

VILLAGE OF OAKWOOD MINUTES

COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES

January 27th, 2026

Attended:

Norman Bliss- Council at Large	Erica Nikolic- Mayor*
Taunya Scruggs- Ward 1	James Climer-Law
Yvonne Evans-Warren- Ward 2	Tom Haba-Service*
Paggie Matlock- Ward 3	Mark Garratt- Police
Mary Davis-Ward 4	Matt Jones- Engineer
Joseph Lastery- Ward 5	

Absent:

Brian Thompson
Eloise Hardin
Roland Walker
Dave Tapp (Assistant Chief was there in his place)
Karen Gaither- Recreation

Meeting opened at 7:00 pm by Bliss

1. Call Meeting to Order
2. Pledge of Allegiance
3. Roll Call
4. Minutes

5. Clerk Correspondence
6. Departmental Reports
7. Ward Reports
8. Committee Reports
9. Floor open for comments from Village Residents on meeting agenda and comments in general Village residents. Please state your name, address, and subject you wish to discuss for the record. Please limit your comments to five (5) minutes. Thank you!
Please sign in to speak.
10. Legislation
11. Adjournment

MINUTES APPROVED:

November 17, 2025 Special Meeting Minutes

June 12, 2025 HR Committee Meeting Minutes

APPROVAL PROCESS:

Bliss stated: "First order of business, minutes from the November 17th 2025 special meeting and the June 12th 2025 HR committee meeting, those minutes are in our packet. Approval of minutes to our next meeting that okay that's fine we'll make a note of that."

Clerk Correspondence- Clerk was not present to give any updates.

DEPARTMENT REPORTS

LAW DIRECTOR - *James Climer*

Key Items:

Cyber Security Policy - No time pressure (due June), but wants to include in work session agenda

Charter Review - Requested another meeting late in the week or early next week to finalize recommendations

Executive Session - Requested for personnel and labor issues discussion

Work Session Items 8, 9, 10 - Time-sensitive items requested to move to regular agenda (stormwater and garden-hickory projects)

Council Requests:

Councilwoman Davis requested Work Session 26 #7 (community center fees) be added to agenda

Councilwoman Evans requested Work Session 26 #6 (scholarship proposal) be added

Councilwoman Davis requested health benefits ordinance be prioritized

ENGINEERING - ***Matt Jones***

Major Projects Discussed:

1. Stormwater Services (Work Sessions 8 & 10)

MS4 Permit Compliance - Required stormwater services from Cuyahoga County Board of Health

Two Service Areas:

Northeast Ohio Regional Sewer District Area (southern/western portion): Services at NO COST to village

Stormwater outfall sampling

Staff training for service department on best practices (catch basin cleaning, ditch cleaning)

Non-Regional Sewer District Area (northern/eastern portion): \$700/year cost

Includes Panhandle, Cape Cod, Forms River areas

Cost reimbursable through community cost share

2. Garden-Hickory Basement Backup Elimination Project (Work Session 9)

Background: Project has been in development for 5-6 years

Scope: Addresses basement backup issues for 8 homes

Funding: NCIP (New Community Infrastructure Program) Grant

County covers: 75% (\$160,000)

Village covers: 25% (\$53,000) - seeking community cost share funding

Total Project Cost: \$213,000 (high-end estimate including design)

Work Includes:

Backflow preventers

Plumbing conversions

Downspout separation

Individual solutions based on each home's specific issues

Timeline: Time-sensitive; needs approval to move forward with bidding

Councilwoman Davis Comment: Project has been promised for 5-6 years; costs increase with delays

3. Forbes-Richmond Infiltration Investigation (Work Session 11)

Separate MCIP grant-funded project

Investigating sanitary contamination sources in storm sewers and creeks

Will examine Tryon, Richmond, Milburn areas and sewer lines in open space

Councilwoman Matlock asked about sanitary manhole on her property - Jones confirmed it's part of the investigation

4. CBE Engineering Contract Renewal (Work Session 11)

Contract not renewed in 2025 due to background issues

Shrem Valley Engineering (CBE) - Oakwood-based for 23 years

Company has grown 5-6x since moving to Oakwood

Making multi-million dollar facility improvements

Received SBA funding for improvements

Committed to remaining and growing in Oakwood Village

President Bliss Response: "Our destinies are intertwined as a business, as a community, as elected officials. When you grow and thrive, we all grow and thrive."

