

CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Carver called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. on September 21st, 2026.

INVOCATION

Chris Sherbourne offered the invocation.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Mayor Carver led the Pledge of Allegiance.

ROLL CALL

The following council members answered roll call: Paige Bierce, Sondra Carey, Kay Hines, Joe Johnson, Mark Phillips, and Chris Sherbourne. Administrator Derek Allen, Fiscal Officer Cathy Davis, Fire Chief Mark Carey, Police Chief Adam Lakey, and Solicitor Matt Griffith were also present.

MINUTES

Sherbourne moved, and Hines seconded, to approve the September 8th minutes with the following corrections:

Mark Phillips gave the invocation, not Joe Johnson.

Also, Joe Johnson made the following correction:

His statement that he can't justify spending the money regarding health care and wages was incorrect. What he actually said was that he can't justify spending that much money.

"If you go back to the video and watch it, what I actually said that wasn't put in this report is I don't see how we can justify paying that much money. I did not say that we couldn't spend the money. I questioned the amount." Roll call vote: 6 ayes.

GUESTS

Deanna Brant, Erin Kelty, Ricky Johnston, Sheri Johnston, Bridgette Skatzes, Ryan Bash, Adam Rensch, Cody Douglas, Reggie Douglas, Captain Thomas Cronenwett and Officer Aaron Gattshall.

Mayor Carver proclaimed September 25th as Dolly Parton Day. Erin Kelty and Deanna Brant from the Morrow Co. Kiwanis and Bridgette Skatzes Siegfried from the Mt. Gilead Public Library accepted the proclamation.

Council President Mark Phillips read a letter from a Mt. Gilead village employee.

Dear administration and members of council, I am writing to express my serious concerns regarding the decision to cut some health insurance and benefits for village employees.

When I accepted my position with the village, I considered both the job's flexibility and the benefits package to be significant factors in my decision. I also wanted the opportunity to take pride in working for the community where I live and raise my children. Being able to serve my own community is something that has meaning to me, and I believe that should be recognized as part of what makes working for the village worthwhile.

The loss or reduction of health insurance or benefits changes the overall value of our employment considerably.

For many employees, purchasing comparable coverage through the marketplace would create significant financial strain. What may appear on paper to be a cost-saving measure for the village could ultimately affect employee morale, retention, and recruitment.

I'm also concerned that employees are being viewed primarily as numbers on the spreadsheet rather than as the people who keep the village operating every day. We have families, bills, and financial responsibilities. The benefits offered were an important part of the compensation we relied on when accepting our positions.

There is also a real concern that eliminating these benefits could cause employees to look elsewhere for higher wages or better overall compensation.

Skilled labor is not cheap, and cheap labor is not skilled. Right now, the village has what I believe is a valuable balance. Skilled employees are willing to work for a lower wage because the village has historically offered benefits that can make the overall compensation package competitive.

If those benefits are removed without a corresponding wage increase, the village may save money in one area while potentially losing experienced and skilled employees in another.

Recruiting and training new employees also comes with costs, and there is no guarantee the village can replace experienced workers at the same overall cost.

I understand the village has financial responsibilities and that the council must make difficult budget decisions. However, I believe those decisions should also consider the long-term impact on the employees who provide the services our community depends on.

I hope the council will consider the impact their decisions have on employees and their families and look at alternatives that would allow the village to maintain affordable health insurance and the benefits currently offered.

We are not simply numbers on a spreadsheet. We are employees, residents, parents, neighbors, and community members who have chosen to work for the Village of Mount Gilead.

I hope you will consider our commitment and the value of the work we provide before making a decision that could significantly affect the people who serve this community.

I am not only a Village of Mt. Gilead employee, but also a husband, father of three, Mt. Gilead High School basketball coach, 4-H club advisor, and chairman of the Morrow County Soil and Water Board of Directors. These roles shape who I am and my commitment to this community, which I truly love and take pride in. Thank you for taking the time to consider my concerns.

Sincerely, Curtis Grimm, Village of Mt. Gilead employee.

Mayor Carver wanted everyone to understand that no decision has been made, and the council is just looking into what options are available.

Sondra Carey appreciates the employees and what they do. We are looking at different avenues to benefit you and the village as a whole.

Joe Johnson commented that we are trying to make an informed decision. For someone to tell us they're going to bring us one quote to vote on doesn't tell us what else might be out there. We may very well end up with exactly what you have now; we don't know, but we want to see what's out there.

