

Hamilton Township Trustee Meeting February 19, 2025

Trustee Board Vice Chairman, Darryl Cordrey, called the meeting to order at 6:00 PM., Mr. Cordrey and Mr. Sousa were present.

Roll call as follows: Darryl Cordrey
Mark Sousa

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited by all.

A motion was made by Mr. Cordrey, with a second by Mr. Sousa, to approve the clerk's journal as the Official Meeting Minutes of February 5, 2025, Trustee Meeting.

Roll call as follows: Darryl Cordrey Yes
Mark Sousa Yes

A motion was made by Mr. Cordrey, with a second by Mr. Sousa, to approve the bills as presented before the Board.

Roll call as follows: Mark Sousa Yes
Darryl Cordrey Yes

Public Comments

Mr. Cordrey opened the floor to public comments at 6:02 PM.

Brad Turner thanked Chief Huges and the Police Department for removing a trail cam that was placed on a stop sign in the Providence subdivision.

After nobody else came forward, Mr. Cordrey closed the floor to public comments at 6:03 PM.

New Business

Resolution No. 2025-0219A – Designating Faller Road as Clyde Baston Way

Mr. Cordrey stated that the former and current Warren County Engineers have requested an honorary renaming of Faller Road as “Clyde Baston Way” to recognize Mr. Baston’s decades of community service. A longtime Hamilton Township resident, he served as a Trustee, Deputy Sheriff, and Fire and Rescue volunteer, while also leading efforts for parks, libraries, and local nonprofits. A secondary sign will be added without affecting addresses.

Former Warren County Engineer Neil Tunison shared that he has known Clyde Baston for 50 years, describing him as a great person and dedicated youth leader. He emphasized Baston’s deep love for the Township and expressed that renaming Faller Road is a fitting tribute. Current County Engineer Kurt Weber thanked the Trustees, stating that Baston, who served as a Trustee for 24 years, is truly the face of the Township and has a strong passion for the community.

Ms. Leah Elliot inquired about the installation of the street sign. Mr. Cordrey responded that a celebration is expected soon, and the public will be notified once a date is set.

A motion was made by Mr. Cordrey, with a second by Mr. Sousa, to approve Resolution 25-0219A, a resolution designating Faller Road as Clyde Baston Way in Hamilton Township from the intersection of Faller Road and Foster-Maineville Road to the intersection of Faller Road and Ascot Road.

Roll call as follows:	Mark Sousa	Yes
	Darryl Cordrey	Yes

Resolution No. 2025-0219B – Road Salt Purchase for 2025-2026

Mr. Sousa asked about the amount of salt used by Public Works this year due to the significant snowfall in the township. Public Works Director Don Pelfrey reported that they have used 500 tons so far this season but recently received a delivery of 1,500 tons, replenishing their supply.

Mr. Cordrey made a motion with a second from Mr. Sousa to approve Resolution 2025-0219B, a resolution authorizing a contract with the Warren County Engineers Office for the purchase of road salt for the 2025-2026 snow season.

Roll call as follows:	Darryl Cordrey	Yes
	Mark Sousa	Yes

Resolution No. 2025-0219C – Support the Inclusion of the Buckeye Trail in the National Trails System

Margee Kirkpatrick, a resident of the Miami Bluffs subdivision, is seeking approval from the board for the inclusion of the Buckeye Trail system. The trail, which currently extends from Loveland to Caesar Creek, is already part of the larger Buckeye Trail network—a 1,444-mile loop that encircles the state of Ohio, connecting numerous parks, forests, and communities.

During the discussion, Mr. Sousa inquired whether federal funding was available for the project. Ms. Kirkpatrick referenced the National Trails System Act of 1968, which allows federal funding for scenic trails, helping to preserve them while ensuring continued public access for recreational use.

The Buckeye Trail has seen significant usage in various locations. In 2023, the trail recorded 247,000 users in Loveland, 143,000 in Fosters, and 74,000 off Grandin Road. These numbers highlight the trail’s growing popularity as a recreational asset.

Administrator Jeff Wright emphasized that integrating the Buckeye Trail into Miami Bluffs would not only enhance outdoor recreation opportunities but also contribute to economic development and property value increases.

A motion was made by Mr. Cordrey, with a second by Mr. Sousa, to approve 25-0219C, a resolution to support the inclusion of the Buckeye Trail in the National Trails System.

Roll call as follows: Mark Sousa Yes
 Darryl Cordrey Yes

Resolution No. 2025-0219D – Aggregate Agreement with Constellation Newenergy for Electric

Mr. Wright stated that Hamilton Township’s electric aggregation program remains voluntary, with no early termination fees. The current low-rate agreement of \$0.071/kWh expires in July 2025. After reviewing bids, IEC recommends a 12-month contract with Constellation at a fixed rate of \$0.08963/kWh, requiring a decision by February 22nd. Notification letters will be mailed to residents, and updates will be posted on the Hamilton Township website.

