez, Steinbrink, Turner, Young.
Nays: None
Motion carried.

b. 200th Anniversary - starts at 34:25

A gathering of leaders of 11+ village organizations and other individuals met to share any 200th anniversary plans in the making, and we came to realize that we will have a series of activities happening every month for the next 6-8 months. Activities will be published under one umbrella with a new 200th anniversary logo. Summary info will go out to Council in a couple days. Council will probably be asked for a variance on our very strict signage ordinance, so we can appropriately enjoy the celebratory nature of this historic event. Anyone interested in joining or attending the group meetings is welcome. Meetings are on Zoom as well as in person.

c. Arboretum - starts at 38:16

The Arboretum, started in 1935 and tended to by the Garden Club for the last 90 years, is in year two of the invasive elimination program. The Garden Club engaged landscape artist Patty Crow to lay out a wildflower preserve. Her work was presented last week - it divides the Arboretum into seven planting zones and identifies what plants will go in what zone. It calls for tree thinning for additional light and air, completion of trails, and replacement of steps - these items will be completed by village crews. Once completed, the Garden Club has committed to plant 2,200 flowers to finish the renovation of the Arboretum as a contribution to our 200th anniversary. The Mayor is inclined to prepare a pamphlet with project details.

d. 2026 Priorities - starts at 43:19

The Mayor has heard comments from a few Councilmembers since circulating at the last meeting the draft 2026 priorities - a listing of three strategic priorities and 6-7 tasks for each of those priorities.

Within the Safety priority, Councilmember comments indicate item 5 (Renovate Police locker room and evaluate squad room) and item 6 (Evaluate Town Hall and future needs) require some conversation. The police locker room and squad room are in the basement of Town Hall and are the same ones that were there when the building was built 90 years ago with few upgrades along the way. We don't have separate men's and women's facilities. The squad room, where police work and file reports and do research, is essentially a computer desk or two in the hallway. Perhaps the first step is to have a professional tell us what we can do with the space we currently have and then how we move from there. The building is historically important. It looks attractive from the outside. Once you get inside, it's a difficult building to move around in. There are no elevators. There's limited ADA access. This is something that needs to be evaluated this year.

Putting together a 3-5 year financial plan has been discussed for inclusion as a 2026 priority. We now know the fire truck cost and soon will have an estimate for fixing the railroad bridge. Other commitments could need attention, such as Town Hall, and we should determine how those fit in over the next 3-5 years.

Comments and questions start at 48:40:

Onysko - Yesterday he had the opportunity to use the Town Hall Coordinators work area for a meeting. What they were doing in that small space - with a beeping generator cooled by opening a window - is mind boggling. He is a big proponent of the need for bigger changes. Wouldn't we be better off to look at something that is a more robust plan than renovating a building that's 100 years old? It's hard to make a 100-year-old building work for what we are doing. We are not the same organization as we were 100 years ago. Having seen the basement of Town Hall, the conditions by which we force our heroes of our community to work are horrible and inhumane.

Perez - Last year the Mayor provided a ranking of where the priorities were in terms of completion. It was helpful and if we're able to get that again, it would be great.

Siemborski - We are going to, as well as the Annual Report. The draft 2026 priorities will be reworded a bit, we'll add the 3-5 year plan as another matter, let me know if anybody has any word smithing, and we'll publish these as what our 2026 priorities are for the village.

7. Financial Report attached and on the website starts at 53:39

Mayor Siemborski reported we are off to a good start in January. It's one month. It's cash basis. It's government accounting. There will be fluctuations. Real estate tax receipts will be down significantly in February to be made up by March - due to later tax bill mailings by the County.

Councilmember Onysko has observed the unpredictability of cash receipts collected by the village has no semblance to how he would manage cash flow in a business. Finance Administrator Mulh shared last year in February our real estate tax advance was \$700,000. This year in February it was \$135,000.

