

**RECORD OF PROCEEDINGS**  
Minutes of Village of South Amherst  
REGULAR MEETING  
March 23, 2026

**CALL TO ORDER**

The council meeting was called to order by Mayor Scott Jones at 7:00 p.m.

**LORD'S PRAYER AND PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

**ROLL CALL**

Councilmember Michele Jeffers	P	Fiscal Officer Michelle Henke	P
Councilmember Robb Koscho	P	Records Clerk Laurie Beran	P
Councilmember Mark Leshinski	P	Law Director Matthew Mishak	P
Councilmember Jeanne Maschari	P	Utility Admin. David Valentine	P
Councilmember Anthony Savage	P	Assistant F.O. Wendy Kolmorgen	P
Councilmember David Troike	P		

*(EA – excused absences)*

**APPROVAL OF AGENDA**

Councilmember Leshinski moved to approve the agenda as amended. Councilmember Savage seconded the motion.

Jeffers x Koscho x Leshinski x Maschari x Savage x Troike x Motion carried.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

Councilmember Savage moved to approve the minutes as presented. Councilmember Jeffers seconded the motion.

Jeffers x Koscho x Leshinski x Maschari x Savage x Troike x Motion carried.

**VISITORS**

Lorain County Commissioner Jeff Riddell (Guest Speaker)

New Russia Township Trustee Cynthia Breda

CDE Chair Penny Becker

Chad Arcaba 6240 Russia Rd.

Commissioner Jeff Riddell (Handouts Exhibits A, B, C)

The County Commissioner addressed a recent issue involving a delayed Sheriff's Department vehicle lease payment, clarifying it was a budgeting matter that was promptly resolved. He provided an overview of current county finances, stating voters strongly rejected the sales tax renewal, resulting in the County operating on a 2020 budget plus inflation. Departments submitted funding requests exceeding projected revenue; voluntary cuts were made, with additional reductions applied to the Domestic Relations Court and the Sheriff's Office. Thirteen of sixteen elected officials accepted the reductions, while three have objected, including one pending lawsuit. The Commissioner explained that ARPA and federal relief funds have ended and emphasized the County's responsibility to adopt a balanced budget without depleting reserves.

Commissioner Riddell also addressed confusion surrounding economic development and sewer projects, stating the County's role is to provide infrastructure—not zoning—to prepare for future industrial growth. He noted that only a small portion of the west-side sewer project serves the proposed megasite, with most intended for long-term development.

Finally, he discussed EPA mandates affecting local wastewater systems, stressing the need to ensure infrastructure options are available as regulatory requirements increase. He concluded by highlighting recent tax relief measures and levy reductions enacted by the County.

Q&A

Chad Arcaba:

1. Explain how the high pressure forced sewer line that is proposed to go down Russia Rd. is a benefit to South Amherst residents when they will not be able to tie into it? Additionally, has the county taken engineering steps into consideration to work within the right of way to integrate a gravity system to coincide with the forced main. Or is the county completely leaving South Amherst residents to pay for and absorb the high cost of the retro engineering a

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gravity system into that limited right of way space in the future and why was the Village left out of the planning process from the beginning?

2. The county just spent \$51,500 on consultation fees for the initiative to change Lorain County's designation from a rural county to an urban county. Could you explain to Council and the residents of the greater plan the county has with this designation change? Furthermore, please explain how the commissioners could use the urban designation to effectively strip townships and villages of their power to oversee land use in their communities. By giving power to the commissioners that could force land use change in the townships and villages by setting up urban infrastructure corridors, thereby allowing county officials to move forward with their plan to destroy thousands of acres of farmland in western Lorain County.

Commissioner Riddell: Stated that the concerns raised are valid and on point, noting that these issues have previously been raised and that connections have been drawn by individuals who may have other agendas and are utilizing the tools available to them.

Mr. Riddell then addressed the second issue, stating that it is the easier matter to explain. The urban designation for Lorain County pertains specifically to urban renewal funding received from the federal government. At present, Lorain County receives this funding through the State of Ohio, with the allocation amounts determined by Columbus. He explained that Lorain County surpassed 200,000 residents outside of the Cities of Lorain and Elyria in the prior year, making the County eligible to apply for urban designation. It was emphasized that this designation has no relation to rural versus urban classification, nor does it relate to townships versus cities. Rather, it is an administrative designation that permits the County to receive funding directly from the federal government rather than through the State. If approved, the County's funding would increase from approximately \$1.6 million to just under \$4 million annually, resulting in an estimated additional \$2 million per year.