Paige Bierce spoke on her behalf:

"Um, I want to clear something up because I understand there have been concerns among our employees about discussions council has had regarding insurance and compensation. I can only speak for myself, but I have never said that I want to take away employee health insurance, and I have never said that I do not care about our employees. Asking questions about insurance or asking for comparable quotes is not the same thing as wanting to eliminate insurance. We are being asked to approve a budget of approximately 1.5 million. I believe it is my responsibility as a council member to understand what we are spending, what our options are, and how those decisions affect both of our employees, both our employees and village before I vote. The same is true for raises. Asking how a proposed raise was determined, what it will cost, or how it fits into the budget does not mean that I oppose raises. It means that I am doing my due diligence. If anyone has been told that I want to eliminate employees insurance, that I do not care about our employees, or that I have already decided against raises, that is not my that is not that does not represent my position. asking for other insurance options. Like you said, it saves the village money. It saves the people of the village money. And in return, if we can get the same sort of insurance for a fraction of the price, that also saves you money, and it keeps the same insurance that you guys currently have. Never once did we come into this saying that we were cutting insurance. That's asinine. That would never happen. If we can't find something better and still offer the same sort of benefits, we're not just going to cut insurance. That's we're going to make it that's not how it work. We're not just going to be like, "Oh, insurance is out the window." That's not how it works. We want other options for insurance so we can save the village, the people, and our employees and still give you the best employment that you can within our village."

Kay Hines asked how we even got to this point. She said that nowhere on video, personally or in writing, did they say we were cutting insurance. We wouldn't do that without talking to the employees about it.

Captain Cronenwett said, "I'm under my wife, so it that that part really is irrelevant to my position. Um, I will say that I think the way things have been portrayed on the last meeting and how it kind of went on and it didn't represent councils that I've seen over the last 30 years"

Chris Sherbourne replied that he had started this whole thing by saying that he didn't want to discuss raises until we find out what our insurance is. He is not sure what our broker will bring to the table, but we will know by mid-October.

Paige Bierce also replied to Captain Cronenwett's comments about how council has done it for the last 30 years. Council has also just been given stuff, handed to them, and they just vote on it. I didn't come to council to just be given stuff and not understand it. If I'm going to approve the budget, I want to understand why we're given this stuff and reach out to other insurance companies, not just one company, and get three quotes.

Captain Cronenwett rebutted and said that he wasn't implying that council has always done it this way for 30 years. I was just saying the behavior at the last council meeting hasn't been seen in 30 years. The temperature needs to come down a little bit, as it looks very bad.

Joe Johnson was flabbergasted that they were given the wage increases first, and that was it. It may absolutely be the way it works everywhere, but it blew my mind that the first thing we were handed before anything else was wage increases. When he did his budget at home, he didn't take his paycheck and give his kids allowance first, then figure out if he had enough left to pay his house payment. Instead, we paid the bills that had to be paid, figured out what food we could buy at the grocery store, then figured out allowances. He felt that we are doing the budget backward.

Derek Allen said we are not doing it backward because our highest fixed cost is employee wages and benefits. First, you figure out what the raises and insurance will be. The second thing you do is budget for all of our operating expenses. We provide service. We provide a product in water. We provide a product in trash collection, but we provide a product in recycling, and we provide a product in waste. The wastewater treatment plant. We provide services like snow removal and salting of streets. So, what happens? Your biggest expense is employees. So that's the first thing we do, unless we're going to get rid of employees, which we're not, and you've never suggested that. But that's the biggest expense. The second is: what does it take for us to operate? So, our budget starts at zero across the board. First thing's employee cost. Second is insurance, which includes employee costs, and third is operating costs. How much will it cost me to buy all the salt and chemicals at the water plant? How much do the chemicals cost at the wastewater plant? How much does it cost to dispose of the recycling? All those things. So, then you've got your employee costs, you have your operating expenses, and then we look at what's left. If there's sufficient money, that is when we look at the extra kind of things.

Kay Hines asked the employees who were in attendance if they had any questions. They did not have any.

Mayor Carver said that at this point nothing's been decided on raises, nothing's been decided on insurance, and council's looking into all their different options. Council will continue discussing this in meetings. And when the time comes when they've made their decision, if you have concerns, you're welcome to come back and discuss them with the council.

POLICE DEPARTMENT REPORT

Chief Lakey reported that Officer Ramos completed Patrol Rifle Instructor Training and Captain Cronenwett completed Tactical Team Leader Training.

