

Village of Lowellville Regular Council Meeting 6/11/25 6:30 PM

Pledge of Allegiance

Mayor called meeting to order

Roll Call – Ron Rotuuno, Bob Coppola, Don D’Onofrio, Joe Donatelli, Keith McCaughtry, Ryan McNicholas

Suspend the reading of the previous minutes – Coppola 2nd McCaughtry

Roll Call – Yes

Motion to send the claims to the claims committee – moved Donatelli 2nd McNicholas

Roll Call – Yes

Motion for claims as approved and placed on the pay ordinance – moved Coppola 2nd Rotunno

Roll Call – Yes

Fiscal Officer read agenda

Motion to approve the meeting minutes from 5/14/25, 5/29/25 & 6/9/25 – Moved by Donofrio 2nd Donatelli

Comment – Mayor – Minutes are available after approval – usually done at following month meeting.

Roll Call – Yes

Village Administrator needs to sign agreement with County for W. Water St. Project

- Mayor explained Mahoning Co. Commissioners gave us a \$200,000.00 Grant
- This covers design cost, and other cost associated with project. Village cost is \$0
- McGill to the Riverfront Park (W Water St.)

Motion for administrator to sign agreement to receive grant – Moved Donatelli 2nd McCaughtry

Roll Call - Yes

Village Administrator needs to sign CACI Agreement with MS Consultant for Parson’s Ave. Improvements.

- Construction Administration and Construction Inspection agreement with MS Consultants
- Sanitary Sewer Update (from Walnut to Liberty St Ext)
- Bid opens 6/12/25

Motion for administrator to sign contract for with MS Consultants – moved Rotunno 2nd McCaughtry

Roll Call – Yes

Water Rate Discussions will be taken place on July 29 for Lowellville, Struthers, Beaver, Campbell, Poland, New Middletown, Boardman, Canfield, Coitsville, and Springfield Twp. at Mauthe Park. Lowellville will have a council member there to represent us.

Mayor stated Village not sure if another income tax request will be on the November ballot.

Fiscal officer asked Mayor if we were signing new contract tonight for Natural Gas at the WWTP located at 600 E Water St. - Stated the Administrator would sign that and to call Dave Ferro (Optics Consulting) to find out why we are only contracted with Optics Consulting for WWTP account. Administrator will follow up in the morning.

Committee Reports –

Improvements – McNicholas

- Enrichment Group:
- Thanks to residents for participation in Lowellville Day
- Congrats to Bill Flora for Citizen of Year
- Happy Will McCaughtry Foundation did well
- Upcoming events: Garage Sale Days, Halloween Decoration

Finance – McCaughtry

- Nothing at this time

Safety – Donatelli

- Nothing to report

Utilities – D’Onofrio

- Did met with Aqua last week (with Village Administrator) and meeting is July 29th for negotiations

Mayor asked if any residents experiencing low pressure with their water – Resident stated yes, they live on McGill. They should not have this issue since that’s where the upgrade was. Definitely need to look into this.

Ordinance – Coppola

- Still working on some proposed ordinances, need to work with solicitor for legislation. Will know more when they have their next meeting.

Claims – Rotunno

- Nothing at this time

No Engineer report – Engineer out on paternity leave. Village Administrator, Joann Esenwein, gave the following updates:

- Stated Bike Trail Project by ODOT – New Bridge being installed – Hopes to reopen this section of the Bike Trail by the festival.
- Opening Bids start 6/12/25 for Parsons Sewer Line Replacement Upgrade
- Finished up Yo-Low Rd. project – Storm water line Replacement