These funds are used for housing rehabilitation, assistance for low-income residents, and infrastructure improvements, including streets, sewer lines, and water lines. By way of example, the speaker noted that funds are currently being used in Amherst Township to repair sewer and water lines that are more than 50 years old. Riddell clarified that the urban designation does not transfer authority, does not alter zoning, and does not shift power away from townships, villages, or cities. It is solely funding mechanism under the federal urban renewal program and is unrelated to land use characteristics such as farmland or industrial development.

The commissioner acknowledged that due to ongoing discussions regarding the megasite, some individuals have interpreted the designation as an attempt by the Board of Commissioners to consolidate authority. Riddell expressly denied this, stating that the sole purpose is to access additional federal funding. These funds remain available to townships, villages, and cities through a formal application process, which is reviewed and administered through third-party oversight to avoid political influence. Addressing the first issue raised regarding the force main sewer, he stated that the project has been fully engineered to determine whether it could function as either a gravity main or a force main. Due to geological conditions, including a rock shelf in South Amherst, the system cannot operate as a gravity sewer and must be constructed as a force main.

Mr. Riddell emphasized that even if the force main passes in front of a residence, no property owner may be compelled to connect to the system. A force main, by its nature, is a pressurized system and does not allow for individual residential taps. In the event of a development, such as an 80- or 90-home subdivision, the development would require a single connection point utilizing a lift station to pump sewage into the force main. Riddell compared the force main to a gas transmission pipeline, noting that individual homes cannot directly tap into such systems, but communities or developments may receive service through proper infrastructure. Any commercial or residential development seeking access would be required to construct and fund a lift station to connect to the force main. It was further explained that absent pressurization, sewage flow would back up, making a gravity system infeasible. The County must traverse South Amherst to reach Baumhart Rd. and will utilize existing rights-of-way wherever possible. Where existing rights-of-way are insufficient, necessary easements will be acquired, utilizing County or State roadway corridors when available. The commissioner concluded by reiterating that no individual residence will be required to connect to the force main. The sewer project is intended to serve villages, neighborhoods, and community systems rather than individual homes.

Chad Arcaba: So, again, how's that benefitting the residents?

Commissioner Riddell: Stated that the favorable aspect of the project is that no local tax dollars are being expended, other than the use of state tax funds. No local funding is involved. He addressed potential future concerns regarding South Amherst's

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desire to install a gravity sewer system within the same right-of-way. The speaker clarified that, based on current understanding and without claiming engineering expertise, a gravity system is unlikely to be feasible in South Amherst.

The commissioner noted that rights-of-way exist on both sides of county and state roads and stated that sewer infrastructure may coexist within those rights-of-way alongside natural gas lines. Utilities such as gas and sewer systems are permitted within the same right-of-way. Mr. Riddell referenced an inquiry received early in the commissioner's term from the utilities board (SABPA), at which time a discussion was held and an engineering estimate was commissioned to evaluate what would be required to sewer South Amherst. The resulting estimate indicated that the design phase alone would cost approximately four million dollars. The County did not have sufficient funds to cover that cost in full. The speaker indicated that while the County may have been willing to participate financially, execution of the project would require local participation. Riddell explained that the County's policy is to require matching funds for such projects and that the County does not fully fund projects alone. The intent of this policy is to ensure shared financial responsibility and prevent unlimited requests for fully funded projects. As a result, the South Amherst sewer issue remains a matter for future consideration by local elected officials, subject to regulatory requirements and decisions by the Ohio Environmental Protection Agency regarding what systems are required or permitted.

The commissioner stated that by installing sewer infrastructure as part of the current project, future options would be preserved. Should South Amherst later wish to design a system that connects to the force main, that option would be available. The project will not increase local taxes, nor will it increase residential property values, as individual properties cannot connect directly to a force main. The sewer infrastructure will be underground, not visible, and intended to serve the broader western portion of the county. No property owner will be required to connect, as direct access to the force main is not permitted. Mr. Riddell addressed questions regarding easements, explaining that engineering work has been completed to determine feasibility, and additional engineering is underway to locate the treatment plant, identify system components, and determine whether existing rights-of-way can be used or whether new easements must be acquired. Where the sewer cannot remain within a public right-of-way, easements will be purchased, consistent with standard practice.

