

The Finance Committee for the Village of Monroeville met in Council Chambers on Thursday, December 4, 2025, at 2:00 PM, for the purpose of discussing the 2026 budget and any other financial matters that came before them.

Present were: Village Administrator Tom Gray; Fiscal Officer Eunice A. Collene; Police Chief Jon Earl; and Council members Chris Raftery, Tammy Schlachter, Bob Whitacre, and Sam Wiley.

Chris Raftery convened the meeting. Eunice invited questions from the Finance Committee regarding the proposed budget for 2026. She also detailed the level of budgetary authority that Council could decide to grant her. Today, Eunice prepared and submitted a revised certificate for 2025 to the County Auditor, which reflected a decrease in the revenue for the electric fund. Legislation aimed at reducing appropriations will be presented at the forthcoming Council meeting. Eunice clarified that our main concern regarding the budget going forward is the electric fund. Adjustments have been implemented to reduce expenses in the electric fund by approximately \$2 million. This morning, Eunice discussed the amended certificate with County Auditor Roland Tkach, reviewing all particulars with him, and they agreed that Eunice's submission is correct. A new amended certificate will be submitted to the County Auditor in 2026. Eunice noted that some capital lines she planned to eliminate will not be removed this year. There exists a sub, poles, and improvements fund 602, into which she allocated \$47,000, as there was a cash balance available. A fluctuation occurred in fund 603 to support operations. Chris asked if this was connected to set-aside funds, to which Eunice confirmed that \$82,000 was set aside, and that amount will remain unchanged for the time being. Tom asked Eunice whether she intends to use the same terminology next year regarding the term "set-aside." Eunice replied that she is unsure, as some department heads have referred to it as "set-aside," while others have called it "reserves." The sewer fund has been established, and there have been no changes in that sector. Some modifications have occurred within the water fund, and Eunice does not foresee any variations in the figures of that fund. Sam inquired if Eunice expects to restore the electric fund in 2026-2027. Eunice responded that much of this depends on Gray Matter. Additionally, it may be necessary to consider increasing electric rates. Tom warned that, most likely, unless it happens at the very end of the year, no AI/data will be functional in 2026. Tom noted that the crypto operation is presently producing around eight million kilowatt hours each month, which corresponds with the target we previously set. The deadline for the 30-day appeal period with Judge Conway is December 15, along with the appeal process. If that proceeds without any appeals, a meeting will be arranged with the Judge and the receiver. With hope, the sale of assets in North Royalton and the recapitalization of the site here could generate some revenue for the Village, assisting in alleviating the outstanding amount left by Gray Matter Holdings. Chris asked whether this would happen monthly or as a single payment, to which Tom replied that he is unsure. The Village is a priority, as Judge Conway is advocating on our behalf. There is no forecast for additional revenue from Decimal Digital.

Eunice indicated her awareness that wage increases are generally implemented at the start of the year. She conveyed that she does not see any potential for wage increases at this time, implying that they may be reassessed next year. At present, both the electric fund and the water fund are experiencing financial difficulties.

Chief indicated that he has not previously experienced the type of wage increases that have been implemented here. He noted that department heads should take into account the pay ranges within their respective departments, as these departments perform various functions. When Chief prepared his budget, he included a standard 3% pay increase for his staff. He is not involved in negotiations for or against employees outside of his department. His primary responsibility lies with his staff, and his budget reflects a 3% increase. Chief expressed uncertainty regarding the creation of job descriptions within his

