

Hiram Township Trustees

Regular Meeting Minutes

March 17, 2026 at 7:00 PM, Hiram Township Complex

Present: Trustees; Chairman Jack Groselle, and Steve Pancost. Fiscal Officer Eric Hankinson. Road Supervisor Tom Matota. Public; Nick Bushak

This meeting is being recorded to facilitate the written minutes. The recording will be preserved until the minutes are approved.

Reading of the Minutes:

Mr. Hankinson read the meeting minutes from the February 17, 2026 meeting. Some corrections were noted. Mr. Pancost motioned to accept the minutes with corrections. Mr. Groselle seconded the motion. Roll Call Vote on the Motion: All Ayes.

Fiscal Officer:

- Mr. Matota provided Mr. Hankinson with the new Portage County Road employee pay scale. The Trustees discussed and reviewed the new scale. Mr. Pancost motioned to accept the pay scale and apply it retroactively to January 1, 2026. Mr. Groselle seconded the motion. Roll Call Vote on the Motion: All Ayes. **Resolution 2026-007**
- Mr. Hankinson presented a FY 2026 Budget for Permanent Appropriations. Mr. Pancost motioned to accept the appropriations. Mr. Groselle seconded the motion. Roll Call Vote on the Motion. All Ayes. **Resolution 2026-008**

Old Business:

Mr. Groselle received a written and signed letter from Debra Blake. She has given notification that she is retiring from her position as a Hiram Township Trustee as of March 8, 2026. Mr. Pancost motioned to accept the letter and her retirement as well as appoint Dan Ellenberger as interim Trustee. Mr. Groselle seconded the motion. Roll Call Vote on the Motion. All Ayes. **Resolution 2026-010**

Mr. Pancost contacted an architect that worked with Integra Excavating (who built the new Township Facility in 2021). The architect sent an estimate for limited services of \$6,570 for initial work on plans to retro-fit the primary 3 garage bays and building into a Fire and EMS department. Mr. Matota mentioned that if water, electric, septic, and gas/propane are provided further into the property for a Road Crew office to either be attached to an existing building (and that building would need to be insulated and heated) or the office could be contained within a whole new auxiliary building.

Mr. Pancost will be attending an upcoming Health Department.

New Business:

Mr. Pancost read a statement he wrote on behalf of the Hiram Township Trustees:

“There are some procedural steps we as a Township need to take regarding our Fire and EMS coverage. Let me be clear, I fully support our first responders as well as those in our surrounding communities. All first responders everywhere actually. On our worst day, they show up for us. They deserve our gratitude and our respect for the heroes they are.

The actions of Ann Haynam, Mayor of Hiram Village, and Chris Szell Council President make it obvious that they do not share this view. On February 27th 2026 despite the Hiram Fire and EMS having two lieutenants already serving, she (the Mayor) unilaterally closed the department and goes so far as to have the Village Police block the doors to prevent any rescue vehicles from leaving under any circumstance. There was no prior discussion with Community EMS, or GFM Fire. Just an email informing them that they need to cover Hiram blindsiding them and everyone else. As a Trustee and a citizen, I am appalled and gravely concerned for the community and for our ability to receive emergency services in our hour of need.

THIS MUST NEVER BE ABLE TO HAPPEN AGAIN!

To address this and explore our options, I am introducing a resolution giving our 90-day notice to the village that we are withdrawing from the current contract between the Village and Township for Fire and EMS services. This is required by our current agreement to explore our options going forward.”

Mr. Pancost then presented the following letter to be sent to the Village of Hiram:

“This notice is our 90 days notice pursuant to section 3B of our current Fire and EMS contract which requires 90 days notice to the Village to terminate.

The purpose of terminating the contract would be to permit the Township to explore all options for the provision of Fire and EMS coverage, which would include but not be limited to renegotiating the terms of the current contract, contracting with other parties for services, forming our own Fire and EMS department, or creating a joint district. These options can not be explored with the current contract in place.

This notice is per resolution ##### voted on and signed by the Hiram Township Trustees on this date 17 April, 2026.”

