

**Council for the Village of Yellow Springs
Regular Session Minutes**

In Council Chambers @ 6 P.M.

Monday, December 1, 2025

CALL TO ORDER

President of Council Kevin Stokes called the meeting to order at 6:02 pm.

ROLL CALL

Present were Council President Kevin Stokes, Vice President Gavin DeVore Leonard and Council member Brian Housh were present. Council member Trish Gustafson arrived at 6:03: Carmen Brown arrived at 6:04pm. Solicitor Amy Blankenship, AVM/Project Lead Elyse Giardullo and Village Manager Johnnie Burns were also present.

SWEARINGS IN (6:00)

Mayor Conine swore in Rebecca Duff as Peace Officer.

President Stokes swore in Anthony Salmonson as Alternate Member of Planning Commission.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Housh announced the success of the Community Thanksgiving meal.

Housh lauded YSDC for holding their recent Town Hall and for their economic development efforts.

Burns noted that the Village tree lighting ceremony will be December 6th from 6:30-7pm.

CONSENT AGENDA

1. Minutes of November 17, 2025 Regular Meeting

Brown MOVED and DeVore Leonard SECONDED a MOTION TO APPROVE THE MINUTES of November 17, 2025 Regular Council Meeting. The MOTION PASSED 5-0 ON A VOICE VOTE.

REVIEW OF AGENDA

There were no changes made.

PETITIONS/COMMUNICATIONS

The Clerk will receive and file:

Sheila Drennen re: Council Short Street Discussion

19 Form Letters re: Spring Meadows 3 and 4 (List of names attached to 1 form)

DeVore Leonard reviewed communications.

PUBLIC HEARINGS/LEGISLATION

Housh MOVED and Brown SECONDED a MOTION TO READ BY TITLE ONLY ALL EMERGENCY LEGISLATION. The MOTION PASSED 5-0 ON A VOICE VOTE.

Reading and Public Hearing of Ordinance 2025-25 Approving 2026 Annual Appropriations for the Village of Yellow Springs and Declaring an Emergency. DeVore Leonard MOVED and Gustafson SECONDED a MOTION TO APPROVE.

Burns noted that nothing has changed since the first reading. The budget still shows a \$588,000 deficit, and efforts are ongoing to reduce or eliminate this deficit by 2028.

Housh commented that the Village typically overestimates expenses and underestimates revenue in an effort to budget responsibly. He opined that while there is reason to believe the budget will balance during 2026, that is not the case moving forward, given extensive infrastructure needs and potential changes to property taxes.

Stokes OPENED THE PUBLIC HEARING.

Reilly Dixon of the Yellow Springs News asked several questions regarding possible backup plans should the State reduce tax income to municipalities.

Housh responded that the Village does not receive the lion's share of property tax, but that shortfalls would have to fall primarily to levies.

DeVore Leonard commented that the repeal of property taxes is unlikely, but if it occurs, every municipality in Ohio would be in the same dire position.

Housh noted that the Finance Committee would do a great deal of work on the situation, should it seem imminent.

Ralita Hilderbrand asked how much of the Affordable Housing fund is targeted for Lawson Place.

Burns responded that \$213,000 is slated specifically for Lawson Place.

Stokes CLOSED THE PUBLIC HEARING.

DeVore Leonard stated that Home, Inc. had asked, following the first reading of the budget, whether the \$20,000 allocated for Home, Inc. (HI) for the repairs project could be moved to fund Phase II of Cascades, and whether an additional \$68,213 could be directed to HI from the Affordable Housing fund to the Phase II Cascades project. This would, he said, be a \$48,213 increase, and would be conditioned upon HI receiving State funding for Phase II.

Brown asked what would happen to the needed repairs in this case.

DeVore Leonard stated that there is more ability to leverage funds on the Cascades side.

Brown objected to removal of repair funds.

Stokes noted that HI has some repair funds available.

DeVore Leonard stated that "the amount in the budget would be the same," since it would be moving funds rather than adding them.

Housh opined that those dollars would not be used for LIHTC or Glass Farm, and suggested that the Village add the amount without pulling the repair funds already allocated.

DeVore Leonard stated that he had shared this idea with Tiffany Hiser as well as with the Village team to make sure it was feasible. He proposed that \$68,213 be allocated to HI Cascades Phase II from within the Affordable Housing fund.

Stokes SECONDED.

Housh commented that there is \$80,000 in the line that was not used for LIHTC in 2025.

Brown commented that she does not want to set a precedent.

DeVore Leonard restated his motion to “Increase the appropriation to the Affordable Housing fund to \$311,247, or an additional \$68,213, those funds to be directed to the HI Phase II Cascades project should they receive State funds for Phase II. Stokes SECONDED.

