

On Thursday, November 6, 2025, the Council for the Village of Monroeville held a work session in Council Chambers for the purpose of discussing the 2026 budget and any other business that came before them.

The Pledge of Allegiance to the flag was recited by those present. The work session was then called to order at 6:08 pm.

Present at roll call:

Chris Raftery	and	Joseph Galea, Mayor
Sue Rogers		Tom Gray, Village Administrator
Tammy Schlachter		Eunice Collene, Fiscal Officer
Bob Whitacre		Chief Jon Earl, MPD
Sam Wiley		Heather Alicea, Administrative Specialist
		Ann Beck, Administrative Assistant
		Ashley Hankins, Administrative Assistant
		Dave Hamons, Electric Dept. Superintendent

Council member Mark Miller previously notified the Mayor that he would not be available for tonight's work session. Chris Raftery made a motion to excuse Mark Miller, seconded by Sue Rogers. Motion carried with no discussion.

The Mayor initiated the conversation concerning the 2026 budget. At the beginning of the meeting, Eunice distributed a handout to the attendees, which included a preliminary draft of the 2026 budget. Eunice informed Council that the budget is not finalized yet, as the Administrative Office continues to evaluate salary line items and compliance with the amended certificate. The state auditors have raised inquiries about the budget's progression for the upcoming year.

Eunice discussed the leave funds, also referred to as severance funds, the various capital improvement funds, and the coinciding transfers associated with these funds. Per discussions with the state auditor, she noted that there are numerous restrictions governing these reserve funds, and Eunice expressed uncertainty regarding whether Council was informed of these limitations at the time the funds were established. There are specific percentage limitations on these funds, and they are only allowed to remain in existence for a period of ten years before they must be dissolved or other action taken. Additionally, the auditors find it challenging to monitor these funds. Eunice suggested the elimination of many of the distinct, specialized types of funds in the 2026 budget, including the leave funds and the capital project funds. The specifications and guidance for this are given in the ORC. Eunice asked for feedback from Council concerning the consolidation of the funds and noted that funds will need to be verified and returned to their originating funds. So, electric funds stay as electric, water stays as water, etc. We would be transferring cash from one restricted fund to another restricted fund. If we follow the required procedures in the ORC, then it is feasible.

Another concern raised by the auditors was the numerous advances to and from funds. Eunice spoke with them in relation to the various grants received by the Village and the advance of funds for those that are reimbursement grants. Eunice will stay cognizant and will keep track of the state's recommendations regarding advances.

The Mayor stated that the funds were established to account for impending retirements; however, he does not remember the numerous restrictions associated with those funds being communicated to Council at the time of their creation. Eunice clarified that we can still create a severance line item within each fund and allocate money to that line on an annual basis. For instance, a severance line item can be created for the sewer department, but it would be included within the sewer department fund of 602, rather than being designated as a distinct, separate 609 fund. It is more straightforward to establish a severance line item within an existing fund than to create an entirely new fund. This type of adjustment is necessary throughout the budget. Another illustration would be the village administrator's line items within the enterprise (water, sewer, and electric) funds. The line items, such as wages, OPERS, contractual obligations, etc., are distinctly listed within the funds, rather than being combined. However, the other administrative staff are all paid from water, sewer, and electric department funds, and they do not possess individual department line items within those funds. Eunice aims to combine the village administrator's line items within the enterprise funds, which will reduce the total number of line items in those funds. The village administrator will still retain a 101.730 line item for his supplies and related expenses in the general fund.

The state auditors were pleased with the proposal to organize the funds and line items. This will simplify the completion of the annual Hinkle report, along with other reports. The Mayor indicated that he and Council agree to simplify processes and keep the auditors happy. Another fund, numbered 109, includes line items for both the police and the parks. Should we decide to dissolve that fund, we must be able to document when it was established, the rationale for its creation, and the timeline of monetary contributions to it, to provide accurate records to the state auditors and follow the ORC.

