

CITY OF ROCKY RIVER

June 2, 2025

The Committee-of-the-Whole Meeting of Council was called to order by Mr. Furry, President of Council, immediately following the CIC Meeting in the David J. Cook Council Chambers.

Council Members Present: Mr. Hunt, Mrs. Gallagher, Mr. O'Boyle, Mr. Shipp,
Mrs. Morris, Mr. Sindelar, Mr. Furry

Administration: Mayor Bobst, Mr. Thomas, Mr. Snyder

The Meeting was opened with a Pledge of Allegiance.

MAYOR'S REPORT:

The Mayor shared with Council that the city received notification of a R.I.T.A. rebate. The city pays a 3% administrative fee to R.I.T.A. to collect Municipal Income Tax. The Mayor is happy to report that their collection costs were just over 1% and the city received a rebate of \$430,000. The city had paid \$680,000 so \$250,000 was the actual cost for their service. Director Thomas sits on their Board and R.I.T.A. collects for 84 counties across the state. The Mayor appreciates the partnership the city has with R.I.T.A. as many municipalities do. The city was paying close to 3% every year and this year it would have been \$680,000. Big congratulations to Director Thomas for converting the city over to R.I.T.A. several years ago and continuing this relationship.

The Mayor mentioned that there was a fire at AMC Theater around midnight on Saturday evening. One of the reclining chairs with a young child sitting in it started on fire. Fortunately, the Fire Suppression System extinguished a very significant fire. The theater is in the process of cleaning and have done a tremendous job. The Fire Suppression System will have to be inspected by both the city and state. AMC Theater had just had their system inspected.

The Mayor updated Council on the short-term rental legislation. Senate Bill 104, which is the short-term rental legislation, had its fourth hearing last week. During that meeting the committee accepted a substitute bill that was a compromise. Most notable in the substitute bill is that it grandfathers existing ordinances and any taxes that were in place prior to the effective date of the bill. The bill still has not passed, but this would protect the City of Rocky River as there are ordinances in place regarding short-term rental. Once the bill becomes effective, if there was no existing legislation, no local government would be allowed to adopt a new ordinance banning short-term rentals. The Mayor is thankful for the forward thinking on Council's part. The city had a lot of issues in the neighborhoods that were addressed very clearly and fortunately the city will not be impacted by this bill. The Mayor will keep City Council updated.

The Mayor discussed the budget process for the state. The Senate has the budget now with changes from the House and then it will go into Conference Committee mid-June to complete the final draft. The Mayor discussed a few things that are notable in addition to the schedule. State government not getting involved in municipal income tax collection is important. We care about the Local Government Fund, we care about pension provisions and property tax reform. The Local Government Fund has a very small increase to the percentage from 1.7 to 1.75 but it is meaningful to note that the health of the State's finances will drive that number up in addition to a slightly higher percentage. The Mayor said that this is positive. MARCS Radio funding continues, which is important as MARCS Radios are used for interoperability of the safety forces. Next Gen 911 with the consolidated dispatch will allow ability to triangulate cell calls so

they can be directed to the nearest dispatch center. Local government's cyber security had \$7 million in that fund which the house took out and now to see what the senate does with it. There were no proposed changes to the municipal income tax statutes or pension provisions, but these may come up. The fact that they are not in the budget does not mean there will not be more details about these. There is no property tax reform but the Mayor added that there is a group interested in abolishing property taxes. This has an impact on the city, but not as great as on the schools or other entities because only \$7.82 of every \$100 comes to the city in property tax. The schools receive about \$72.00 per \$100, maybe more. The Attorney General, Dave Yost, approved the petition language, not the ballot language but the petition language. Often ballot language will be the petition language or some close variation of that. This group needs to collect 443,000 signatures by July to place this on the ballot. If it goes on the ballot there will be a lot of school districts, libraries and municipalities very interested in what happens with that.

The Mayor discussed infrastructure projects of scale: I-90 will have a total rebuild which will commence later in 2025 and that has an impact on the Hilliard Road Bridge. The Hilliard Road Bridge remains a moving construction target looking at somewhere between 2028–2030. The Marian Ramp, if demolished along with site prep would be in 2033. These are rough dates. The Detroit Bridge over I-90 is also getting a new deck.

City Council will be receiving two ordinances next week to purchase a sewer jet and a packer. These are in the budget and looking for approval before the August Recess.

The Northview Road speed cushions will be installed Tuesday and Wednesday this week in the section between Hilliard Blvd. and Center Ridge Road. The detour for this was sent out to residents this afternoon.

The Mayor announced that the outdoor pool opens this Friday. School will be out as of Thursday.