8. Clerk's Report - None

9. Treasurer's Report starts at 57:15

Treasurer Spear is not getting any information on a constitutional amendment to eliminate real estate tax, although the Governor has sounded the alarm. If you know anything, please let him know.

The Treasurer attended a hearing in Columbus on HP503 - a proposal to wrest away from the village some of the fluidity it has on tax credit on income tax.

Finally, after circulating a summary on real estate tax last month, he has prepared a similar summary on how income tax works. It will give you a good sense of where our taxes fit relative to every other community.

The Mayor stressed the importance of HP503 because the village has very few ways to move quickly should it find itself in a financial shortfall. One lever that we do have, which we've never used, is adjusting the tax credit that is applied to income tax. The state desires to take away that right of Council, to require the citizens to decide, and to reduce taxes on individuals.

10. Police Department Report attached and on the website starts at 1:00:30

Chief Minichello reported the cold and snowy weather made for a rough January out on the road for our officers. In just two days there were 18 disabled vehicles needing assistance despite the best efforts the service dept put forth to clear the roads.

The Mayor commended everybody on the service, fire, EMS, and police teams for their tremendous support over the last four weeks of weather.

11. Service Department Report attached and on the website starts at 1:03:49

In response to Councilmember Perez asking where we stand with current salt and delivery challenges, Service Director Biggert reported, as of today, we're fine. The bins are about 80% full, and we have a minimum of 400 tons more we have to buy for the season. We did have an issue. Why? Cargill did not mine enough salt and process it in a timely fashion. They did not have enough trucks or drivers to deliver the salt. The State's salt needs take preference, so they lock all the salt down when storms like these arise. Our orders for about 400 tons were 3 weeks behind. Fortunately a nearby community loaned us 3 truckloads of salt that we returned when our orders arrived.

Mike Sanders, who replaced retired Ted Zalewski, is working on his CDL and will be prepared to plow the hills next year in the bigger trucks. He is very talented and very happy to be with us. Unfortunately one of our guys fractured his knee and will not return until early March as of now.

Councilmember Broome assumes winter's blow to our roads will require an assessment to see if we have to adjust the road program. The Service Director agreed. Our five-year road program layout is looked at each year to determine any need to juggle a particular road from one year to another.

Village Engineer Courtney addressed the dam remnant removal project. Under a grant administered by the Chagrin River Watershed Partners, the removal of the remaining Chagrin River dam structures is moving ahead. A closer look is necessary to assess if one piece of the dam may remain for historical and stability reasons along the west side of the river where the memorial rock is. The project will be done by Davey Resource Group, sole bidder on the project and who we've dealt with on the downtown riverbank stabilization project, in July/August of this year and should take about 3 weeks. Councilmember Steinbrink asked if damage to Chagrin River Road is foreseen with hauling additional weight on the road. The Village Engineer will discuss with Davey. It won't be any more weight than a normal load allowed on the road right now. He doesn't anticipate Davey building a ramp down into the river - rather they'll be picking things up and they'll close a lane closest to the river to load stuff up and take it out.

Salt Bin - Postponed until the next meeting.

12. Fire Department Report attached and on the website starts at 1:11:58

Fire Chief Majeski reported we were notified by the State Fire Marshal that our 70% grant for two of our candidates who attended fire school last year came in. The village is going to be reimbursed \$6,940. Captain Feig also submitted for an equipment grant from the State Fire Marshal's office, but we will not be notified until later this year. We are investigating a grant through the Bureau of Workman's Comp for turnout gear.

The Mayor recalled a prior Council's agreement to pay for training individuals in our cadet program was considered an investment necessary to start the program up again, because the cost of entry can be out of reach for individuals nowadays. If there's something we can do as a community to grow a pool of first responders, we should consider it.

Regarding the mutual aid response to 27600 Chardon Road, the Fire Chief explained under our regional program we are in mutual aid and automatic aid to other communities who in turn give us mutual aid. For example, when we have an actual fire call here in GM, the EMS squad comes from Willoughby Hills. In return for that service, we are automatic aid for some of their areas. As they fill these boxes through dispatch, if there's a company that's already committed to another call or can't respond because they're out on EMS calls, they go to the next company. A lot of times that's how we're being captured in these boxes.

