

Village of Gates Mills
MINUTES OF A REGULAR MEETING OF COUNCIL
December 16, 2025

A regular meeting of the Council of the Village of Gates Mills, Ohio was held at the Community House on Tuesday, December 16, 2025, at 5:30 p.m. with Mayor Siemborski presiding. The meeting was live-streamed to the internet.

1. Roll Call starts at 3:40

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

Other Village officials present were Clerk DeCapite, Service Director Biggert, Police Chief Minichello, Fire Chief Majeski, Assistant Fire Chief Jamieson, Finance Administrator Mulh, Village Engineer Courtney, and Law Director Hunt.

Mayor Siemborski welcomed past Mayor Karen Schneider, recognized Lieutenant Pollutro's valuable 23 years of service and now his retirement, and detailed the many holiday and community spirit events happening in the village (Agenda Item No. 4a).

2. Minutes of Regular Council Meeting of November 18, 2025 starts at 8:30

Councilmember Broome moved to approve the November 18, 2025 minutes and Councilmember Deacon seconded the motion.

Ayes: Broome, Deacon, Greco, Perez, Steinbrink, Turner.

Abstain: Onysko

Nays: None

Motion carried.

3. Pay Ordinance # 1304 \$710,916.59 starts at 10:15

Councilmember Broome moved to approve Pay Ordinance #1304, and Councilmember Steinbrink seconded the motion.

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

Nays: None

Motion carried.

4. Mayor's Report starts at 11:00

b. Sidewalk Project Update

We have completed the sidewalk. The east side of River Road was finished in an exposed aggregate alternative, and the west side is basic cement, in keeping with the desires of the adjacent property owners. A small decorative sandstone wall was built on the corner of Colvin and River Roads. Lindsey Baker, landscape architect, has submitted a proposal of \$3000 for determining plantings and fencing using input from the affected residents. This winter we will not clear snow from the sidewalk - it doesn't make sense to encourage usage when all the safety measures are not in place. In the spring, we will install the plantings and fencing and various other safety features, stripe the road, and await the bridge placement.

c. Aging Well Committee starts at 14:00

Community Partnership on Aging (CPA) Executive Director Wendy Sattin and Committee Co-Chair Joy Banish were in the audience and available to answer questions. Council had asked for a number of items during the first reading of Resolution No. 2025-48 at the last meeting. An Operating Agreement was drafted and provided to Council this morning. After having a chance to read the material, please send any questions so they may be addressed before the next meeting.

Moved to Agenda Item No. 12 **Resolution No. 2025-48 (Second Reading)**

“A Resolution Authorizing the Village of Gates Mills to Enter Into a Membership Agreement with Community Partnership on Aging for Older Adult Services” was read by Mayor Siemborski. Resolution No. 2025-48 will remain on second reading.

Executive Director Sattin introduced herself and advised that some residents already participate with CPA. CPA's main mission is to keep everybody in their homes as safely as possible with dignity and with the opportunity to thrive in place. After laying some groundwork in January, services and programs would probably start in February. The Senior Services Interest Survey has provided a very strong direction on how to move forward in Gates Mills.

Comments and questions from Councilmembers starts at 18:08

Broome - If CPA runs short of funds, does CPA call on its members to kick in more money? Ms. Sattin replied a budget is presented to the Mayors of member communities every November for review and discussion, and then the Mayors vote on it. CPA sticks to that budget. She also seeks funding from the County, Western Reserve Area on Aging, and several foundations.

Deacon - Where is the framework of operation documented - things like budgeting and liability? Ms. Sattin and the Mayor indicated two documents address the framework - the Council of Governments (COG) Agreement given to Council at the last meeting and the Operating Agreement drafted 12/10 given to Council today.

Onysko - He would like to join the Aging Well Committee.

Turner - She thanked the Mayor for putting the Senior Services Interest Survey on the village website. The survey indicated residents are interested in attending events here in the village rather than in other communities. A comment was made at the last meeting that to have programs here, we need another \$5,000 to \$10,000 to do so. She thought CPA speakers and activities were provided for in their fee. Ms. Sattin stated she anticipates about two days presence here in Gates Mills every week. Mayor Siemborski explained on top of that there may be things we want to do here in the village for our seniors that are outside of CPA's scope. For example, support transportation not included in the \$23,546 fee, deliver hard copies of the monthly CPA newsletter for the first year, and other unanticipated things for which we budgeted a total of \$30,000 for senior services.