Stokes CALLED THE VOTE ON THE AMENDMENT TO THE BUDGET ORDINANCE, and the MOTION PASSED 3-2 ON A ROLL CALL VOTE, with Brown and Gustafson voting against.

Stokes CALLED A VOTE ON THE MOTION TO APPROVE, AS AMENDED. The MOTION PASSED 4-1 ON A ROLL CALL VOTE, with Gustafson voting against.

First Reading of Ordinance 2025-29 Approving a Right of Way Vacation Off of East Center College Street. Brown MOVED and Housh SECONDED a MOTION TO APPROVE.

Burns noted that a portion of the alley has structures on top of it and is not usable as a Right-of-Way.

Housh asked that moving forward there be evaluation of any possible future use as a function of the Planner’s findings.

Burns agreed, but noted that ROWs are very rarely vacated in recent years.

Blankenship responded to Housh’s concern, stating that an additional condition could be added for ROW vacations.

Stokes declined to call a vote on the first reading.

Reading of Resolution 2025-58 Approving a Wage Adjustment for Village Employees for 2026. Brown MOVED and Housh SECONDED a MOTION TO APPROVE.

Burns stated that the COLA average for the area is 3.11.

Stokes permitted comment from Mitzie Miller.

Miller conflated the COLA amount and possible merit increases for eligible employees, stating that some employees could receive up to 8%. She expressed objection to this possibility and spoke against the wage increase.

Gustafson objected to Section 3, stating that the Village Manager should not be able to award merit, that those increases should come through Council.

Blankenship explained that the resolution is enabling, through legislative act, the longstanding practice of the Village Manager awarding merit increases as an outcome of performance evaluations. She explained that the referenced 5% is tied to step increases listed in the 252 chart for salaried employees.

Blankenship noted that the resolution provides legislative specificity that the Village Manager is permitted not only to recommend an annual wage increase, but is permitted to authorize merit (step) increases should they be warranted.

Gustafson stated that the average increase in Ohio is 3%, and a potential 8% increase is insupportable when “villagers are struggling to afford groceries.”

Burns pointed out that the merit increase could range from zero to as much as 5%--it is not a guaranteed 5%.

Brown objected to using struggling villagers as a reason to deny an increase, stating that all villagers benefit from having excellent Village employees.

Gustafson responded that this is what municipal employees do, and is nothing extraordinary, and that when there is a deficit, extreme measures have to be considered.

DeVore Leonard commented that while there are concerns, there is currently enough cash reserve that this is not a concern.

Housh commented that he has long tried to get a clear definition of merit increase and has not received this. He added that this is being looked at with an eye to resolution.

Brown commented that this is something that Council should have resolved and has not as yet, and that employees should not lose out.

Gustafson stated that a measure had been on the ballot and that voters had voted to add longevity increases to pay.

Blankenship indicated that this may be a misinterpretation of a conversation the two had previously had, stating that longevity increases have never been a ballot issue and are covered through the Employee Handbook.

Ralita Hilderbrand commented that “the number one cost driver is people” and that a better way to approach this issue is with bonuses.

Stokes CALLED THE VOTE, and the MOTION PASSED 4-1, with Gustafson voting against.

Reading of Resolution 2025-59 Approving a Salary Adjustment for Judith O. Kintner for Continued Service as the Clerk of Council. DeVore Leonard MOVED and Housh SECONDED a MOTION TO APPROVE.

DeVore Leonard noted the process engaged in to determine the increase.

Housh complimented the process and the thoroughness of the approach.

Blankenship received clarification that the increases proposed for both the Clerk and the Village Manager will not include the 3% increase allotted all other employees.

Stokes CALLED THE VOTE, and the MOTION PASSED 4-0 on a ROLL CALL VOTE, with Gustafson Abstaining.

Reading of Resolution 2025-60 Approving a Salary Adjustment for Johnnie R. Burns for Continued Service as Village Manager. DeVore Leonard MOVED and Housh SECONDED a MOTION TO APPROVE.

Stokes affirmed that the same process was engaged in with the Village Manager as with the Clerk.

Stokes CALLED THE VOTE, and the MOTION PASSED 4-0 on a ROLL CALL VOTE, with Gustafson Abstaining.

CITIZEN CONCERNS

Mitzie Miller related a sidewalk clearing story.

Ralita Hilderbrand expressed great frustration that DeVore Leonard had moved to increase the amount budgeted to Home, Inc. after the public hearing was closed, which effectively prevented public comment. She added that the reason she had sought to determine how much of the Affordable Housing fund was required for

Lawson Place was so that she would know how much was likely going to Home, Inc. She spoke against the lack of transparency in the situation.