The budget handout was reviewed with Council, clarifying that the grayed-out line items are set to be eliminated or consolidated. A cheat sheet that details the fund, department, and category will be distributed to Council. Council's level of budgetary authority was reviewed and discussed. Currently, the finance office staff is authorized to reallocate funds within department categories such as wages, benefits, contractual services, and supplies with the direction of the fiscal officer without council approval. However, transferring funds from contractual services to supplies and materials necessitates Council approval, as it falls outside the budgetary authority previously established by Council. It is at the discretion of Council to modify the level of budgetary authority. Should Council decide to make such changes, it would reduce the frequency of special meetings required. Council will continue to receive the same financial reports during regular meetings to monitor the budget. Additionally, this change would help prevent the village from closing the month in the negative.

Continuing the conversation about budget consolidation, Eunice clarified that the Street Department has budget line items in both the 101 and 201 funds. The Street Department does not generate sufficient revenue to sustain itself, thus requiring support from the General Fund. The state auditor has agreed with this consolidation. At the conclusion of each month, prior to closing the month, a transfer will be executed from 101 to 201 to ensure the cash balance is not negative. The total transfer amount for the year would be approved and monitored in a transfer out line in the general fund. This will also reflect an increase in the 201 Street budget since the 101.602 budget figures will be included in 201 going forward.

Chief addressed the MPD segment of the budget. Chief intends to return to the Monroeville Local School Board in January to discuss the possibility of establishing a school resource officer (SRO). Although this initiative is not included in the distributed budget draft, Chief has allocated funds for this purpose. The Mayor expressed confidence that Chief would receive majority support from the school board, particularly with the new members, to which Chief concurred. Eunice mentioned that she has also had discussions

with Chief regarding the budget. Chief noted that funds from the CPT and GATSO can be utilized to finance the SRO.

Several line items can be combined or added to 101.708 and 101.709 and changed to General Government Services. These are currently departments listed as County Aud/Treas Fees and State Examiner Fees, respectively. Tom indicated that maintenance for the concession stand building is in the budget.

Council's budget is still pending with the new members joining. We are awaiting their intentions. Sam inquired whether the new Council members would undergo training, to which Eunice confirmed and stated that funds would be appropriated for their training.

We have a clear understanding of the initial six months of the year on health insurance, with a 5% projected increase reflected for 2026. There is some "cushion" to consider the possibility of any marriages or births, as these events could affect the overall cost.

Eunice was informed of a grant at a recent training that will reimburse the Village up to \$2,000 for each employee across all departments for a wide range of qualified topics. Should we apply for this grant and fail to secure it, we may decide against pursuing it. This situation could lead to modifications in the training line items within the budget at a later stage.

A table, chairs, and a television for the middle conference room are in the budget. This is needed for employee training, and the room will be made available for community use.

Department 712 will all be moved to General Government Services. Less than \$500 was expended for the newsletter. The Income Tax salary breakdown was discussed regarding who is paid from this department and how it is calculated.

The Mayor inquired about the primary factor contributing to the reduction of expenses in the General Fund. Eunice explained that a significant portion of this reduction is due to certain expenses that previously fell under the PD lines now being covered by other funds that the Mayor was not previously aware of, thereby assisting in offsetting the budget total.

Sam inquired about the absence of a cost estimate for engineering within the streets division. Tom responded that none has been provided. The Mayor stated that there are no costs associated if the streets are not undergoing repairs at this time. Tom mentioned that Hamilton Street engineering services are being provided by the County Engineer. Eunice highlighted that the Street Department's computers are outdated and will be replaced prior to the new software. Tom noted that maintenance is scheduled for the Kubota.

CPT funds are the PDs and will be allocated as permitted.

The Mayor inquired about the purpose of fund 219 concerning Street Capital Projects. Eunice responded that both 219 and 291 are restricted funds that are set to be consolidated. Tom further mentioned that fund 291 will be allocated to complete the downtown parking lot project, as well as the sidewalk located in front of the parking lot.