Turner - She finds the 20% facilitation time requirement by Robin and/or Jean, Town Hall Coordinators, mentioned last month to be high. The Mayor responded phone calls, making arrangements, and follow up efforts are not person-free. It's not zero and it's not half their time. We estimated a quarter of one person's time is realistic. Councilmember Onysko's daughter wishes to get involved.

Turner - She pointed out Council has not approved an Aging Well Committee. If we are going to have a committee, two organizations that have done a lot of work for seniors in the community - the Community Club and the Friends of the Library - should have representation on the committee. The Mayor agreed. Committees are appointed by the Mayor and confirmed by Council. It would be appropriate to do so if the resolution is approved in January.

Perez - She spoke to Parks and Recreation Director of Mayfield Village. Their experience with CPA is overwhelmingly positive. They appreciate the partnership even though Mayfield Village has extensive senior programming and a senior coordinator in place. Transportation service costs are paid upfront annually even though just 3-4 residents a year use it. There is a Citizens on Aging Committee that meets quarterly and invites CPA to attend. CPA provides reporting on the number of residents who participate. Mayfield Village has not paid any additional costs beyond the contracted annual cost and transportation.

Broome - He asked if CPA makes phone calls to seniors just to talk. Ms. Sattin answered yes, friendly visitors make phone calls. Friendly visitors in the home recently started back up. They are background checked before coming into the house.

5. Financial Report attached and on the website starts at 30:40

Mayor Siemborski reported we continue to be in a somewhat enviable position at the end of November. We're showing a good surplus in large part due to the fact that we've received about \$250,000 in reimbursements for dollars we expended in the previous year. All the expenses were pretty much in line with what we had expected.

6. Clerk's Report - None

7. Treasurer's Report - None

8. Police Department Report attached and starts at 32:26

9. Service Department Report attached and starts at 33:00

Comments and questions prompted the Service Director to report they are still trying to fix the truck broken down at Cedar and Woodstock Roads December 13th. We stopped using slag about 5 years ago because it costs more than salt, and slag is less effective on the road. We did not seek reimbursement from Morgan Linen after their truck hit the side of the Mills Building, because we can fix it at minimal cost.

10. Fire Department Report attached and starts at 35:40

The Mayor provided background for Resolution No. 2025-56 on the agenda tonight. Although the purchase of a Ford F-350 pickup truck was in the 2025 budget, Fire Dept personnel wished to hold off on the purchase, not knowing whether the funds appropriated might instead be needed for the new fire engine. That will not be the case in 2025. Fire Chief Majeski reported the lowest bid received on a Ford F-350 was under \$57,000. The truck will be upgraded with a lighting package and a utility body making it more of a service vehicle/command vehicle for the fire dept. The new truck will eventually replace the 2010 Ford Explorer.

Councilmember Perez asked the Fire Chief if he was concerned that some fire truck vendors had declined to bid. Fire Chief Majeski responded he is somewhat certain that we will get at least two bids.

Councilmember Deacon complimented the Chagrin Valley Times article about Fire Chief Majeski, the mutual aid system, and how all the area departments cooperate.

Councilmember Steinbrink asked why is there a delay of 3 years in fire engine manufacturing. The Fire Chief feels there was no or little production during Covid. Generally fire apparatus in the country is aging. We are replacing a fire truck that is going to be 40 years old. Most communities try to replace their truck between 18 - 22 years.

11. Committee Updates starts at 40:32

a. Broadband (Councilmembers Deacon and Onysko/Village Engineer)

- CVG is on track to begin construction at the beginning of the year
- CVG will meet the second Thursday of every month from 4:00 - 5:00 p.m. with the Broadband Committee to discuss progress issues
- CVG is developing a FAQ communication for release before the holidays
- Biggest lesson learned from Hunting Valley is communication is paramount

- We received CVG's first 16-week schedule. They update that every month and will provide to us at our monthly meetings. We should share that service area schedule on the village website. Village buildings are first
- We have laid out a process to best integrate CVG drawings, which are in ArcGIS, and our existing conditions information, which is in AutoCAD. We will review and approve those integrated drawings on a street by street basis based on their 16-week installation schedule
- The Law Director will write an agreement that specifies the purpose and the duration of CVG's use of the space on River Road. A couple of residents have complained about the staging area. Communication is critical. The area will look better after plantings in the spring, and we will continue to keep an eye on it. Signage to warn traffic that vehicles might be entering the roadway are planned
- CVG is going to keep the high-tech hub in Hunting Valley
- CVG's commitment to burial is huge. They are not going to do aerial unless there is no other way

b. Budget & Finance (Mayor Siemborski) starts at 48:45

There is an appropriation request on the agenda tonight to approve expenses for next year (Ordinance No. 2025-51), and there is legislation covering health insurance and compensation.