13. Committee Updates starts at 1:16:30

a. Broadband (Chairperson Deacon/Village Engineer/Councilmember Onysko)

Monthly progress meetings on the second Thursday of each month at 2 p.m. have started. Last Thursday we covered:

- Progress - CVG has made it from Chagrin River Road to Beverly and they've started going up Beverly after resolving some equipment maintenance issues.
- Problems - Cleanup of extra drilling fluid. Scheduling their crews and not advising us where they're going to be working.
- 16-week look ahead schedule - Beverly, Chagrin River Road, Epping, Deerfield, Berkshire, Chelsea, Sudbury, Kenwyn, SOM Center, Dorchester, Mayfield, Carpenter, Old Mill, Glenwood, Colvin, and Glen Echo. This schedule is weather, equipment breakdown, and subsurface condition dependent.
- Deliverables list - Are CVG and the village meeting their different obligations under the agreement?
- Communication - What to expect during construction can be found on the village website and in a letter from CVG entitled Happy Holidays. Another CVG communication will go out soon once reviewed.

Be aware there is a provider out there who's promoting "fiber power". That means fiber is upstream and not to the home. CVG is providing fiber to the home. There is going to be a lot of misinformation coming now, as companies don't want to lose their business to something that is so affordable and to the home. Be careful. Don't

sign up for a long-term contract with anyone else until you at least talk to CVG, or contact Councilmember Onysko. He will be happy to examine your bills and tell you exactly what's going to happen and what's different.

Many residents are asking when they can expect better internet at their home. CVG is putting together a map that will break the village up into 6-8 areas and will indicate within each area a rough date when you can expect to have internet service.

Councilmember Broome recalled CVG's initial standard to the home will be one gigabit. Councilmember Onysko stated that as standards increase, up to 10 gigabits is possible without backend infrastructure changes, and the fiber coming to the home is capable of 25 gigabits. Chairperson Deacon added we don't have it in writing, but CVG has stated they will not charge a fee for increasing gigabits to new standards.

Councilmember Perez requested a report next month on the uptake in participation. Ms. Deacon advised CVG has received calls and questions, but not a lot of uptake, because the village and elementary school will be done first. CVG does not want a lot of signups early on, because people get anxious about waiting.

b. Land Conservation Levy Committee (Mayor Siemborski) - starts at 1:30:18

Since the Committee was authorized last month, Committee Members Turner and Young, the Mayor, and the Land Conservancy met on February 9. The Land Conservancy presented their views of what the needs were in the village. No decisions were made. No actions were taken. Committee Members Turner and Young and the Mayor met again on February 13 and discussed their reaction to the meeting and what they thought some of the needs were of the levy. Those topics included invasives and the need to continue the invasives program and broadening the number of people we work with using partnerships like EQIP, MetroParks, etc. They talked about access to properties, the number of acres that could be covered, legal stewardship, easements, and deed restrictions. They agreed to put together their thoughts on a sheet of paper and meet again on February 23. At that time the Committee will finalize the paper, and that could be the basis for conversation with Council and a conversation with the Land Conservancy.

14. Motion to name Janet Mulh as designee for Certified Public Records Training on March 18, 2026, for the elected officials of the Village of Gates Mills starts at 1:32:29

Councilmember Steinbrink moved to designate Janet Mulh to take Certified Public Records Training for the elected officials of Gates Mills on March 18, 2026. Councilmember Greco seconded the motion. Thank you Janet!

Ayes: Broome, Greco, Onysko, Perez, Steinbrink, Turner, Young.

Nays: None

Motion carried.

15. Ordinance No. 2026-13 (Revised) (First Reading) starts at 1:33:12

"An Ordinance to Amend the Annual Appropriation Ordinance No. 2025-51 to Increase Certain Appropriations and Other Expenditures of the Village of Gates Mills, Ohio for the Fiscal Year Ending December 31, 2026" was read by Councilmember Broome.