Hilderbrand added that she had gone from being satisfied with the budget process to being outraged.

SPECIAL REPORTS

There were no Special Reports.

MANAGER'S REPORT

Burns delivered the Manager's Report. He noted that the WYSO story on annual flour and sugar delivery had been picked up at the state level.

Burns directed attention to a memo from Aaron Arellano regarding an ODOT grant, noting that a resolution to that effect will be brought to the meeting on December 15th.

OLD BUSINESS

Conversion Therapy Ban Discussion. Housh introduced the topic. He referenced the ordinance and resolution provided and advocated for a resolution in the short term and consideration of an ordinance in the longer term. Housh based his recommendation on his understanding that an ordinance would in fact be enforceable.

Housh stated that he had reached out to Cuyahoga County who have a Conversion Therapy Ban ordinance, and are able to do so because they have an anti-discrimination ordinance which is upheld by means of their Human Rights Commission. Housh stated that because the Village has its own Mayor's Court, he believes Council could pass first an anti-discrimination ordinance and then a CT Ban.

Responding to a question from Brown, Blankenship stated that any law the Village puts on its books can be upheld in Mayor's Court. The real issue, she said, is proving that the violation occurred. She noted that there is only one instance in the State of Ohio of a CT Ban being enforced, and that was an instance in which the provider had advertised the practice openly.

Blankenship reminded Council that the "ban on bans" is still being argued by the Supreme Court, and if it is upheld, any legislation passed by the Village would be immediately nullified.

Housh advocated for an anti-discrimination ordinance and stated that there seemed reason to bring a resolution as well. He stated that would work on both the resolution and a draft ordinance for the next packet.

Responding to a question from Stokes, Housh stated that an anti-discrimination ordinance would contain language that could be referenced by a later CT Ban ordinance.

DeVore Leonard expressed that if it is not a heavy lift or high cost, he would not be opposed to considering the legislation.

Blankenship clarified that in the case of the majority of anti-discrimination ordinances, there is an adjudicating body—such as a Human Relations Commission—that determines whether or not the alleged act of discrimination occurred.

Housh opined that this could be done within the context of Mayor's Court or could be referred to the Ohio Civil Rights Commission.

NEW BUSINESS

Go Bus Report. Burns noted that Yellow Springs has been selected as a stop on one of the planned Go Bus expansion routes. This low-cost option will provide twice-daily transportation throughout Ohio and into

Pennsylvania. A resolution authorizing a contract for these services and provision of a bus stop will be brought to the December 15th meeting.

FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

- Dec. 15: **Second Reading and Public Hearing of Ordinance 2025-29** Approving a Right of Way Vacation Off of East Center College Street
 Reading of Resolution 2025-61 Authorizing the Village Manager to Enter into a Contract with Hocking Athens Perry Community Action and Barons Bus for Go Bus Services
 Reading of Resolution 2025-62 Authorizing the Village Manager to Enter into a Contract with XXX for Dashcam and Taser Services
 Reading of Resolution 2025-63 Approving a Vacation Time Pay Out for the Village Manager
 Reading of Resolution 2025-64 Appreciation for Trish Gustafson's Service as a Council Member
 Reading of Resolution 2025-65 Appreciation for Kevin Stokes' Eight Years of Service as a Council Member
 Reading of Resolution 2025-66 Appreciation for Brian Housh's Twelve Years of Service as a Council Member
 Reading of Resolution 2025-67 Condemning the Practice of Conversion Therapy
 Reading of Resolution 2025-68 Authorizing the Village Manager to Enter into a Community Reinvestment Area Agreement with The Windsor Companies
 Reading of Resolution 2025-69 Authorizing the Village Manager to Submit a Grant Application to the Ohio Department Of Transportation for Active Transportation Plan Development Assistance
- Jan. 5: Swear in New Council/New Mayor
 Nomination/Vote for Council President
 Nomination/Vote for Council Vice President
 First Reading of Resolution 2026-01 Authorizing the Sale During Calendar Year 2024 of Municipally Owned Personal Property Which is Not Needed for Public Use, or Which is Obsolete or Unfit for the Use for Which It was Acquired, by Internet Auction, Pursuant to Ohio Revised Code Section 721.15(D)

Jan. 20:

ADJOURNMENT

At 7:49pm DeVore Leonard MOVED and Housh SECONDED a MOTION TO ADJOURN. The MOTION PASSED 5-0 ON A VOICE VOTE.

Signed: _____
 Kevin Stokes, Council President

Attest: _____
 Judy Kintner, Clerk of Council