Over the last several years we developed the following process to establish our budget. Department heads put together the first pass of what they believe they need to operate their departments. That data is collected and combined by the Finance Administrator and reviewed with the Mayor. The Mayor goes back to the department heads with questions, and there's give and take. At the same time, wage information is gathered from ten municipalities that we consider our peers. The Wage & Benefit Sub-Committee uses that information to determine whether our various classifications of wage levels are appropriate. Their recommendation to the Budget & Finance Committee was that with inflation running in the high twos, a raise across the board of 3% would be reasonable and fair. We have been fortunate over the last two years to lose no staff due to compensation, and we need to be competitive. The Insurance Sub-Committee initially was looking at a 35% increase in health insurance premium from Cigna. The Finance Administrator negotiated that number down to 23%, and then used that leverage to talk to our previous carrier who came in at 22% - 23%. The Insurance Sub-Committee recommended staying with Cigna at the 23% increase as it's tough to change insurance companies with respect to employees, signups, deductibles, and ease of administration. There will be small deductible and co-payment increases with Cigna, and we have maintained our employee participation rate at 6% - the village pays the substantial amount of premium. This is the recommendation of the Budget & Finance Committee. Councilmembers Onysko and Broome concurred with the health insurance environment based on their own experiences.

On the revenue side, we kept the real estate taxes at the current level. We won't get an exact real estate tax number until another two weeks passes. We put municipal income taxes at \$2,400,000. RITA's estimate was \$2,300,000 - \$2,500,000. We maintained the traffic camera program at \$1,500,000. We have \$1,300,000 from various other sources - rents and so on. The biggest piece is an estimated \$250,000 from a home donated to the village that will be ready for sale - that money has no strings attached to it and will go into the general fund. It's up to Council to decide where that goes.

When you put that all together, that creates a budget for the year and it creates the appropriation request of \$9,665,000 in Ordinance No. 2025-51. Council never approves the budget. Council only approves the expenses, but you can't reasonably approve the expenses if you don't know where the revenue is coming from. So we do the revenue, the budget, and the capital expenditures all at the same time in order for Council to have a basis for knowing how it all ties together.

c. Tree Canopy (Councilmember Turner) starts at 58:55

- Shared a Holden Arboretum publication called "Ways to Love a Forest" that showcases individuals and groups doing extraordinary things with stewardship of the land. Our Tree Canopy Committee was one of only two groups included in the book. We should be proud.
- The Committee discussed an extension of properties to be included in the pilot project for the coming year and submitted a \$50,000 budget to the village - \$21,500 for the second year of the existing pilot project, \$22,000 for the additional properties, and \$7,000 for forester consultation. The Committee still needs to come to Council for approval.
- A slideshow of aerial and ground photos is in the making as an interim comparison from October 2024 (before the project started) until October 2025. Bryan Kuchta will add some narration, and we will have a good information piece for the village.
- We will be applying for ODNR EQIP funds. Private property owners adjacent to the village or Land Conservancy property under the pilot program can take advantage of funds to work on the invasives on their property. We have identified two locations - between the Garden Club and Merkel properties, and at Founders Park on Old Mill Road.
- The Metroparks will continue work to remove invasives on 33 acres of their property along River Road north of Mayfield Road all the way to the river.
- We are looking at the feasibility of planting 200 trees in the village for our 200th anniversary as suggested by Jim Stafford.

d. Heritage Home (Mayor Siemborski) starts at 1:04:14

- Chuck Spear has done a wonderful job identifying homes that have a value that would qualify.
- Up to 20 people attended the November 12 presentation. Attractive 2% financing was available if the application was completed and registered in the system by December 31.

- We have been asked to rejoin next year at a \$2,500 cost and we'll do that. Heritage Homes is near closing on financing with another commercial lender - it will probably be 3% under market.

12. **Resolution No. 2025-48 (Second Reading)** - See 14:00

13. **Ordinance No. 2025-50 (First Reading)** starts at 1:06:05

“An Ordinance to Increase the Compensation of Certain Village Employees; and Declaring an Emergency” was read by Councilmember Turner. The Mayor discussed this at Agenda Item No. 11b. Councilmember Turner added other aspects of compensation, like holiday/vacation/overtime/sick time/longevity pay, remain the same. Adding station staffing at the fire dept over the weekends starting May 1, 2026 will bring total 2026 compensation expense above the 3% increase, as will the payout in January of unused vacation and sick time to retiring Lieutenant Pollutro.