- River Road, McGaffney, Jackson – Will be starting project after the festival. Paving, replacing guardrails
- Riverfront Park & W Water St. – Pre-Construction Meeting on 6/19/25
- Picnic tables are delivered, need set up.
- Camera's & Wi-Fi will be discussed
- Benches, Basketball courts, Pickleball courts, Playground area are part of the project
- Still working on design on Northside Fire Station (D'Onofrio working with them on project)
- Siphon Repair Project will go out for bid in early September
 - Mayor comments: The River Road project, it's a federal aid route, 80% federal money 20% match
 - OPWC was part of our match estimated at 2.1 came in 1.4 million. Should not have to borrow any funds for this project. This project was submitted over 4 years ago.
 - Park project was \$936,000.00 GRANT with no match. Did have to pay CSX a fee since we are encroaching on their property during construction, part of the grant expense.
 - Parsons- Stormwater cannot go into sewer systems being treated. Got cited for too much I and I. Project will have all new sanitary, roadway curbs, storm curbs, paving. Grant from OPWC pays 42.1% We pay 57.9%.
 - Loan at 0% for 20 years
 - Pump station & Siphon – currently pipe that runs from BFI to our WWTP is from 1936. We will be installing pump station, new pipe,

Solicitor Lanzo Report

- Report on pending litigation but will require executive session

Mayors Iudiciani Report

- His duties are to report to council about finances and coverage of safety forces. What is the best way to handle both?
- Mayor has gone to Mahoning Co. Auditor office and spoke with another entity to see cost for village to enter into agreement with fire district, WRJFD. Has not met with them (WRJFD), not sure where that information came from.
 - Current Police Budget - \$563,000 We do not want to lose our identity but we do have look at safety and budget for Fire and Police. When/if conversations is had we would negotiate our employee's.
 - Council has met with 1 municipality and may be meeting 3-4 more to get some information. Mayor is gathering information and presents to council in executive session since it's contract and personnel conversations. Council makes decisions from there and it goes to the public. There was an executive session meeting with another municipality that included council and chief of police.
 - Mayors biggest concern is ambulance service especially during the day. 20+ years ago it use to take 28 minutes to get an ambulance and it has returned to that time frame, especially during day. 130 medical calls, 630 police calls in 2024. Looking at finances and we are not able to pass a levy for police/fire or income tax. We have to look at other alternatives.

- Income tax levy – would have generated \$130,000.00 with the 1/2 % increase. Was defended and Mayor and Council admit they did not do a good job promoting.
- Explained that if Police/Fire levy was to pass it is used strictly for that department only.
- Income Tax increase goes to general fund
- Our budget is 2M. We usually fund \$300,000 - \$350,000 in matching funds of projects. Village has been lucky to receive so many grants. We are in the top 5% of all grant money received.
- We have no more cuts we can make, currently 8 full-time employees. We run the WWTP with 2 consultants - \$52,000.00 year. We could use a licensee 3 but their salary is \$110,000.00
- Lots of surrounding communities pay \$180-200 mo. for sewer bills
- We raise almost \$600,000.00 year in income tax. General fund is \$1,040,000.00 and Police Budget is \$563,000 – which comes out of the general fund.
- Would like for residents to attend meetings as we go through this process. Offer suggestion's, talk to council, call Mayor.
- Chief Comstock – all that happened with that is the mayor spoke with him and would like for him to explain what can they do for us, how does it work, can he talk to council?
- Village wants to build fire station \$250,000.00 but we don't have the funds and not sure if we could get loan for that.
- Wants our identity and keep our employees employed. #1 priority.
- Does not want people resigning from fire dept. Nothing has happened. Just asking questions to get information. Village is studying the finances and will go from there.

Legislation –

Motion to move on suspension of the rules for the pay ordinance by Coppola 2nd McCaughtry

Roll Call – Yes

Move on passage of the pay ordinance by Coppola 2nd Rotunno

Roll Call – Yes

Old Business –

- Coppola confirming Michael Mellio still does our webpage – Yes.
- How does he receive? Fiscal Officer sends minutes to him and Administrator sends him project updates.
- Council is happy with the website.
- Hope residents are utilizing. Minutes are posted a month behind due to pending approval from Mayor and Council.

New Business –

- Confirmed that notice was received for road closure for festival.

- Did Melillo's request a road closure for festival? Not yet, but we do have a council meeting before the festival.
- Mayor states we will properly have a special meeting before the next regular council meeting. Will be advertised, as usual. Special meetings can only discuss what is on the agenda.