The commissioner noted that specialized engineering firms are engaged to complete this work, including surveyors and sewer design engineers who will determine grades, pressurization points, and system layout. Advisement was given that specific technical questions should be submitted in writing so they can be directed to the appropriate engineers for detailed responses.

Councilmember Maschari: In previous discussions with Commissioner Moore and Mr. Armbruster that she was surprised to learn that a forced main sewer line was to go down Russia Rd. while attending a New Russia Township meeting, placing South Amherst councilmembers in an unprepared and unfavorable position. Ms. Maschari requested that South Amherst officials be included in discussions when projects affecting the community are being considered. Earlier involvement would have allowed the Council to ask whether project planning and engineering could accommodate a future gravity sewer line if conditions later permit.

Commissioner Riddell: I believe these discussions should have occurred based on what I heard tonight. I make no excuses for the past. We have not been effective in our communication. Coming from the private sector into government, one challenge I faced is that we do not communicate publicly until approvals are finalized. We applied for funding from the State of Ohio, which took fifteen months to be awarded. In the private sector, we would have held parallel discussions to explain what we hoped to do if the funding were received. That did not happen here, and I include myself in that responsibility.

While nothing was ultimately lost, we acknowledge that conversations should have occurred earlier. We have taken steps to correct this. Following a staff retirement in the Lorain County Commissioners' office, we redirected funding toward developing a newsletter. For major projects, such as the sewer project, we recognize that direct communication with affected residents should have occurred.

Previously, we distributed printed newsletters, but due to cost, which is no longer feasible. We are now developing an email newsletter and a Facebook page to better share updates and invite public questions.

Councilmember Maschari: Requested that, going forward to consider the village in the process in some way – whether through an email notification or by letting us know that an issue will be discussed at a commissioners' meeting. I raise this because of attending a Lorain County Township Association meeting in Grafton Township that included representatives from the various townships, county administration, a commissioner, plus state officials. As a village representative, it felt as though villages

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were not fully considered. I understand that, structurally, commissioners primarily serve townships, and that villages and cities operate more independently. However, we are still part of the county.

Commissioner Riddell: I agree, and that is why we need to communicate more broadly. For two years, we mailed information to 136,000 households, even though we do not know how many people read it. This year, due to budget reductions, we are pursuing a more cost-effective communication method.

County commissions were created as extensions of the state, while cities and villages operate under home rule and often fall outside our jurisdiction. However, you make a valid point: lack of authority should not mean lack of communication, and that is an area where we can improve.

Councilmember Maschari: I would like your opinion regarding the All-Ohio Future Fund. I reviewed the website to better understand how the county secured the \$67 million, including the application process and materials submitted. In doing so, I learned that villages and townships may apply to the fund independently. Given that we are in need of both a water system and sewer infrastructure, is there a way the commissioners could provide assistance or support to help us apply for this funding?

Commissioner Riddell: The appropriate step is to work with your state representative and state senator. They voted to create the Ohio Future Fund, which was established when state income tax collections exceeded projections by approximately \$750 million. Rather than using those funds elsewhere, the legislature created the Ohio Future Fund to support projects that contribute to Ohio's long-term future.

Villages and cities are eligible to apply directly for that funding, and the county does not control the process. We would apply under the same criteria as a village or city and would be competing for grants. However, commissioners are legally responsible for representing and planning for townships, which is the primary distinction. This is not intended to diminish villages or cities; it is simply a reflection of jurisdictional structure and the fact that we are not typically included in those discussions.

Councilmember Maschari: Do you know when you applied to them? You didn't have engineering plans then. You had a PowerPoint presentation that said, "Here's our dream wish,"

Commissioner Riddell: We had sufficient engineering completed to estimate the overall system cost, based on comparable projects and construction costs in other areas. While we did not have final construction-ready drawings, we did have a presentation outlining a plan, including the general location of the sewage treatment plant and how the system would connect. I believe that approach is still workable.

Going forward, I recommend contacting the candidates elected this fall. You are within Representative Deeter's district, and Senator Nathan Manning is also currently serving, though he is term-limited. These state legislators are the appropriate contacts when seeking funding from Columbus, as they are responsible for managing and allocating state revenue, similar to the role of county commissioners at the local level.

Councilmember Savage: What is the current plan for funding those sewer projects and the water treatment plant beyond \$67 million plus?