The city is sending out the 2022, 2023 and 2024 sidewalk assessments that have not been paid. This is one final letter and if not paid the amounts will be posted to the property tax bill. Council will receive legislation with the assessments attached. Before passage, the exhibit will be amended by substitution with all the unpaid accounts.

The Rocky River Watershed Clean-up Day is this Saturday from 9:00–12:00.

The Mayor would like to draw Council's attention to the new Quill. It is hard to believe that the Senior Center is under construction with all the activities going on. Great to see all the things happening at the Senior Center.

The Mayor distributed a copy of the June 2025 issue of Cleveland Magazine where the City of Rocky River is ranked number two. There is an insert featuring Rocky River and a three-page article about Rocky River and its sense of community. It is a wonderful article written by Kristen Hampshire.

- Mrs. Morris asked the Mayor what the date is for the Detroit Road Deck. Director Snyder said 2028.
- Mr. O'Boyle said that the Senior Players are having their play coming up this week. The Mayor added that the play will be performed on Wednesday evening at 7:00 p.m. and Thursday and Friday there will be two matinees.

- Mr. Furry asked for confirmation that Rocky River can keep home rules regarding the Airbnb issue. The Mayor responded yes, so far so good.
- Mr. Furry asked if the handling of the sidewalk assessments will be similar to how the city handles the sewer assessments annually. The Mayor said yes.
- Mrs. Morris asked what was being cleaned up on Saturday. The Mayor reiterated that the Rocky River Watershed is meeting and has groups of people that go out from 9:00-12:00.

COMMITTEE REPORTS: NONE

COMMUNICATIONS OR ANNOUNCEMENTS: NONE

UNFINISHED BUSINESS:

Ordinance No. 25-25: Mrs. Gallagher said this is a request to authorize the purchase of a new 25 Yard Spartan Self Contained Leaf machine for the Service Department under the Sourcewell Cooperative at a cost not to exceed \$168,632.00. The total cost includes a base price of \$166,275.00, and an additional \$2,357.00 to upgrade the unit with a hood to reduce dust and an upgraded directional light for safety. This will replace our final packer/tow behind unit that is over 20 years old. The new machine will be towed behind a large dump truck and will be able to dump directly at the Transfer Station. There is a chance this machine may be delivered this fall, but the lead times are currently uncertain. The old one will be kept as a backup. This will be placed on a consent agenda.

Resolution No. 26-25: Mrs. Moris said that this is a plan for the Cuyahoga County Solid Waste Management District to adopt their plan. This is a requirement of Ohio Law. Every Solid Waste Management District in Ohio must periodically update their Solid Waste Management Plan and submit it to be ratified. Ratification occurs when each city and village vote to approve the plan. This plan update complies with an Ohio EPA format and contains six chapters, 23 appendices, describes the waste management plans methods to be used in the upcoming planning period and details how the ten waste reduction and recycling goals established in the state's solid waste management plan and how it will be achieved. It also describes how the plan will be implemented by the Cuyahoga County Solid Waste District. This will also be placed on the consent agenda.

Ordinance No. 27-25: Mrs. Gallagher said this is authorizing the city to purchase one 2025 Rayco RG80-R Stump Grinder for the Service Department, Park Division, from the Sourcewell Cooperative Purchasing Contract from Morbark, LLC at a cost not to exceed \$81,434.12. This is a stump grinder for the Parks Division. It will remove stumps and excavate for new tree planting. AG Pro-North Canton is the local dealer and will be the local distributor for sales and service. This will help in planting of trees and the Parks Department has planted almost 800 trees in the past five years and has pruned almost 4,000 trees. This will be on the consent agenda.

- Mrs. Morris commented that this is a very cool tool.

Ordinance No. 28-25: Mr. Furry said that this is for an annual stepped-up rate increase for sewer billing of \$2.50 a year base MCF for four years. President Furry thinks these rates are competitive especially compared to our neighbor to the east. Charges are due to EPA mandates and capital-intensive upgrades at the plant, costs continue to increase. The last increase was in December 2007 prior to that in March 2003. This will be added to the consent agenda also.

President Furry explained that for the next four ordinances is for the position and not the person.

Ordinance No. 29-25: Mr. Furry said that every new term, the current Council needs to set the compensation for the newly elected Council. The filing deadline has not been reached yet, so some may be sitting in the same seats and some may not. The previous two cycles have had a cost-of-living adjustment and President Furry did not think any further adjustments were necessary. Mr. Furry is expecting three full reads on this.