The Mayor stated this allows us to increase the 2026 annual appropriation amount approved in December - and is different from transfers and spending money. Technology approved by Council last year but not spent amounts to \$43,775 and must be reappropriated this year from the General Fund to the Admin Dept Other Expense. The fire truck contract is now in place and it's time to start putting aside the money by first appropriating \$596,500 from the General Fund to the Safety Fund.

Councilmember Broome moved that the rules requiring ordinances to be read on three different days be suspended and that Ordinance No. 2026-13 be placed on its final passage. Councilmember Greco seconded the motion.

Ayes: Broome, Greco, Onysko, Perez, Steinbrink, Turner, Young.
Nays: None
Motion carried.

Councilmember Broome moved to approve Ordinance No. 2026-13, and Councilmember Perez seconded the motion.

Ayes: Broome, Greco, Onysko, Perez, Steinbrink, Turner, Young.
Nays: None
Motion carried.

16.. **Resolution No. 2026-14 (First Reading)** starts at 1:36:21

“A Resolution Authorizing and Directing the Transfer of Certain Sums from the General Fund to the Safety Fund” was read by Mayor Siemborski. Now that Council appropriated the fire truck amount in the previous ordinance, we need to resolve to put aside last years surplus and then something every month.

Councilmember Broome moved that the rules requiring ordinances to be read on three different days be suspended and that Resolution No. 2026-14 be placed on its final passage. Councilmember Greco seconded the motion.

Ayes: Broome, Greco, Onysko, Perez, Steinbrink, Turner, Young.
Nays: None
Motion carried.

Councilmember Broome moved to approve Resolution No. 2026-14, and Councilmember Turner seconded the motion.

Ayes: Broome, Greco, Onysko, Perez, Steinbrink, Turner, Young.
Nays: None
Motion carried.

17. **Resolution No. 2026-15 (First Reading)** starts at 1:38:25

“A Resolution Authorizing the Mayor to Enter Into an Agreement with Better Meadows & Woodlands, LLP, and Cleveland MetroParks for Services Regarding the Village’s Ongoing Invasive Species Control Program; and Declaring an Emergency” was read by Councilmember Turner. This is a continuation into the second year of our three-

year project for removing invasives. We're also adding two parcels - what was known as Founders Field and another location. The cost for village owned property is \$52,498.

MetroParks is extending the work they're doing on their own property along Chagrin River Road (between Mayfield and Sherman Roads). It's easier for them if we make their portion a part of our project for which they will reimburse \$34,807 to the village for their share.

Acting Law Director Mack advised that Law Director Hunt preferred a three-party agreement with Better Meadows and MetroParks for the total cost of \$87,305.

Councilmember Turner moved that the rules requiring ordinances to be read on three different days be suspended and that Resolution No. 2026-15 be placed on its final passage. Councilmember Steinbrink seconded the motion.

Ayes: Broome, Greco, Onysko, Perez, Steinbrink, Turner, Young.
Nays: None
Motion carried.

Councilmember Turner moved to approve Resolution No. 2026-15 and Councilmember Broome seconded the motion.

Ayes: Broome, Greco, Onysko, Perez, Steinbrink, Turner, Young.
Nays: None
Motion carried.

18. **Resolution No. 2026-16 (First Reading)** - see 27:06

19. Council Discussion starts at 1:44:23

Councilmember Onysko had hoped Law Director Hunt would bring to the meeting tonight alternate verbage for "declaring an emergency" with its negative connotation. Acting Law Director Mack will bring that to his attention.

20. Business from the Audience - None

21. Adjourn

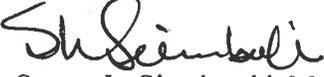
There being no further business, it was moved by Councilmember Broome, seconded by Councilmember Greco, and unanimously carried, that the council meeting be adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,



Beth DeCapite, Clerk

Approved:


Steven L. Siemborski, Mayor