Commissioner Riddell: The Environmental Protection Agency currently controls nearly \$700 billion in funding appropriated to improve sewage capacity in the Midwest. We have already been in contact with relevant parties, and once the sewer system is constructed and the land is purchased using the \$67 million allocation, we will be eligible to apply for EPA funding.

Our plan aligns directly with the EPA's priorities. They favor a single large treatment facility rather than multiple smaller plants, and they prefer direct discharge into the lake instead of into rivers and streams where delays occur. Our proposal fits their mission closely. Nationally, the EPA is managing funding approaching \$1.5 trillion for these purposes.

Councilmember Savage: Is that only for sewage, or can that be water systems as well?

Commissioner Riddell: I don't know about the water. I always think of sewers and EPA hand in hand. Email me that question and I'll try to get the answer.

Councilmember Savage: What does the county plan to do if property taxes are abolished in Ohio:

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Commissioner Riddell: The elimination of real estate taxes would result in an immediate \$13 million budget shortfall, severely impacting schools, public services, and community-based programs that rely entirely on property tax funding. While reform is necessary to control growth, abolishing this revenue source would require deep service cuts or replacement through income or sales taxes, disproportionately burdening lower- and middle-income residents. Legislative reforms are intended to stabilize the system, and taxpayers are encouraged to allow those measures to take effect before pursuing structural changes that could destabilize essential public services.

Councilmember Troike: Are you aware that the village has made repeated efforts to collaborate with the county on the installation of sanitary sewers, based on prior plans (Line that ran from W. Erie, down Baumhart to the Quarries) and assurances that service expansion was a matter of timing rather than feasibility. Residents are now facing significant financial burdens due to failing septic systems, while the village was not included in or granted access to a newly planned sanitary sewer project. This lack of coordination has caused concern, particularly given prior commitments and ongoing development priorities elsewhere.

Commissioner Riddell: We would pick up the Quarry site and that still plans to be luxury homes.

Councilmember Troike: Why would you pick up the Quarry site and not the village:

Commissioner Riddell: There was a meeting in '23 with your utilities board and we were under impression that people liked it the way it was, and the board said they don't have the support.

Councilmember Troike: I know the person from the board and the liaison, and they were pushing for it (the sewers).

Commissioner Riddell: Turnover in elected office has contributed to uncertainty regarding prior decisions; however, the county's intent is not to exclude South Amherst from infrastructure opportunities. The goal is to preserve the village's option to access sanitary sewers if desired, recognizing that growth is not feasible without such infrastructure. Previous planning estimated costs near \$4 million, and the village lacked both funding capacity and community support at that time. County policy requires shared financial participation when a project does not benefit the entire county, with a focus on long-term, permanent improvements.

Councilmember Savage: What do you see as the most important industry right now?

Commissioner Riddell: Contrary to popular belief, agriculture is often perceived as the county's primary industry, automotive and manufacturing sectors remain the leading contributors to economic output. Agricultural property values are moderated by CAUV protections, which intentionally limit tax burden on farmers. Looking ahead, high-tech manufacturing represents the greatest opportunity for future economic growth, with the potential to become as transformative as the steel industry was historically.

Councilmember Savage: So, from your perspective, when you think of the most important industries here in the county, it's based on what they bring in as far as tax dollars?

Commissioner Riddell: No, that's just a piece of it. What they bring in, in gross domestic product—what's the value that they provide? If you add up all the soybeans and corn and compare it to all the cars that are sold, and so forth, and what do they contribute to employment in Lorain County? All of those things are a factor in that. It's not just a tax valuation. It's also how many jobs are in agriculture, how many jobs are in industry. There are about seven or eight components to that calculation.

Councilmember Savage: I would say, in the rural parts of the county, agriculture is extremely important. And I know there are a lot of people who are concerned—some are scared, some are angry—about the development that's coming to the rural parts of the western part of the county, especially right now. What are the commissioners going to do to ensure a future for agriculture here in Lorain County?

Commissioner Riddell: Well, first of all, zoning is the purview of the townships, the villages, and the cities. They establish zoning laws to determine what is permitted and what is not permitted—what is a hard “no,” a hard “yes,” and what falls in between. The county does not control zoning decisions. Our responsibility is to ensure that the groundwork is in place so that, as the future comes to Lorain County, we are prepared to allow the future we want. Zoning is the primary tool used to protect that future.