Public Request –

Trish Mezzacappa 761 W Wood St. Moved here for the safety and peacefulness. Thinks it's a bad idea to lose control over police dept. Moved from community where this happened, near New Jersey boarder. Wants to volunteer to do line-item analysis of financials and budget to save village money. Will do for free and come up with a report by August. Solicitor informed her budget is public record. McCaughtry informed her finance meetings are posted.

Angel Laudermilt 705 Elizabeth St. – Income Tax Levy – voted no because it read fire, police, and general fund. Has council considered just doing a safety forces levy? Mayor explained yes, we did a fire/police levy and it went down overwhelmingly. She would like to see another levy of safety forces now that the public is aware we in dire straits. Has village considered not income tax levy but a bond levy based on real estate? Coppola explained income tax is more beneficial over a levy, everybody pays in the Village 4-6 mils. Income tax, if retired, do not pay. Work in Lowellville, pay, if you work outside of Lowellville, you do not pay. If levy done, we get millage, everyone pays, including the retired. Mayor admits they did not do a good job explaining the income tax.

- "If" we joined Poland Twp Fire District, and their council approved Lowellville joining, we automatically go into their millage. Ex: \$100,000.00 home you will pay an additional \$212.00 year. This is not verified. Still looking at paperwork provided by Auditor's office. Poland's budget is 2.8 million for fire dept. Would cost Lowellville approx. \$212,000.00 Council and Mayor are conducting study, not only with Poland. WRJFD did provide a presentation by email. Council has not voted yet.

Brandi Harris 713 W Walnut What information has the fire dept been told that is not true? Mayor, how the levy works, meaning if a fire levy that money goes strictly to fire, nowhere else. She did not like the lack of transparency of this last election and voted no. Wished they were more informed about what was happening with fiscal emergency and feels public was not informed about ballot until last minute. McCaughtry informed her we are not in fiscal emergency; our budget is balanced. Brandi stated any information coming through, that you feel is coming from the fire dept. (Mayor clarified he does not feel the fire dept is sharing misinformation, feels they received bad information from someone). Mayor stated they did have a town hall meeting, in regards to the levy, and only 2 people came. He does believe they should have done one earlier and went door-to-door. And in regards to the language on the ballot that was from the election board, and mayor agrees, he did not like the language either.

Terrance Esarco 127 E Grant – He did attend the town hall meeting and only 1 other resident and 4 council were present. Asking residents to attend more meetings to know more of what's going on, do not rely on social media. When he heard about something to do with finances, he called the office and then spoke with the mayor directly. Wants everyone to know the mayor and council are available to speak with you. He's happy with our police dept. Every Sunday morning, he calls for loud music and the police respond to him. Wants to know if council gets paid per diem or salary? They are paid salary and if

they are absent council has to excuse them to be paid. Mayor gets paid \$12,000.00 year and council gets \$3,300.00 year. He wishes more people would attend meetings, call their reps, talk to them when you see them out. Get involved.

Kasey Stabinski 662 E Wood – Has 2 children 7 & 3. 7-year-old she pulled out of Lowellville Schools. Still wants to stay in Lowellville because of the safety. Concerned for school if we change funds for fire and police. We've had 2 major incidents at the school that affect all our children and teachers, what happens if we don't have them? Mayor – "If" it happens we will still have resource officers at the school. Kasey loves everyone on the fire dept. Her grandmother, lives next store to city hall, fell on the bathroom floor and had to call 911. It took 37 minutes, happened in the afternoon. Tons of people from Lowellville got there before the emergency response to help. Officer that was on scene, had arms crossed and said there was nothing he could do, you'll have to wait. Does not want anything to happen to our fire/police. Lives on the East End, no driveway and people are driving 90MPH. Concerned for children. Voted no on the levy because of the way it was written. Mayor – most police depts. do not do CPR, just go to home (Kasey clarified, she did not like the way he had his arms crossed). We had 133 medical calls and 95% of the time police arrive first. Expressed his concern about the 37 min. for ambulance to arrive. Will discuss with Police Chief.