The Chief had credit card purchases for a holster and FAA license exams for the drone for two employees.

The Chief gave a parking update to council, which was at the bottom of his report. He said he did this personally.

FIRE DEPARTMENT REPORT

Chief Carey briefed council on an addition to the personnel policy that he would like to add. He requested that his part-time firefighters be paid overtime for working on holidays. This would be at one and a half times their regular rate for the 11 holidays recognized by the Village. This pay would only pertain to actual hours worked by the part-time employees.

Johnson moved and Sherbourne seconded to allow part-time firefighters who actually work a Village holiday to get paid at one and a half times their regular rate of pay. This will be effective with the 2027 payroll. Roll Call: 6 ayes.

Chief Carey also reported that the fire department provides different types of services, including water rescues. While infrequent, the most common water rescues we respond to involve victims who fall through the ice or people trapped by flash flooding. Because of this, the fire department's association raised funds and approved \$7,700.00 in rescue equipment for our staff. This was made possible largely by a generous \$5,000.00 donation from our local VFW. Once the equipment arrives, we will conduct a series of training sessions with the firefighters at no cost to the Village.

COMMITTEE AS A WHOLE - MARK PHILLIPS

We met today at 6 o'clock. Our guests were Teri and RC Wise from the V3 Companies of Westerville.

We discussed our upcoming village zoning revision and also planning for future and possible growth of the village.

Our next meeting will be on Monday, October 5th at 6 pm. Our guest will be the village's health insurance company broker, Nick Ferrando, from the Oswald Company, and this is a public meeting.

ADMINISTRATOR - DEREK K. ALLEN

He met with ODOT on September 16th about the State Route 95 bridge. That is in 2028, which is the state fiscal year. So, we're talking about any time after July of 27. However, it is currently scheduled for 2029, but they are trying to move it up because of the bridge's condition. It'll be a full closure, which will actually speed things up. I think it's a three- or four-month bridge replacement, rather than having it controlled by automated signals with one lane for a year.

He attended the safety council meeting by attending 10 of the 12 meetings a year; we get a 3% discount on our workers' comp.

On Friday, September 18th, he spoke with Central Ohio Security about cameras out at 417 West Marion and at the fire training center. We may have some internet concerns at the fire training center that we'll need to address.

He sent the response letter to 318 Park Avenue, which Ben Albrecht reviewed and revised.

He used the village credit card, which he has had for three or four months, I think, for the first time, and ordered the anti-graffiti mural sealant that was almost \$600. He ordered 10 flower boxes for downtown.

He met with a developer to answer zoning questions about a new residential building.

He had to file the NPDES permit for the wastewater plant electronically as the owner, which was the first time ever.

Currently, 32 properties are on the code enforcement list. Another property owner was cited and is scheduled to appear in court on September 23, 2026. He was given a code enforcement notice on July 27, 2026. One is being summoned to the next mayor's court.

The compost facility reopened September 1st, 2026. The DKMM Solid Waste District paid to grind the brush and limbs.

Voltz completed the fences for the two ball diamonds at West Park (Edison ballfields).

The service department did cut the weeds around the monument. And we'll need to have, at some point, a discussion about the concrete crumbling from the cars and trucks hitting it. I don't know of anybody around here who could do that repair to satisfaction, which I think everybody would want, but if you see it, it's crumbling. Only one section of the concrete needs to be repaired.

We mowed the grass at 281 West High Street, and that will be assessed on the taxes.

The recycling truck was repaired. If people saw recycling being put into the garbage truck, it's because the recycling truck was down for maintenance.

We did erect a parking sign on Park Avenue next to the tennis courts and repaired a sign knocked down at the post office

We ran the street sweeper multiple times, and we are doing brush collection, and the annual dead tree removal is ongoing. We spoke about that last time. There are still two trees to be removed.

Last Friday, I was asked to calculate raises of one, two, three, and four percent, and that's what I did and then distributed tonight. So, it's for informational purposes

MAYOR - DONNA J. CARVER

Mayor Carver attended the EMA executive board meeting. On September 10th, I held the 250 Morrow County meeting. September 11th, I completed my Sunshine Law training. September 20th, I attended the Deputy Daniel Weston Sherrer Memorial Highway dedication.

A young man shadowed me. His name was Isaiah; he's homeschooled, interested in government, and we toured all the village facilities. He asked some great questions.