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Second, it is important to remember that there are more than 98,000 acres of agriculturally zoned land in Lorain County today. Not all of that land is actively farmed, and some acreage is subsidized by the federal government not to produce crops.

When we hear concerns that the loss of a thousand acres will destroy farmland, that amount represents less than one percent of the county's total agricultural land. While it is true that this could accumulate over time, we must also address the loss of approximately 20,000 manufacturing jobs. Without replacement development, the tax base will continue to shrink as the population ages and contributes less in taxes.

Ultimately, there are three choices: bring in development to strengthen the tax base and generate revenue, cut services, or raise taxes. We prefer to pursue development. We will continue to seek opportunities for growth. Some communities may not want that growth, but there are townships and communities within the county that do.

Councilmember Koscho: Chip factories have been mentioned a few times, and you would not take an unemployed steel worker and put them in a chip factory position. So, first, how many jobs are being created by these chip manufacturers? And where are you going to be pulling these people?

Commissioner Riddell: The average chip plant, which is half a million square feet, has 3,500 jobs. The average data center that everybody's against employs 25 to 50 people. We're not after a data center. We're after chip manufacturing. Forty percent of the unemployed in Lorain County today are between the ages of 25 and 40. They are trainable. If we don't have the jobs, the college trains them and those individuals leave the county to take jobs elsewhere—jobs they were trained for using our tax dollars. I would like to see more of those 25- to 40-year-olds stay here.

The commissioner offered to have a work session outside of a regular council meeting in order not to take up meeting time.

Mayor Jones: I have one question before we end. Have you sat in on, or been part of, any conversations that included a data center in the county—anything that you're aware of and can speak on—that maybe an NDA has not kept you under?

Commissioner Riddell: Well, first of all, we've been cited in the media. Commissioner Moore answered a question and said, yes, he signed an NDA, but that was for Micron, which went to New York six years ago. There are no NDAs outstanding right now with the commissioners or our staff.

Second, regarding data centers, it appears there is one looking at Oberlin on land that was taken over there. They have not come to the county for any assistance. The land in Pittsfield Township that is adjacent to Oberlin—property owners, not the township, initiate annexation. The property owners petition the village or city, and if both agree, the annexation proceeds. It then comes through our office from a recordkeeping standpoint. Our role is limited to ensuring the required steps are followed. We cannot approve or reject the project based on preference.

I also understand that there may be one looking at Baumhart Road and one looking elsewhere; however, those are rumors. We have had no official contact from any of them at the county level. These projects are very lucrative, and they are not seeking tax abatements or incentives. If they can acquire the land and secure zoning, they can finance the development themselves. In fact, in the case of the project near Brownhelm, the developer is petitioning Vermilion to fund the sewer and lift station to connect to the Vermilion wastewater treatment plant. The challenge is capacity, and without sewer capacity, growth will continue to be limited. Where there are no sewers, there can be no development.

Cynthia Breda: I am a New Russia Township Trustee but speaking my personal opinion. I wanted to point out, regarding data centers, that I spoke with Jeff Armbruster on October 21, with Karen Perkins present. This was when the megasite issue first became public. Transparency, which Mr. Riddell referenced, did not occur with us. We had no knowledge of the megasite, and we were not informed of anything related to it.

Regarding data centers, Mr. Armbruster assured me there would not be a data center in New Russia Township. He did state there would be one in Brownhelm and a small one in Brownhelm Township. At our March 17 hearing with the developer, I asked Drew Siley about the data center and repeated what we had been told. He then stated that it was not small and was planned as a hyperscale facility. As a result, we are receiving conflicting and inaccurate information.

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Regarding sewers, New Russia Township was working in tandem with the county, yet we were not notified of developments until we began work on our land use plan. A red flag occurred when county representatives began attending our land use planning committee.

Residents who have expressed concern have reportedly been told that if they do not like the situation, they can move. I find that statement disrespectful to taxpayers and to families who have invested in their communities.

We were not informed that JobsOhio was involved, and New Russia Township was not included in those discussions. While the concern is not specific to New Russia Township alone, data centers in the general area present environmental concerns. In my opinion, data centers consume utilities and resources without clear community benefit.

Regarding the megasite, we were told in June 2025 that sewers were coming, and approximately three weeks later, news of the megasite became public. None of this was communicated to us in advance. Citizens later obtained application materials indicating planned sewer installation and potential eminent domain, neither of which had been disclosed.