Ordinance No. 30-25: President Furry said that this ordinance provides for the compensation for the Council President for the City of Rocky River for the years commencing January 1, 2026 and ending December 31, 2027. Similar to 29-25 every new term the current council needs to set the compensation for the Council President, who is elected by the newly elected Council. The previous two cycles had a cost-of-living adjustment but President Furry did not think any further adjustments were necessary. As someone who has sat in both chairs knows that there is a little more responsibility

Ordinance No. 31-25: President Furry said this ordinance provides for the compensation for the Director of Law commencing January 1, 2026, through December 31, 2027. Again, Council sets this. The salary for this position had a good bump last cycle so will remain the same. This also has an additional compensation component of \$100.00 an hour up to \$50,000 annually for the term. This might be tweaked and Mr. Furry is asking Council to weigh in on this. Mr. Furry said that the \$100.00 an hour has probably been in effect since the 1980's.

- Mr. Hunt believes that there should be some upward compensation but what that is he doesn't know if it is a percentage or a flat rate, but certainly \$100.00 per hour is not commensurate with what should be paid. Mr. Hunt said that the lower end is \$125.00 on Council appointed by the court.
- Mr. Sindelar said it should be compared differently as this is a Council. Attorneys appointed by a court are public defenders for criminal matters. The Law Department of the city is doing things more in depth.
- Mrs. Morris is curious because this is a different kind of job than what City Council does. Why doesn't this position get the 3% that everyone else gets. The Mayor responded that the 3% increase is because of union negotiations and the Mayor is the lead negotiator. She would feel uncomfortable that Council sets an increase for the Mayor's position or any position and if we benefited from that rate, the Mayor is not comfortable with that.
- Mr. Sindelar said years of experience should be looked at. We could say that the entry level is \$150.00 - \$200.00 and the Law Director is not at entry level. If the city went out on the market, the cost would be more than \$100.00 an hour.
- Mr. O'Shea said that the \$100.00 an hour is separate from the salary. The hourly rate comes in to play when doing things above and beyond what he calls the generic call of duty. \$100.00 an hour has been the rate for fifteen years. It is way below market rate and Mr. O'Shea cannot afford from a private practice perspective to go out and do it himself, so it gets sent out. He is getting to the point now where he can handle things that automatically use to get sent out because of the level of sophistication and nuance. To operate a law firm, \$100.00 an hour does not cover the overhead associated with the work that is being done. The Federal Government pays their court appointed lawyers \$175.00 an hour. He's looking for some parity for the position. The good news is, if the rate can get between \$140.00 - \$170.00 the Law Department will do the work rather than send it out, saving the city money.

- The Mayor added that someone knows when they run for the office what expertise is required. It should be compensated appropriately.
- Mr. Sindelar said you might be missing attorneys that won't go for the position because the compensation is not appropriate to their skill set. Mr. Sindelar looked it up and it states that in Ohio entry level is no less than \$150.00.
- President Furry was looking at \$150.00 and doing a graduate thing per year as the term is set for a two-year cycle.
- Mrs. Gallagher asked if the city pays for the Bar Association and CLE registrations. Mr. O'Shea said some of that is covered by the city. The Mayor said it is listed in the budget.
- Mr. O'Boyle asked about the pronouns in the legislation and if they should be changed. Mr. Furry said that in the Charter there is a catch all provision that the pronouns do not matter.
- Mr. Furry said his feelings on this, maybe \$150.00 for year 2026 and \$200.00 for 2027. Mr. Hunt said it is more than what he is comfortable with a 100% increase in 2027. Mr. Furry stated it could have been addressed prior to it coming on the agenda, but the \$100.00 an hour has been the amount for too long. Mr. O'Shea suggested \$150.00 in 2026 and \$175.00 in 2027. Council agreed to this amount. The legislation will be amended for next week's Legislative Meeting.
- Mr. O'Shea thanked Council for the discussion.

Ordinance No. 32-25: President Furry said like all the previous ordinances, this ordinance is providing for the compensation of the Mayor of the City of Rocky River term commencing January 1, 2026, through December 31, 2027. Again, Council sets this. This had a slight bump last cycle with the longevity piece added and no further increase was looked at for this cycle.

Resolution No. 33-25: President Furry said that this is a resolution establishing that Rocky River City Council shall recess during the month of August 2025. This has been a practice for a long time but during President Furry's tenure, there have been times that Council did have to meet for emergency situations during the month of August. The Mayor added that this is one of the only WestShore Councils that take only one month for recess.

MISCELLANEOUS BUSINESS: NONE

President Furry said that the next meeting will be a Legislative Meeting on Monday, June 9, 2025 beginning at 7:00 p.m.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:36 p.m.

David W. Furry
President of Council

Susan G. Pease
Clerk of Council