Councilmember Turner moved that the rules requiring ordinances to be read on three different days be suspended and that Ordinance No. 2025-50 be placed on its final passage. Councilmember Broome seconded the motion.

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

Nays: None

Motion carried.

The Mayor noted there is a typo error for the Community House Manager, and the correct rate is 35.44

Councilmember Turner moved to approve Ordinance No. 2025-50 as amended, and Councilmember Broome seconded the motion.

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

Nays: None

Motion carried.

14. **Ordinance No. 2025-51 (First Reading)** starts at 1:09:06

“An Ordinance Providing Appropriations for Expenditures for the Village of Gates Mills, Ohio, for Fiscal Year Ending December 31, 2026, Repealing Certain Ordinances and Declaring an Emergency” was read by the Mayor. See discussion at Agenda Item No. 11b.

The budget for the year shows expected revenue of \$7,800,000. The operating expenses of the village are \$7,400,000 and the capital expenditures are \$2,200,000 for a total of \$9,600,000. We will be spending over \$1,500,000 of funds that we have accumulated the last several years.

The larger capital expenditures are \$868,000 for the road program, \$545,000 for prepayment of service to CVG, \$160,000 for broadband engineering, and \$156,000 for culverts.

Councilmember Broome summarized we are spending more than we are planning on taking in, but a lot of that is one time, non-repetitive expenditures. Councilmember Broome moved that the rules requiring ordinances to be read on three different days be suspended and that Ordinance No. 2025-51 be placed on its final passage. Councilmember Steinbrink seconded the motion.

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

Nays: None

Motion carried.

Councilmember Broome moved to approve Ordinance No. 2025-51 and Councilmember Steinbrink seconded the motion.

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

Nays: None

Motion carried.

15. **Resolution No. 2025-52 (First Reading)** starts at 1:14:35

“A Resolution Authorizing a Contract with Cigna Healthcare to Furnish and Provide Hospitalization and Health Care, Dental, and Vision Coverage for Village Employees; and Declaring an Emergency” was read by Councilmember Turner. See discussion at Agenda Item No. 11b. Councilmember Turner added dental and vision rates were kept flat.

Councilmember Turner moved that the rules requiring ordinances to be read on three different days be suspended and that Resolution No. 2025-52 be placed on its final passage. Councilmember Greco seconded the motion.

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

Nays: None

Motion carried.

Councilmember Turner moved to approve Resolution No. 2025-52 and Councilmember Broome seconded the motion.

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

Nays: None

Motion carried.

Finance Administrator Mulh clarified two often confused terms. When you are “suspending the rules”, you are suspending the three readings. When

you are “declaring an emergency”, you are making it go into effect immediately, instead of after 30 days.

16. **Ordinance No. 2025-53 (First Reading)** starts at 1:18:30

“An Ordinance Declaring the Village’s Intention to Enter Into a Health Reimbursement Account for 2026; and Declaring an Emergency” was read by Councilmember Turner. This is a continuation of a program currently in place. It reimburses employees 1/2 of their eligible out-of-pocket medical expenses per year up to \$3,250 for single coverage and up to \$6,500 for two-person or family coverage.

Councilmember Broome moved that the rules requiring ordinances to be read on three different days be suspended and that Ordinance No. 2025-53 be placed on its final passage. Councilmember Onysko seconded the motion.

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

Nays: None

Motion carried.

Councilmember Broome moved to approve Ordinance No. 2025-53 and Councilmember Deacon seconded the motion.

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

Nays: None

Motion carried.

17, **Resolution No. 2025-54 (First Reading)** starts at 1:20:20

“A Resolution Authorizing a Contract with Wichert Insurance Services, Inc. to Furnish and Provide Liability and Property Insurance Coverages for the Village of Gates Mills, Its Officials and Employees and Declaring an Emergency” was read by the Mayor. Premiums came back \$10,000 higher than current. We have agreed to accept a higher deductible on some of our vehicles, and that brought the premium down by \$5,000.

Councilmember Steinbrink asked if a higher deductible was looked at on property too. Why wouldn’t we have a \$10,000 or \$15,000 property damage deductible, certainly something more than \$1,000? The insurance industry is quickly becoming catastrophic coverage. At what point would we file a claim? The Finance Administrator will see what the effect would be on premium if we increase more deductibles and report back at the next meeting.

Councilmember Turner moved that the rules requiring ordinances to be read on three different days be suspended and that Resolution No. 2025-54 be placed on its final passage. Councilmember Steinbrink seconded the motion.