FINANCE - **Brian Thompson**

Status Report:

Main focus: Closing the month

Target date for reporting: Today (missed due to weather closures)

Staff came in despite closure to continue work

Tasks: W-2s, 1099s, system entries

First year-end close for some current staff

Identified areas for improvement to speed up future reporting

Expected Completion: Tomorrow (January 24)

Reports were due last Friday but will be available for review before next meeting

Note: This is the first time some staff are doing a year-end close, so council asked for patience.

FIRE DEPARTMENT - **Brian D'Oracco**

Updates:

New employee started last week

Smoke Alarm Program: Ongoing; hundreds distributed in past 12 months; flyers widely distributed

CO Alarm Sales: \$10 discount CO alarms available at fire department or city hall

POLICE DEPARTMENT - Chief Garrett

Weather-Related Calls:

Dozens of traffic crashes, especially on freeway with multiple pile-ups

Increased OVIs (Operating Vehicle Impaired)

Increased domestic violence and disturbances (similar to COVID lockdown effect)

Emergency Notifications:

Part of Cog County Ready Certified Program

Receives constant communication about storm changes, warming centers

Cog County Ready Notify: Public can sign up via Google search for weather/emergency alerts

Key Cards:

Distributed new key cards for building access system

Cards have council members' names for entry to new system

RECREATION - Councilwoman Scruggs (reporting for Ms. Gaither)

"Music in Motion" Event:

Starting Friday (January 24)

All ages event at community center

Time: 6:30 PM - 9:30 PM

For residents stuck at home during school closures

Flyers available at back of meeting

SERVICE DEPARTMENT - **Tom** (Excused)

Excused from meeting due to snow removal operations

Multiple vehicles lined up ready for snow operations

President Bliss: "We will excuse Tom this season from the service department"

WARD REPORTS

Ward 1 - **Councilwoman Scruggs**

Community Engagement Event:

First event was held on January 20 (snow day) at bowling alley

Residents bowled and discussed community concerns

Good turnout with parents and children

New Frequency: Changed from monthly to quarterly events

2026 Schedule: Once per quarter (next event in Q2)

Mayor to receive flyer with dates

Other Wards

No reports at this time

COMMITTEE REPORTS

None at this time

Organizational Meeting Planned: To set tone, pace, and tenor for committee structure for 2026 (pending snow day recovery)

PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD

Denise Grant (260 Triangle Road)

Issue: Website outdated and non-functional

Complaint: During recent storm, surrounding communities posted closings on websites; Oakwood had nothing

Impact: "It's just embarrassing that we are so outdated"

Request: Please address website issues

Semia Bray (6.00 Richmond Road)

Praise: Thanked service department for excellent snow removal

Specific: Able to get in/out of driveway and navigate Richmond Road

Comparison: Unlike surrounding communities

Request: Pass along appreciation to service department

LEGISLATION

Motion to Move Work Session Items to Regular Agenda

Items Moved: 2025-WS-08, 2026-WS-06, 07, 08, 09, and 10

Motion: Made by Councilwoman Davis Second: Councilman Lastery

Vote YES: Matlock, Scruggs, Lastery, Davis, Hardin, Bliss, Evans-Warren.

Motion passed.

ORDINANCE 2025-89 - Land Sale

Title: THE ORDINANCE AUTHORIZING THE MAYOR TO ENTER INTO A CONTRACT WITH JAME A. PALLADINO TRUST TO SELL CERTAIN VILLAGE LAND

Details:

- Landlocked property in Summit County
- Received as part of court settlement in 1970s
- Village didn't even know it had the property
- No access or use possible
- "Very generous offer" given restrictions

Process:

- Planning Commission report received (was waiting on this)
- All land sales must go to planning commission first

Motion: Councilwoman Davis

Second: Councilwoman Evans

Vote YES: Matlock, Scruggs, Lastery, Davis, Hardin, Bliss, Evans-Warren.