department and believes that a reassessment is warranted. He wishes to meet with Eunice to revise the entire pay scale. Chief stated that he would like his officers to receive a 3% pay increase, followed by percentage-based increases evaluated on a three-year cycle. He observed that his staff is compensated less than their peers in other departments, yet he expects more from his officers than has ever been demanded of them. Chief asserted that his budget is in accordance with the wage ordinance. Chief mentioned that the current step program can be interpreted loosely and expressed a desire for it to be restructured. Chief proposed the introduction of five paid steps for his officers: the initial start date; after the first year; after the second year; after the third year; and a fixed wage for the fourth year, which could then be negotiated annually for a three-year period, with the budget adjusted accordingly. Chief stated that the wages will be determined by Council regarding the type of wage increase they wish to provide, but this will establish the pay range, and years of service will dictate when an employee receives a pay increase. Beginning in year five, an employee will not receive any further increases unless Council decides to grant a pay increase. The wage increase is not based on performance. Eunice remarked that this serves as a good illustration of how the Police Department differs from other departments. The Administrative Department could be established similarly, incorporating a range of minimum and maximum values, and it could be performance-based, with a specified range to adhere to. Currently, the job descriptions within the Administrative Department list various certifications; however, Eunice is aware that some of these certifications were acquired without any corresponding wage increase. Eunice perceives that changes have occurred in her office, and certain items listed in the certification requirements are no longer relevant to her office. Tammy inquired whether this would assist Chief in hiring individuals with or without experience. Chief indicated that there will be a predetermined starting wage for officers, and when the wage ordinance is revised, provisions for lateral transfers should be included. Chief does not believe he accounted for a school resource officer (SRO) in his budget, and Eunice confirmed this, as he had informed her that he still needed to approach the school board. Another variable will depend on the decisions made regarding the Flock cameras. Presently, the cost to operate all Flock cameras in the Village is \$24,000. The Village experiences minimal violent crime, which implies that we do not meet many of the statistics required for grants that could assist in funding the Flock cameras. Chief has also allocated funds for a new cruiser, which would initiate the rotation of cruisers. If we do not acquire an SRO, we will have two cruisers available for trade-in for the next one, thereby maintaining our two-cruiser fleet. Conversely, if we do secure an SRO, we will have already ordered the third cruiser, with one officer assigned to drive it, and the other serving as a backup. Chris asked Chief about his strategy for approaching the school board. Chief stated that he intends to propose the 75/25 plan and proceed from there. Eunice mentioned that based on discussions she has had with Chief and the Mayor, Ashley Hankins, the part-time Administrative Office employee, has been making phone calls and sending letters in an effort to collect GATSO payments from those who have not yet paid. Ashley will soon be going on maternity leave; however, she will resume this task upon her return and will also explore the possibility of securing some grants.

Eunice has been engaged in the review of Village expenses to identify areas where we can eliminate unnecessary service invoices. Additionally, we successfully reduced our bill by fifty percent with our trash service provider. We are also considering outsourcing the printing of our utility bills, as this will contribute to cost reduction and alleviate some of the workload in the Administrative Office. Tammy inquired whether pay stubs could be sent via email. Eunice confirmed that they will be emailed once we transition to our new software. Tammy also requested an update on this, to which Eunice responded that it is expected to occur by the end of 2026. With the implementation of the new software, utility customers will have the capability to log in and access their utility bills as well. Bob asked if there exists a report detailing the sources of revenue that fund the checks issued each month. Eunice indicated that there is no such report related to the check report, but Bob is welcome to request a revenue report. Furthermore, Council will have access to the new Finance software if they wish to review reports.

Chief expressed his desire to have comp (compensatory) time included in the records. This initiative is beneficial for officers as it encourages them to refrain from calling in sick, thereby rewarding their commitment. Currently, when an officer is absent, it results in eight hours of overtime for another individual. Chief is interested in exploring the feasibility of this option. Eunice mentioned that the new software is capable of monitoring this process, and it can also implement a cap on payouts. Furthermore, employees will have the opportunity to log in and check their accrued time. There was a discussion regarding flexible time and the associated labor laws; however, no significant points were raised during this conversation.

There being no other finance business to come before them, the meeting adjourned at 3:10 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

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Eunice A. Collene, Fiscal Officer

*The minutes of this meeting were recorded by Administrative Specialist Heather Alicea. Fiscal Officer Eunice Collene examined them for both form and content, subsequently approving them as transcribed.*