Nick Miketa 140 E Grant - Member of the Fire Dept. and medical for over 13 years. Reason for moving to Lowellville. During the day they are short staffed due to having full-time jobs. Not opposed to seeking help for during the day, if that means staffing someone full time or someone else part-time help us in the day but not fully losing our identify. Believes losing Lowellville Police/Fire would be the wrong way to go. Feels we are the most certified in the surrounding areas. 24 out of 26 members are full-service fire and medical. Shortage at hospitals causes delay, as well, you have to stay with patient. Says all surrounding areas are having the same issues, delayed times. Unless they offer to staff more people and buy more ambulances to cover the village, the issue will not change. In the village our night time is very quick. Mayor – Chief Boggia and Chief Meehan did a phenomenal job. Council has given chiefs what they asked for but now we at the point where we need a new station, truck and we don't have it to give. Agrees you are all dedicated and one of the best and doing more ambulance runs than anywhere. Have not meet with another fire dept, only had a conversation with one entity and may be having more. He says we would not lose our identity, other than the name, but the same people would be doing the same thing here in the village. Council was provided with a presentation of a powerpoint. They do the funding, will pay lease on building. They could stag EMS here in the village and North Hill/South Hill. Nick wants to clarity, yes, they say that but if they get called, they will leave to cover the other calls. Our fire dept is the most equip in the area. We built this program.

Tonya Boggia 709 W Wood – Husband was fire chief for 17 yrs. And on dept for 24 yrs. Today was his last. He has not got many things he asked for. Has asked for a station, floor testing cause it's not safe, tried to implement evening staffing, was approved but not written. He has brought in over \$600,000.00 in equipment. Village has not since 1999. Fire dept had ambulance given to them, sold a squad truck, and made \$1,000.00. Village was the first to have ambulance. Dept was built from ground up, hours of training. Grant for EMT classes. Fire Dept does for the community, not for a paycheck.

Scott Ogle 230 E Walnut – 2 years ago I told you to talk to village regarding the levy and explain. And now it happened again. Why did you not go and knock-on doors, send mailers? We are a shrinking village, not gaining population, and that means shrinking money. Wants his tax money to go to services

that is worth the money. What would our response time be? Reminds council to talk to the villagers regarding levies and let them know what it's for.

Burton Baird 141 W Walnut – 128 W Walnut St. raccoons, opossum's, cats has bought this issue up a few months ago ... the house is empty. It needs condemned. Mayor asked zoning and yes, this house is in the process of being looked at. There were issues at the county level due to father and son having same name. Zoning did have Board of Health called there and they gave it a clean bill of health. Burton asking Mayor how much is milage on WRJFD currently? Mayor –Village gets 8mil and school gets 59 mils. If we entered into electric/gas aggregate as a community, are we responsible, as citizen's, to only that? No, you can opt out. Was on WRJFD for over 20 yrs., great fire dept, but I don't want to pay extra taxes to join. Village has a great fire dept. As a community we need to look at every option. Understands we need to look to cut cost but don't feel my taxes should go up. Mayor answered for only \$210.00 additional a year for a \$100,000 house and being able to have a better ambulance service is a no brainer but we want to study it. Burton said our fire dept is going to provide the same coverage as station 93. Mayor would like to hear other presentations from other fire districts. This is something that may not ever happen if council does not like. Burton is asking (for fire dept only) will the residents get to vote? Not until there is a renewal of their levy is the mayor's understanding.

Mike Trolio Lowellville Police Officer – Asking about the police dept budget, why is the lighting on the police dept budget? Mayor – you are welcome to see the budget at any time.

Jeff Wildes – 224 W Walnut – Listening to all this bs regarding grants, projects, and everything. This problem with finances is your guys, you can't decide on a gd thing. Mayor asked if he could be more specific. Jeff say "everything". You come to a meeting and you're asking her and her, you didn't come prepared for nothing. Mayor-oh really, you don't know wtf you're talking about. Jeff – I spent 32 yrs. on the street dept, how about the street dept, you're only talking about police and fire, do they work for free? Mayor - No, they get different grants and different accounts. Bob Coppola explained appropriations and budgets and how the budget gets really tight through the year. Jeff asked Bob about the road on the bridge, horrible. It will be taken care of. Project is starting after festival. Mayor told Jeff they will address those potholes before the festival.