Motion passed

ORDINANCE 2025-04 - Charter Amendment

Title: Ordinance to submit to electors the question of adopting amended Charter for Village of Oakwood

Status: SECOND READING Action: Tabled for further discussion Reason: Another meeting needed for council to discuss requested updates and revisions

ORDINANCE 2026-05 - Employee Dishonesty Insurance

RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING ACQUISITION OF EMPLOYEE DISHONESTY AND FAITHFUL PERFORMANCE OF DUTY INSURANCE POLICY IN LIEU OF SURETY BOND

Details:

- **Current Bond:** \$12,500 limit
- **Proposed Insurance:** \$250,000 limit
- **Cost:** ~\$2,400
- **Coverage Includes:** All village employees plus external incidents (e.g., hacking, unauthorized bank withdrawals)
- **Sub-limits:**
 - Forgery and alteration: \$500,000
 - Funds in transit: \$500,000
 - Money orders/counterfeit: \$500
 - Fund transfers: \$500

Questions Raised:

- Difference between retroactive vs. occurrence policies
- Exact coverage amounts
- When policy starts (upon signing, not retroactively)

Status: SECOND READING Action: TABLED for next meeting Reason: Council requested more information; Law Director to send product description and pricing for review

ORDINANCE 2026-06 - Health Insurance Contract

ORDINANCE AUTHORIZING MAYOR TO ENTER INTO HEALTH INSURANCE CONTRACT WITH MEDICAL MUTUAL

Details:

- Covers eligible officials and employees
- Time-sensitive (renewal date approaching)
- Related to ongoing union negotiations

Discussion Points:

- HRA option rejected
- HSA option available
- Possible future conversion if agreement reached with parties
- Different options for dental/vision discussed

Motion to suspend: Councilwoman Davis

Second: Councilman Lastery

Vote YES: Matlock, Scruggs, Lastery, Davis, Hardin, Bliss, Evans-Warren.

Motion passed

Motion to adopt: Councilwoman Scruggs

Second: Councilman Lastery

Vote YES: Matlock, Scruggs, Lastery, Davis, Hardin, Bliss, Evans-Warren.

Motion passed

ORDINANCE 2026-07 - Vision & Dental Insurance

Title: ORDINANCE AUTHORIZING MAYOR TO ENTER INTO CONTRACT WITH ANTHEM BLUE CROSS BLUE SHIELD FOR VISION AND DENTAL

Details:

- Covers eligible officials and employees
- Part of ongoing union contract obligations
- Renewal date: January 1 (different from health insurance February 1 renewal)

Key Issue Raised:

- Confusion about renewal dates (health vs. dental/vision)
- Health insurance: February 1 renewal
- Dental/Vision: January 1 renewal
- If not approved, could result in unfair labor practice claims

Motion to suspend: Councilman Lastery

Second: Councilwoman Scruggs

Vote YES: Matlock, Scruggs, Lastery, Davis, Hardin, Bliss, Evans-Warren.

Motion passed

Motion to adopt: Councilman Lastery Second: Councilwoman Scruggs

Vote YES: Matlock, Scruggs, Lastery, Davis, Hardin, Bliss, Evans-Warren.

Motion passed

Note: Councilwoman Evans-Warren initially abstained on suspension but changed to yes to allow vote

ORDINANCE 2026-08 - Recreation Facility Rebate Program

EMERGENCY ORDINANCE AMENDING THE HEALTHY REBATE PROGRAM FOR RECREATION FACILITY FEES

Background (Councilwoman Davis):

Original ordinance: 2011-05

Rebates based on one-quarter of non-resident membership fees

Compared rates with Beaver Heights, Macedonia, Twinsville

Macedonia had middle-range pricing

Rebates are one-third of what non-residents pay annually

Rebate Amounts:

Single adult: \$100

Family of two: \$133

Family of three or more: \$160

Seniors: Different groups with varying amounts

Medicare/Insurance with Renew Active/Silver Sneakers: Free membership

Military Veterans: \$100 off membership fee

Rationale:

Residents in other communities still pay taxes and membership fees

This rebate helps offset costs for Oakwood residents

Program in place since 2011; updated to provide more assistance

Honors previous mayor's commitment to health and wellness

Motion to suspend: Councilwoman Davis

Second: Councilman Lastery

Vote YES: Matlock, Scruggs, Lastery, Davis, Hardin, Bliss, Evans-Warren.