If transparency is the goal, communities should be engaged early when major projects are being considered. I support sustainable, long-term job creation, but we need more information about these industries, particularly given increasing automation and the long-term impact on local tax bases. We feel we were blindsided and that collaboration did not occur as it should have.

Chad Arcaba: Agriculture is the leading industry in Ohio, generating approximately \$124 billion annually. Zoning is a primary tool for protecting agricultural land. The speaker questioned why the county continues to pursue a sewer line through New Russia Township when the area is zoned for agricultural preservation and the township would not be permitted to connect to the sewer system.

**FISCAL OFFICER**

Payment Listing 3/6-3/20/26

Presented to council. Council noted that the detailed report accompanying the payment listing was helpful in clarifying certain items.

Financial Reports

The following Financial Reports for March 2026 were presented to council: Revenue Summary, Fund Summary and Appropriation Summary.

February Bank Reconciliation

Completed and requires council signatures.

**RECORDS CLERK**

LGOC Recap

Michelle Henke, Wendy Kolmorgen and Laurie Beran attended the Local Government Officials Conference hosted by the State Auditor and will be reviewing and implementing key concepts over the coming weeks with updates to be shared with the village administration. A few of the sessions that were attended included: the Ohio Ethics Law, Practices & Procedures of Deliberative Bodies, Payroll and Bank Reconciliation.

**UTILITY ADMINISTRATOR**

**Street/Service**

Sign Vandalism

The village has seen a recent increase in vandalism involving road signs. Signs have been cleaned where feasible, and those that sustained damage will be replaced with new signs that are currently on order.

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**Water/Storm**

Water Breaks

Over the past week, the village experienced multiple water main breaks due to a failed transducer monitor at the water tower, which caused pressure spikes from Rural Water. The failed part has been replaced, and the water tower is now fully operational. All water breaks have been repaired promptly. Appreciation was expressed to Diggers in Ohio for responding on two consecutive days to assist with the repairs

Shut Offs

During the past month, there were four shutoffs, all of which have been restored.

**Park**

Playground Equipment

The additional equipment estimates were presented to council as requested.

Councilmember Maschari moved to approve the Pioneer Place Playground System by Pro Playgrounds for a cost of \$75,999.00. Councilmember Savage seconded the motion.

*Discussion: Wood fiber mulch and demolition of existing playground is included.*

Jeffers  Koscho  Leshinski  Maschari  Savage  Troike  Motion carried.

**Cemetery**

Software

Councilmember Maschari provided background on the consideration of cemetery software. She explained that current cemetery records are very old, handwritten, and in some cases illegible, making software implementation impractical at this time. Inputting unreliable data would not improve record accuracy, and paid manual entry would be required. Current recordkeeping methods are sufficient given low lot sales. Ms. Maschari noted that software might be reconsidered in the future if a new cemetery section were developed and surveyed to support increased sales and revenue. However, current burial trends, including fewer funerals and increased cremations, do not justify the expense.

*Discussion: Ultimately it would be up to the Utility Administrator to advise Council when it becomes necessary for a new software program.*

Jeffers  Koscho  Leshinski  Maschari  Savage  Troike  Motion carried.

Councilmember Maschari moved to close for sale the following sections in Evergreen Cemetery: A, B, C, D, E, F, G, H. Seconded by Councilmember Savage.

Jeffers  Koscho  Leshinski  Maschari  Savage  Troike  Motion carried.

**COMMITTEES**

**Ordinance**

Amend 121.03 Audit Committee

The committee recommends revising the current wording so that it reflects three members of council and one resident. If the appointed resident position is unfulfilled, the audit committee will continue to perform its duties.

Ordinance Enforcement / Mayor's Court (521, 521.08, 909.03)

Trash and Nuisance Ordinance Enforcement

Discussion was held regarding enforcing trash and nuisance ordinances through Mayor's Court. It was noted that enforcement does not require police officers; citations may be issued by Building Department

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staff, zoning officials, or inspectors. Citations may list the issuer as an “official” and be processed through Mayor’s Court, with a focus on achieving compliance and remedies rather than punishment.

Questions were raised regarding ordinance penalty levels and Mayor’s Court jurisdiction, particularly where penalties could exceed allowable authority. It was emphasized that ordinances must be drafted within penalties the Mayor’s Court can impose and coordinated with the Law Director. Most existing ordinances begin as minor misdemeanors and escalate only after repeated noncompliance.