Ceil Vance 36 W Walnut –basin W Walnut & McGill has not been cleaned in a year. Says the only thing our street dept does is mow grass. Mayor says someone will be out tomorrow. She wants to know how much we spent last time we did it – Mayor – it was an emergency grant through OPWC and it cost us nothing. Ceil has nothing but good things to say about our fire dept but our police dept, forget it. Never sees a police cruiser. Already addressed this with you and know you spoke with the chief. After that I saw them for 3 days, I see Poland Twp all the time. I would rather give my money to Poland than Lowellville. I'm done with the police here. It takes them 35 minutes to get to someone. They should never be out of the village unless they are assisting another community.

Not sure who is speaking – when you took this job (mayor I didn't take it, I was elected) you understood people would come here and be angry and upset (mayor, yes, of course, but I'm allowed to get upset, too). You just said we were going to have a better fire dept (mayor, no I didn't, if I did, I misspoke. Our fire dept and people are still going to be here.) You ae not a man I want representing us after tonight.

Bill Meehan 129 High St.- All other counties have levies - 1 for police and 1 for fire. Put it on the ballot.

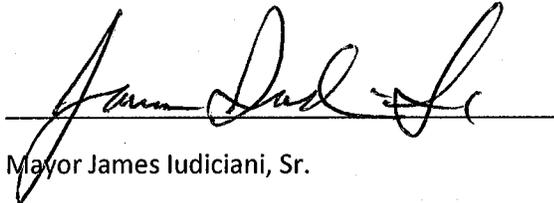
Steven Ruozzo 220 E Jackson – You say we’re going to have better service from a different fire dept. How can you sit there and say that? (Mayor, again, I misspoke) You’re going to say someone from the twp. is going to fight harder than ours? (Mayor – my concern is ambulance service during the day, that’s what I meant-we have great people on our fire dept and police dept. Also, if we do go with someone else, they would want our people to stay).

Brandi Blinsky 220 E Jackson – You said our crime rate is low, well that’s the police. Can you name any of the students in the school? Mayor – yes. Brandi, well you know our police can cause they keep our students safe. Our fire dept responds within 1-5 min. Somewhere else is 10-20 min. and you want to get rid of them? Mayor – we are not getting rid of anybody.

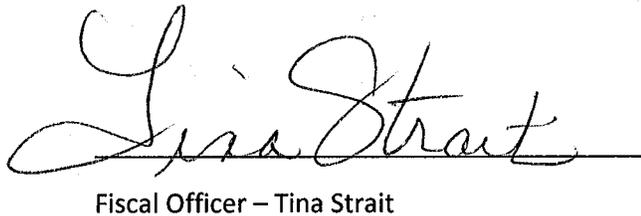
Nick Miketa – After I presented what the issue was with EMS, you all only care about dollar signs. You’d rather pay a different dept than us? Why would you pay someone else when you have all these people who have given their lives to his village? (Mayor – my understanding is you could still be here.) Why? I don’t want to work for them ... I want to work for the village because we built it. Keith asked Nick – who said we were doing this? Nick – I’m just saying – we’re entertaining the issue of giving it away instead of looking at the issues. I’d loved to leave my full-time job and be here as my full-time job as a fire fighter/EMT. You’ve never proposed that. You never came to the fire dept and asked how many of you would be interested, if we found a way to pay you guys during the day how many would be interested? You have never once come to the fire dept and I’ve never even spoken to some of you council. You have never once asked us what we needed, it’s always a fight at a council meeting for us to voice our opinion. And it should never come down to that, we are Lowellville and we built Lowellville. You are single handing trying to give it away.

Motion for adjourn – Keith McCaughtry 2nd Joe Donatelli

Roll Call – Yes



Mayor James Ludiciani, Sr.



Fiscal Officer – Tina Strait