We are going through the budget process. The solicitor's contract is up at the end of the year. Council would like to look into what's available to us, as it is their right and their fiduciary responsibility to the village.

Bierce moved and Carey seconded to allow the Fiscal Officer to advertise the solicitor position. The council discussed this, and Bierce asked when the council usually receives the contract renewal. Fiscal Officer Davis said they usually receive it in November as it comes due at the end of December. The application deadline is October 19th. Roll Call: 5 ayes, Phillips abstained. This will be advertised in the paper and posted on our website.

Johnson asked who the administrator for the Mt. Gilead Facebook page was. And who was it that put the village at risk by violating sunshine law and hiding comments made by citizens? Mayor Carver stated that she puts the things on the Facebook page, but there were no hidden comments. There's nothing to delete. It's all there. That was taken down for a while until someone commented, and then it came back. Yeah, that I can't explain.

She is the only administrator. She said, "What happens is, and I'll be honest. Sometimes I'm doing things on my phone, and I don't mean to hit things".

And so, if it's pointed out to me, yeah, I'll correct it. But it was never done deliberately because I understand the sunshine law. You cannot hide comments.

Chris Sherbourne asked why can the sheriff do that, then? I'm not being argumentative.

I've had this discussion with the central committee, with the sheriff, with the previous prosecutor. So, I'm just wondering why we can't yet, they do.

Mayor Carver stated that she didn't know if they have different rules than we do. I can't answer that question.

SOLICITOR - MATT GRIFFITH

An executive session is needed.

FISCAL OFFICER - CATHY DAVIS

Sherbourne moved, and Hines seconded to approve the bills. I explained the GPD invoices and the street sign. Roll Call: 6 ayes.

Phillips moved and Carey seconded to pass Resolution 8-17-26 A, which authorizes a request for qualifications for engineering for needs analysis for the fire station. That is the last reading. Roll Call: 6 ayes.

I changed ordinance 2033 to declare an emergency. It becomes effective upon this last reading instead of waiting 30 days because I have more invoices for GPD, and instead of doing a supplemental, we can pay those right away.

Sherbourne moved and Bierce seconded to pass Ordinance 2033 “establishing pass-through invoicing requirements for village contracts funded through the Ohio Water Development authority”. Roll Call: 6 ayes.

Hines moved and Carey seconded to pass Ordinance 2034 “amending section 1307.99 of the codified ordinances of the Village of Mt. Gilead, Ohio, to establish graduated penalties for repeat violations of Chapter 1307 (blight control)” to the second reading.

Mark Phillips asked whether this applies to residential properties only or includes businesses. Solicitor Griffith stated that he would have to look back and see if businesses are included in that. But the penalty provision applies to the whole section, not the whole village. Mark Phillips explained that because many businesses are embarrassing downtown, and if they scraped and painted, they could bring in more customers and work on their storefronts. Businesses shouldn’t be excluded.

Solicitor Griffith will research this and get back with council. Joe Johnson asked Griffith to elaborate on the penalty. Griffith stated that it was open for discussion as well.

The minor misdemeanor, no jail time, and then it goes to a jailable offense, an M4, and then the M3. But we could tweak that. I wasn't sure exactly what you were looking for. After discussing the offenses, Griffith will research and, if necessary, will change the ordinance. It was stated that we have until the last reading to change it.

Roll Call vote: 6 ayes.

Sherbourne moved, and Phillips seconded, to suspend the reading of Resolution 9-21-26 “the services the Village of Mt. Gilead will provide to certain territory proposed for annexation pursuant to r.c. 709.023(c) and declaring an emergency”.

Phillips asked where it was. Allen stated it was on Neal Avenue and it was owned by Joe Johnson.

Roll Call vote: 5 ayes, Johnson abstained.

Bierce moved and Hines seconded to pass Resolution 9-21-26. Roll Call vote: 5 ayes, Johnson abstained.

Joe Johnson was concerned about the employees' timekeeping method. “I was shown a time sheet and literally the time sheets say they have the employees name on them. It'll say Monday and then they'll say 10. It doesn't have time in, doesn't have time out, doesn't have time for lunch. And I think in 2026, I think that's really kind of prehistoric or archaic, if you will, that I can't believe for a second there isn't a time where somebody has to run back and lock the fence. somebody has to go put the shovels away. You know, something that they're not out of the goodness of their heart may be doing, but they're not necessarily getting paid for it. And I think to have an actual electronic timekeeping system is something that in my opinion is long past due.”