Council discussed concerns that current remedies, such as property tax assessments or liens, are not effective deterrents. Members expressed interest in strengthening enforcement tools to encourage timely compliance with basic property maintenance, such as lawn care and trash removal. The matter was identified as appropriate for further review by the Ordinance Committee.

**ORDINANCES**

Ordinance No. 1854-26 (First Reading) An ordinance amending Section 121.03 of the Codified Ordinances of the Village of South Amherst

**VISITORS**

Chad Arcaba cited an American Farmland Trust study indicating that approximately 2,000 acres of farmland are lost daily in the Midwest. He expressed concern over statements made by Drew Siley of Liberty Development at a New Russia Township meeting regarding a proposed “small” data center at the mega site, noting that data centers typically have a 15–20 year lifespan and leave land unsuitable for future agricultural use. He also raised concerns about a forced sewer main along Russia Road and the lack of direct benefit to the Village.

CDE Penny Becker updated council on the Easter Egg that will be held on March 28<sup>th</sup> at the former school and Memorial Day plans are underway.

**EXECUTIVE SESSION**

ORC (G)(3) Legal Action; (G)(1) Personnel- Safety

Councilmember Savage moved to enter Executive Session to consider imminent court action in accordance with ORC 121.22 (G)(3) and to discuss Personnel – Safety, discipline, dismissal and compensation issues in accordance with ORC 121.22 (G)(1) at 8:38 p.m. Councilmember Jeffers seconded the motion.

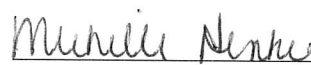
Jeffers x Koscho x Leshinski x Maschari x Savage x Troike x Motion carried.

Returned to regular session at 9:33 p.m.

**ADJOURNMENT** 9:34 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Mayor Scott Jones

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Fiscal Officer Michelle Henke

# FACTS ABOUT THE PROPOSED NEW RUSSIA TOWNSHIP DEVELOPMENT



**Lorain County has lost tens of thousands of traditional manufacturing jobs over the past several decades. To remain economically competitive—and to keep young people living and working locally—the County has been planning for future-ready, light and high-tech manufacturing opportunities.**

**This direction is not new, and it is not tied to a single project.**

## What Residents Said They Wanted

In 2023, Lorain County conducted a 10-month Strategic Action Plan involving thousands of participants across the county. New Russia Township represents approximately **0.7% of the County's population**.

## Township residents accounted for:

- 0.65% of responses in the first survey, which is proportionate to the Township's share of the County population
- 1.90% of responses in the second survey, which is more than twice the Township's proportion of the County population

This confirms that New Russia Township residents were meaningfully heard during the planning process.

## How this aligns with local planning

New Russia Township's 2013 Land Use Plan identifies areas appropriate for future development and provides guidance for long-term growth decisions.

- The proposed site aligns with the existing land use plan
- Property owners voluntarily entered into options with a private developer
- No land was taken, and no use has been imposed

Importantly:

- Zoning authority remains with the Township
- Specific uses can still be restricted until an end user is identified

## Across the county, survey results showed broad support for:

- Job creation in emerging industries
- Workforce development and education
- Infrastructure investment
- A future-ready local economy

## Why the county supports this approach

The County has a responsibility to plan for countywide growth, not just individual jurisdictions.

In partnership with state and regional economic development organizations, Lorain County supports site selection initiatives that help communities throughout the county attract and retain investment.

Responsible planning helps:

- Expand the tax base beyond residential property taxes
- Create long-term job and career opportunities
- Ensure infrastructure and workforce readiness for the future

***Preparing today positions Lorain County to respond to future opportunities – rather than reacting after they have already gone elsewhere.***



# PROTECTING OUR LAND. PRESERVING OUR WATER. PREPARING FOR RESPONSIBLE GROWTH

**Lorain County's \$67.4 million award from the All-Ohio Future Fund represents a transformational environmental and infrastructure investment in western Lorain County - strengthening water quality protections while preparing our communities for the future.**

## Environmental Benefits

While properly functioning septic systems can serve individual properties, aging or failing systems may:

- Release untreated nutrients and contaminants into groundwater
- Contribute to harmful algal growth in streams and waterways
- Impact soil integrity and nearby farmland
- Create costly maintenance and replacement burdens for homeowners

A centralized sewer system ensures wastewater is treated under strict environmental standards before being safely returned to the environment - protecting both public health and agricultural resources.