Eunice clarified that she maintains a spreadsheet containing calculations for the wages of each department; however, these figures have not yet been incorporated into the budget. After she obtains

the total appropriations, it will be necessary for her to ensure that we remain compliant with the amended certificate from the county, which may require adjustments in certain areas before the finalization of the budget.

Tom mentioned that we have not yet conducted the water tower diving inspection this year. Don Clark intends to maintain the Industrial Park Tower through cleaning, and we will also need to address scraping, painting, and managing the pitting. The Broad Street water tower is in significantly better condition. Tom indicated that if our discussions with Amcor are fruitful, there could be a reduction in costs if the Council consents to permit Amcor to place a name on the tank and cover that segment of the tank's expenses.

Dave Hamons, Electric Superintendent, proposed changing from Cintas to a uniform allowance. This change could result in significant savings for the Village. Other employees have been asked and informed that the uniform policy will be strictly enforced, requiring employees to submit receipts and wear an approved uniform. We are researching an alternative vendor for trash collection, which is expected to yield further savings for the Village.

Tom mentioned that the estimated amount for Electric contractual services related to Mainlite and other miscellaneous expenses is \$41,000. He further clarified that the Electric Department's estimated rent cost to the Water Department for the fixed tilt solar installation at the reservoir is \$41,030. This cost will be prorated for the floating solar project once it becomes commercial on June 1, 2026. The solar project has utilized professional services, including legal and engineering support, for the Gray Matter court hearings and the AMP asset sale. Dave noted that equipment maintenance will include the annual dye electric testing for the trucks. Eunice added that part of the contractual services expense is allocated for new software. Tom pointed out that the first line item on the report pertains to the electricity purchased for use within the Village, covering commercial, industrial, and residential needs. The second line item relates to the crypto site, which has seen an increase due to the addition of two megawatts of load. Tom anticipates that the cost of purchased power will rise, leading to a corresponding increase in revenue.

Eunice explained the confusion caused by the inconsistent naming of lines across departments. In all departments, lines with the object code 52300 are contractual services. Lines with the object code 52390 vary from departments and are not the same. Some are Misc Contractual Services, while others are Memberships, Subscriptions, Fees, etc. These 52390 object descriptions will all be changed to "Memberships and Subscriptions." Dave mentioned that our inventory has been reduced, and the pole pile has been depleted, which was the goal due to the limited lifespan of poles, as the chemicals leach out, rendering them ineffective. Dave clarified that his concern is not about buying large quantities of materials, but rather the steep prices associated with them. Additionally, delays in material availability can lead to price increases because of tariffs. Tom noted that the \$435,000 in line 603.501.52500 reflects the estimated cost for constructing a new distribution service that will connect the floating solar project to the Village. The current three-phase line, which is linked to the fixed tilt solar, lacks the capacity to accommodate the new solar generation. In addition to this cost, we are also reconfiguring the distribution system to enhance its flexibility in case of any issues. The Herbert substation requires the installation of switchgear to maintain service reliability. The Mayor indicated that we are still awaiting a complete overview of the electric budget.

Going forward, funds would not be advanced until confirmation is received that the project is approved and will move forward in the calendar year. Advancing funds prematurely and then having to return them without expending is confusing at best. Eunice mentioned that concerning advances, she is unlikely to provide funds in the future until she receives confirmation that the project is approved. If funds are

advanced prematurely and the project is not finished by year-end, the money will need to be returned. Eunice said this approach is cleaner.

The Mayor inquired about the possibility of reviewing the UDAG Revolving Loan fund to determine if those funds could be returned if they are not going to be used.