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

Nays: None
Motion carried.

Councilmember Greco moved to approve Resolution No. 2025-54 and Councilmember Broome seconded the motion.

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

18. **Resolution No. 2025-55 (First Reading)** starts at 1:23:30

“A Resolution Declaring a Police Department Service Weapon as Surplus Property and Transferring Ownership of the Service Weapon to Lieutenant Pollutro Upon His Retirement and Upon Release of All Claims Related to Said Weapon” was read by the Mayor. Police Chief Minichello explained that historically an officer in good standing retires with their duty weapon. The Lieutenant was a range officer for years, and this is important to him. The Law Director added state code requires Council to declare it is no longer needed for municipal purposes. It’s an administrative matter, so there is no need to declare an emergency.

Councilmember Onysko moved that the rules requiring ordinances to be read on three different days be suspended and that Resolution No. 2025-55 be placed on its final passage. Councilmember Greco seconded the motion.

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

Councilmember Greco moved to approve Resolution No. 2025-55 and Councilmember Deacon seconded the motion.

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

19. **Resolution No. 2025-56 (First Reading)** starts at 1:26:06

“A Resolution Authorizing the Mayor to Enter Into a Purchase Agreement With Preston Ford for a 2026 Ford F-350 Super Cab Pickup Truck for Use by the Fire Department; and Declaring an Emergency” was read by the Mayor. See discussion at Agenda Item No. 10. The Mayor added their is a verbal agreement with Preston Ford that Council would vote tonight, and if approved, we would make the purchase. Hence the emergency, so it could go into effect now and we could sign the agreement tomorrow.

Councilmember Greco moved that the rules requiring ordinances to be read on three different days be suspended and that Resolution No. 2025-56 be placed on its final passage. Councilmember Broome seconded the motion.

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

Nays: None

Motion carried.

Councilmember Broome moved to approve Resolution No. 2025-56 and Councilmember Turner seconded the motion.

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

Nays: None

Motion carried.

20. **Ordinance No. 2025-57 (First Reading)** starts at 1:27:37

“An Ordinance to Amend the Annual Appropriation Ordinance No. 2024-52 to Increase Certain Appropriations and Other Expenditures of the Village of Gates Mills, Ohio for the Fiscal Year Ending December 31, 2025” was read by the Mayor. He recalled our practice is to set appropriations at the budgeted amounts. As the year progresses and we find that we need more money appropriated, then we come back to Council and ask for those approvals. The Finance Administrator sent a brief description of three items earlier today.

Councilmember Perez moved that the rules requiring ordinances to be read on three different days be suspended and that Ordinance No. 2025-57 be placed on its final passage. Councilmember Deacon seconded the motion.

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

Nays: None

Motion carried.

Councilmember Greco moved to approve Ordinance No. 2025-57 and Councilmember Deacon seconded the motion.

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

Nays: None

Motion carried.

21. Council Discussion starts at 1:29:27

a. Land Conservation Levy - Mayor Siemborski - starts at 1:29:55

Given the Land Conservancy Levy is up for renewal in 2026, the Mayor prepared a document titled “Land Conservation and Open Space Levy” that lays out a time frame and the principal tasks necessary for inclusion of the levy on the

November ballot. The Mayor would like Council input as well as one or two Councilmembers to assist him throughout the process.

b. Accessory Structures - Councilmember Steinbrink - starts at 1:33:46

Councilmember Steinbrink expects to be back in front of Council late first quarter 2026 with recommendations from P & Z. The Mayor has some items he would like to incorporate in with the topic.

c. 2026 Priorities - All Council - starts at 1:34:25

Last year the Mayor laid out priorities that aligned with our three major Comprehensive Plan priorities of safety, land and environmental stewardship, and community engagement. Council discussed and tweaked and agreed on what were the most important things for the village to do in 2025. The Mayor proposed a similar process for 2026. He would start with taking a look at did we accomplish what we set out to do in 2025, and then what might 2026 look like. He stressed the importance of having our 2026 priorities written down by the end of January.

22. Business from the Audience - None

23. Adjourn

Mayor Siemborski recognized Councilmember Deacon, who is completing her four year term on Council, for her active dedication, especially with the Broadband Committee. Many times she silently adjusted her schedule, and her efforts are going to make our village different than a lot of other villages. The Mayor also acknowledged his good fortune to work with knowledgeable and dedicated department heads, Finance Administrator, Village Engineer, Law Director, and all staff.

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

Respectfully submitted,

Beth DeCapite, Clerk

Approved:

Steven L. Siemborski, Mayor