## Property Owner Protections

In many situations, existing residents will not be required to connect to the system. Under applicable provisions of the Ohio Revised Code, mandatory connections generally occur only under defined public health or system availability conditions, such as septic system failure.

If connection is required pursuant to state law, financial responsibility can be structured through assessments, payment plans, low-interest financing programs, or other mechanisms designed to reduce upfront burden and provide flexibility for homeowners.

## Project Status & Financing

The total project cost is currently under design and evaluation. While final engineering and construction estimates are still being developed, it is anticipated that the overall cost will exceed the \$67.4 million awarded through the All Ohio Future Fund.

Lorain County is actively evaluating all available financing options, including but not limited to:

- State and federal infrastructure grants
- Revenue or general obligation bonds
- Low-interest loan programs
- Public-private partnerships

Any debt obligation associated with the project is expected to be repaid through dedicated sewer system revenues, user fees, connection charges, special assessments, or other lawful revenue sources - ensuring a responsible and sustainable funding structure.

## A Modern, Underground Infrastructure System

The proposed sewer expansion will be mostly underground, preserving the rural character of western Lorain County while delivering long-term environmental safeguards.

A consolidated public wastewater system provides centralized, professionally managed treatment that protects groundwater, streams, farmland, and Lake Erie tributaries for generations to come.

## Planning for Anticipated Growth

Western Lorain County is expected to experience continued residential growth, accompanied by complementary commercial and industrial development. That growth will require a reliable, modern water and sewer system capable of serving new homes, businesses, and employers safely and efficiently.

Expanding both water and sewer infrastructure is the responsible approach to accommodate:

- New housing development
- Job-creation
- Increased service demands
- Long-term community sustainability

Proactive infrastructure investment ensures that growth occurs in a controlled, environmentally sound manner rather than through fragmented, uncoordinated systems.

## Cleaner water. Reliable infrastructure. Responsible growth.

By investing now, western Lorain County is ensuring that residential, commercial, and industrial expansion is supported by the infrastructure necessary to protect our environment and strengthen our communities for decades to come.

# UNDERSTANDING THE LORAIN COUNTY WASTEWATER INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECT



## \$67.4 Million State Infrastructure Investment | What It Is and What It Means

Lorain County has been awarded **\$67.4 million** in state infrastructure funding through a competitive grant process to support wastewater improvements in western portions of the county.

This funding is designated specifically for wastewater and sewer infrastructure expansion and upgrades to improve long-term regional capacity, environmental compliance, and public health protections.

This is an infrastructure project. It is not a zoning action, and it does **NOT** change local land-use authority.

### What this funding supports

The awarded funds will be used for:

- Expansion of regional sewer capacity
- Upgrades to existing wastewater systems
- Improvements that strengthen long-term environmental compliance
- Infrastructure necessary to serve current and future system users

Modern wastewater systems are essential to protect groundwater, surface water, and the long-term health of our communities.

### What remains under local control

Wastewater infrastructure does not determine land use.

- Township zoning authority remains with local governments.
- Land-use decisions remain under township control.
- Private property rights remain unchanged.

Infrastructure investment supports system capacity and environmental protection. It does not override local governance.

### A commitment to responsible stewardship

The \$67.4 million in state funding represents a significant investment in public infrastructure. Lorain County's responsibility is to ensure that these funds are used properly, transparently, and in accordance with state requirements.

Infrastructure decisions are made carefully, with attention to environmental standards, engineering feasibility, and long-term public benefit.

### What Lorain County controls

Lorain County's role is focused on infrastructure planning and implementation.

The County is responsible for:

- Engineering and construction oversight
- Compliance with Ohio EPA and environmental regulations
- Responsible stewardship of state-awarded funds
- Long-term wastewater capacity planning for the region

The funding must be used in accordance with state program requirements and environmental standards.

### Why this investment matters

Wastewater systems are long-term public infrastructure. Like roads, bridges, and water lines, they require planning years in advance.

Investments in regional sewer infrastructure help:

- Reduce strain on aging systems
- Improve reliability and redundancy
- Protect water quality
- Ensure regulatory compliance
- Provide capacity for existing homes and businesses

Responsible infrastructure planning positions Lorain County to meet both present and future needs.

***Lorain County remains committed to responsible infrastructure management and to working with local communities as these projects move forward.***