Mr. Pancost then motioned to provide the Village of Hiram a 90 day notice of termination for the current Fire and EMS contract. Mr. Groselle seconded the motion. Roll Call Vote on the Motion. All Ayes. **Resolution 2026-009**

Mr. Bushak asked the Trustees about the possibility of participating in a Fire District. Mr. Groselle stated that he is 100% against a Fire District because then Hiram College would pay nothing towards supporting the Fire and EMS program. The College would be a major cost to cover and they would provide no revenue to support the program. Mr. Groselle noted that if the State Fire Inspector known that the Village and Township did not have coverage, along with the Police blocking vehicles, he would have written up a report. The Township would have gone from a 5 to a 10 ISO rating, and the Village from a 3-4 to a 10 ISO rating. He noted this would affect everyone’s insurance. This is gross negligence on behalf of Mayor Ann Haynam. Mr. Pancost noted that the budget numbers used are based on what the Township provides. Mr. Groselle noted that the Village charges the Fire and EMS for utilities, and office administration.

Mr. Matota noted that there is space on the Township property to convert or erect a new building for the Road Crew, and then repurpose the existing 3 garage bays for use by a Fire and EMS department if the Township wishes to move in that direction.

Mr. Groselle stated that there should be a committee comprised of Ed Frito-Sweeney (Village Councilman), the Fire Chief, and one of the Township Trustees to discuss a Fire and EMS agreement going forward. Mr. Groselle is adamant that Mayor Haynam should not be directly involved. There are many questions about how a Full-time Fire Chief can be hired given the budget numbers provided by the Village. The Fire department has been saving money in order to eventually purchase a new fire truck given what a major expense (rough cost of \$1 million to purchase). Hiring full-time personnel would cut into that savings for the new truck.

Mr. Groselle received an email from Mike Collins at the County about application for participating in County Transportation Improvement District.

Resident at 11734 Udall Rd expressing concern about drainage ditch at end of driveway. Mr. Matota has already spoken to him about the issue.

Mr. Hankinson noted that Spectrum is continuing the rollout of high speed cable/fiber internet within the Township.

Road:

Mr. Matota will reach out to the County Engineers to start putting together specs for a 2026 Chip and Seal bid. There will be an Ascendance trucking bill for around \$13,000 to repair one of the large trucks. Also, Mr. Matota asked the Trustees if they would be interested in speaking to his son about possibly joining the Township Road Crew. The Trustees will set something up with him. The Township did receive a few responses to the advertisement for Road Maintenance position. Unfortunately, they do not meet the job requirements including availability.

Zoning:

None

Police:

February 2026: No report provided

Fire:

February 2026: No report provided.

Mr. Pancost motioned to pay the bills, Mr. Groselle seconded the motion. Roll Call Vote on the Motion: All Ayes.

Mr. Groselle adjourned the meeting. Meeting ended at 8:21pm

03-17-26 Meeting Payments and Receipts

Warrant	Payee	Description	Expenses	Received
12617	Municipal Signs		\$1,000.00	
12618	Good News		\$150.00	
12619	J&B Fleet Industrial Supply		\$34.61	
12620	Stanwade Metal products		\$80.10	
12621	Cleveland Plumbing Supply		\$9.34	
12622	Ray's Repair		\$100.45	
12623	Sarchione Chevrolet 2		\$92.50	
12624	Gee-Ville Auto Parts		\$228.49	
12625	Portage County Health District		\$275.00	
12626	Sedgwick		\$730.00	
12627	Centerra Co-op		\$1,250.36	
12628	Charter Communications		\$144.48	
12629	Mantua Hardware Lawn & Garden		\$152.45	
12630	Ohio Edison		\$595.31	
12631	Hartville Hardware		\$224.42	
12632	Cuyahoga Landmark		\$576.91	
electronic	Payroll		\$12,928.22	
electronic	Windstream		\$120.85	
electronic	United Site Services		\$126.00	
electronic	Middlefield Bank	ACH Service Fees	\$25.00	
electronic	Middlefield Bank	Interest		\$1,719.03