At the conclusion of the budget discussion, Eunice expressed her heartfelt gratitude to her team for their hard work and commitment. Ann, Heather, and Ashley conveyed their appreciation to Eunice for her exceptional leadership and teaching. The Mayor acknowledged Eunice's goal of finalizing the budget before the start of the new year, eliminating the need for a temporary budget. He recognized the significant demands placed on Eunice and expressed his satisfaction with the Administrative Staff for rising to the occasion.

Eunice mentioned that a more refined version of the budget will be presented to Council in the upcoming weeks. Additionally, an updated certificate must be sent to the county, and she will need to thoroughly examine the electric fund. We currently have legal fees that must be settled due to the issues with Gray Matter. The Mayor acknowledged that there has been a revenue shortfall because the growth of crypto mining has not progressed as quickly as expected. Tom noted that when the budget was being prepared, he was unsure if he had included revenue estimates for it.

Sam inquired about the status of the floating solar wiring. Tom responded that it would be after the beginning of the year, once all elements are in place. He will reach out to D3 Energy to confirm scheduling.

Bob expressed that he is unclear about our current position regarding the debt owed by Gray Matter. Tom indicated that there have been no changes. A hearing is set for tomorrow at the Huron County Common Pleas Court. Additional details will be provided concerning the sale of other assets in North Royalton, Ohio, which may help offset some of the money owed to the Village. A meeting is arranged with the Village and legal representatives on the 13th to bring everyone up to speed. The Mayor inquired whether Gray Matter is managing the site here, to which Tom replied no. The Mayor also asked if Gray Matter is active in any other locations, and Tom stated that, to his knowledge, they are not. The Mayor questioned whether Gray Matter's assets would need to be liquidated to settle the Village's debts, and Tom confirmed that they would. The Mayor noted that while Gray Matter is not bankrupt, it is under receivership, which functions similarly to bankruptcy. Gray Matter owes money to the Village as well as to numerous creditors. They possess significant assets, and if these assets are sold, they could fulfill their financial obligations to the Village. Gray Matter is resisting the sale of their assets to avoid settling their debts. Tom clarified that the receiver is overseeing the site. Decimal Digital is currently operating the site. All the machines present at the site belong to Decimal, which is generating revenue and purchasing power from the Village, despite Gray Matter being the primary entity. The Mayor mentioned that Gray Matter has an outstanding balance, along with late fees. Previously, they were tenants in the Village, but now Decimal has taken over as the tenant and is making payments, albeit not always on time. At this moment, the Village is nearly up to date on the invoices owed to AMP for the electricity that Gray Matter failed to pay. Tom indicated that the Village still owes AMP \$7,000. Bob inquired about Gray Matter's debt to the Village. Eunice informed that it is approximately 1.3 million, and Tom added that this figure includes late fees. The Mayor stated that the Village is also attempting to collect reimbursement of our legal fees from Gray Matter. Eunice mentioned that we need to include legal fees with Duncan & Allen and Jim Barney.

The Mayor inquired with Council about their interest in discussing a proposal for an Ordinance concerning stray and feral cats. Earlier this week, the Mayor sent an email to Council containing details about the

proposed Ordinance. Sam inquired about the enforcement of the Ordinance. Chief responded that the issue is in the feeding of the cats, which complicates proof of ownership by outlining the criteria for the removal of those cats. Cats venture onto neighboring properties, causing damage to yards and flower beds, and bowls or dishes are being left out for the cats. The proposed Ordinance empowers the Police Department to handle the complaints they receive. Eunice asked Council if they would like the Ordinance to be prepared for the regular meeting scheduled for November 19, 2025. Chris expressed her belief that they are not yet prepared for that and that it requires further discussion. The Mayor asked if it could be brought up in a meeting. Eunice responded that she could draft a motion for three readings instead of an emergency passage. The Mayor concluded that the absence of an Ordinance is hindering the Police Department's ability to assist residents with their complaints.

Chief said the installation of the Flock cameras will take place in the coming weeks.

There being no other business to come before them, the meeting adjourned at 7:50 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Eunice A. Collene, Fiscal Officer

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