Motion to adopt: Councilwoman Davis

Second: Councilman Lastery

Vote YES: Matlock, Scruggs, Lastery, Davis, Hardin, Bliss, Evans-Warren.

ORDINANCE 2026-09 - Scholarship Awards Committee

EMERGENCY ORDINANCE ESTABLISHING THE OAKWOOD SCHOLARSHIP AWARDS
COMMITTEE

Presented by: Councilwoman Evans

Background:

Previous scholarship program (15 years) funded through business rebate/abatement

Fund expired; no scholarships since then

New program designed to serve underserved population (high school students)

Program Details:

Scholarships:

Number: 5 scholarships

Amount: \$2,000 each (vs. previous 16 scholarships at \$500 each)

Total: \$10,000 from general fund

Payment: \$1,000 upon enrollment proof (minimum 12 credit hours); \$1,000 after completing first semester

Refund required if student drops out

Eligibility:

Full-time enrollment at accredited college, university, or skilled trade school

Oakwood Village residents (including private high school students, home school)

Bedford High School or home school students

Selection Criteria (5 categories):

Academic performance (not sole factor)

Community service

Extracurricular activities

Awards received

Essay and oral presentation

Personal interview

Committee Structure:

One representative from each of 5 wards

Committee members receive stipends (like other committees)

Estimated 5-6 meetings needed

First meeting: Select president, vice president, secretary

Minutes kept and provided to council

Timeline:

Senior Award Program: May 15 (12 weeks away)

Time-sensitive to establish committee and finalize rules

Questions & Concerns:

Councilwoman Davis:

Asked about payment structure (clarified: \$1,000 then \$1,000)

Asked about committee member compensation (yes, like other committees)

Asked about meeting frequency (5-6 meetings)

Asked about chairperson selection (elected at first meeting)

Requested 12 credit hour requirement be added to form

Requested inclusion of private high school students (Evans agreed to add)

Councilwoman Scruggs:

Asked about funding source

Noted previous program was funded through business abatement

Concerned about committing without confirmed funding

Wanted to explore business abatement options

Evans Response:

This program NOT funded through abatement

Funded from general fund (\$10,000)

Previous program had to include non-Oakwood students due to abatement structure

This program only for Oakwood residents

Mayor Nikolic:

Asked if \$10,000 from council's budget or general fund (general fund)

Asked about committee establishment via charter vs. ordinance

Clarified: Can be established by ordinance; doesn't require charter change

Councilwoman Matlock:

Noted she was on previous scholarship committee

Previous committee didn't receive stipends (Evans said hers did)

Questioned whether stipends should be included

President Bliss:

Strong advocate for education and scholarships

Concerned about timing (year-end not yet closed)

Wanted to know final fund balance before committing

Preferred to wait for next meeting (2 weeks) for action

Wanted Council President Harding present for decision

Status: FIRST READING (Deferred)

FINAL STATUS:

X NOT APPROVED X NOT VOTED ON ✓ FIRST READING ONLY ✓ DEFERRED TO NEXT MEETING (approximately 2 weeks)

Motion to adjourn meeting made by Davis and seconded by Lastery.

Vote YES: Matlock, Scruggs, Lastery, Davis, Hardin, Bliss, Evans-Warren.

Motion passed

Meeting adjourned at 8:55.

July 14th 2026

Approved (date)

Eloise Hardin

Council President, Eloise Hardin

July 15th 2026

Posted (date)

Nina Curry

Assistant Clerk of Council, Nina Curry