Johnson moved and Bierce seconded to direct the village administrator and fiscal officer to implement a mandatory electronic time tracking system for all non-exempt hourly employees, village employees affected within 30 days pursuant to council's legislative authority under RC 731.13 to fix employee conditions and oversee municipal expenditures. This policy shall require all hourly personnel to accurately record all hours worked during using the designated village time clock or timekeeping software. It shall strictly prohibit off-the-clock work and unauthorized buddy punching. Furthermore, the village administrator is directed to update the village personnel policy manual to reflect the requirement, distribute a written copy to all current and future hourly employees, collect signed acknowledgement forms, and provide council with a confirmation report at the next regular scheduled meeting.

Allen asked if it had to be implemented by the next council meeting. Johnson stated that was in the motion but if you can’t then tell him you can’t. Phillips asked if this be tabled until the next meeting so council has a chance to read it. Allen asked if it was for all employees. Fiscal Officer Davis stated that you would have to do it for all employees. She also stated that she would not be able to implement this by the October 5th council meeting. She was hoping to get it by the third meeting in October, or at least have some apps started. Roll Call vote: 5 ayes, Phillips abstained.

Sondra Carey moved and Johnson seconded to have the fiscal officer and designated insurance broker present a minimum of three independent competitive quotes for insurance carriers to council within 60 days prior to the expiration of the active insurance policy. Allen questioned it

as that would make it November 1st deadline. This would not be enough time for all employees to fill out the needed forms. Fiscal Officer Davis asked Carey if it had to be 60 days. Carey said that the dates could be changed. Fiscal Officer Davis will contact our broker and request he follow Careys' motion. Roll Call vote: 5 ayes, Phillips abstained.

GOOD OF THE ORDER

Solicitor Griffith was asked to go into executive session per Ohio Code section 121.22 (G) (1) regarding a complaint against a public employee. Derek Allen said "Well, I'm not going into executive session. So, if it's me, file your formal complaint, charge me. I'm not and or do it out here in the public. Listen, do out here in the public because I want the world to see. I want my wife, my family, my neighbors, my friends, my church. I want them all to hear this, Derek. And if and if it's a formal charge, then charge me and I will have my hearing." Paige Bierce told him "I don't know who told you that we were charging anything, but that wasn't it. It was in the Hold on. It said in the we can we can do an executive session to discuss employee I'm not going in employee like performance. This has nothing. This is no charge or anything." Joe Johnson said "Derek, I called for it. And I will tell you the reason I called for it is so that we can throw things on the table. Donna asked me if I wanted anything to come out of it and I said absolutely not. We just want to help you. We just want to talk. That's all we want. absolutely no repercussions to come out of anything. We want to be able to openly discuss things with you. Derek Allen replied "Well, let's discuss it out here." Joe Johnson "because I'm we're not going to throw the residents of this village in in that position. We're not we will do it."

Mark Phillips said "We need to remember as our uh lawyer said that council is not management and we cannot give directives on how to change behavior."

Joe Johnson "There's only one person that can change the things that we're hearing, Derek, and that's you. And that's all we want to do is tell you what we're hearing off camera. I appreciate you. I don't want you to go anywhere."

Derek Allen "I'm the one who should say, "Hey, I don't want this out in the public." I have no problem discussing it on camera."

Paige Bierce stated that we can't ignore residents who bring us complaints. Derek Allen said to document it, write it down and give it to him. He is not going into executive session.

Mayor Carver asked council if they still wanted to go into executive session without Derek Allen present. Joe Johnson said No, I don't. But we will if we have to because you're his supervisor. So, at the very least, I guess we need to tell you what we've heard.

Johnson moved and Bierce seconded to go into executive session at 8:36 pm per ORC 121.22

(G1), complaint against a public employee. Roll Call vote: 4 ayes, Phillips voted no and Sherbourne abstained. Solicitor Griffith was asked how many were needed to go into executive session. His response was 4.

Johnson moved and Sherbourne seconded to end regular council meeting at 8:39 pm. Roll call vote: 6 ayes.

Joe Johnson moved and Kay Hines seconded to go back into regular council session at 9:48 pm.

Roll Call vote: 6 ayes.

Joe Johnson moved and Sondra Carey seconded to adjourn at 9:49 pm.

Cathy Davis, Fiscal Officer

Donna J. Carver, Mayor