Mr. Cordrey reminded residents that the program operates on an opt-out basis. Mr. Sousa encouraged residents to explore their options and determine if the aggregation plan is the best choice for them. Since rates change every 12 to 24 months, residents can visit www.energychoice.ohio.gov to compare current rates and check if they are fixed.

Mr. Cordrey made a motion with a second from Mr. Sousa to approve Resolution 25-0219D, a resolution authorizing all actions necessary to support the continuation of a governmental electric aggregation program with opt-out provisions pursuant to section 4928.20, Ohio Revised Code, directing the township administrator of Hamilton Township to execute an electric supply agreement with Constellation Newenergy, Inc.

Roll call as follows: Mark Sousa Yes
 Darryl Cordrey Yes

Resolution No. 2025-0219E – Contract with Warren County Engineers Office for 2025 Resurfacing, Chip Seal, and Striping Project.

Mr. Cordrey reminded residents that information on scheduled road repaving will be available on the Hamilton Township website. The Board and Mr. Weber also discussed cost savings through

Motion – Transfer of Cemetery Deed

Mr. Cordrey made a motion with a second from Mr. Sousa to approve the transfer of a cemetery deed as presented to the board.

Roll call as follows: Mark Sousa Yes
Darryl Cordrey Yes

Motion- Approve Hamilton Township Roster as presented

Mr. Cordrey made a motion with a second from Mr. Sousa to approve of the Hamilton Township Roster as presented before the Board.

Roll call as follows: Mark Sousa Yes
Darryl Cordrey Yes

Public Comments

Mr. Cordrey opened the floor to public comments at 6:31 p.m.

Rusty Holman expressed concerns about rising costs, stating that his property taxes had increased by 15% and his electric bill by 25%. He asked Mr. Wright whether Duke Energy would charge the same rate for the lighting district or if it would be different. Mr. Wright explained that the rate could be different but assured Mr. Holman that he would follow up with any updates regarding the new contract.

Mr. Holman emphasized that, as a resident on a fixed income, he does not support any increases in expenses without some form of offset. He also accused the township of excessive spending and inquired about the cost of the new fire department truck. Mr. Cordrey responded that it would be approximately half a million dollars. Mr. Holman then pointed out that, in addition to the ladder truck’s cost, 20% of excess road funds were being allocated toward a new building. Mr. Sousa acknowledged that there would be a significant debt service payment and understood Mr. Holman’s concerns.

Mr. Holman further accused the board and staff of not prioritizing the interests of taxpayers, particularly those in his age group. In response, Mr. Wright clarified for Mr. Holman and other residents that participation in the township’s aggregate electricity program is optional. Unlike Loveland and Lebanon, the township does not operate its own electric utility or set electricity rates but can provide residents with information on reducing energy costs. He explained that aggregation allows multiple households to bundle together, potentially securing lower rates.

Mr. Holman urged the township to make greater efforts to keep costs down for residents. Mr. Sousa noted that the lighting district assessment is included in property tax bills but agreed to

provide details on any increases. Mr. Holman also suggested that the township could use funds from a large reserve to offset costs and lower overall expenses for residents.

Mr. Cordrey closed the floor at 6:38 p.m.

Fiscal Report

Fiscal Officer Leah Elliot provided an overview of the General Fund revenue vs. expenditures, highlighting a significant variance. The budget projected \$3.1 million in spending, with actual expenditures at \$2.9 million, resulting in a \$200,000 variance. Initially, the plan was to draw \$600,000 from reserves, but instead, the township added \$400,000, creating a \$1 million variance against the budget.

Mr. Sousa noted that property tax revenue is typically budgeted conservatively and asked what drove the additional revenues. Ms. Elliot explained that the interest income was higher than anticipated, and property tax collections exceeded expectations.

Public Works: Experienced a \$500,000 positive variance on expenditures and an \$800,000 swing in reserves, with funds originally planned for use instead added to reserves.

Fire & EMS: Underbudgeted on revenue and overbudgeted on expenses, resulting in \$257,000 drawn from reserves.

Police: Showed a \$500,000 positive swing, with revenues exceeding expectations and expenditures coming in lower than budgeted.

A key takeaway from the presentation was the percentage breakdown, with 63% of the budget utilized and 37% remaining, reflecting current spending trends.

Mr. Cordrey emphasized that the township follows a conservative budgeting approach, which allows for continued investments in equipment and infrastructure while staying on track with the 10-year levy plan established in 2019. He stated that the township's financial strategy ensures stability without the need to request additional levies from residents.

Mr. Sousa asked Mr. Weber if he observed similar budgeting trends in the Engineer's Office. Mr. Weber explained that the county follows a conservative revenue projection approach, particularly regarding tax collections and budgeted revenue.

Mr. Sousa questioned whether the conservative budget approach could allow for certain projects to be completed ahead of schedule. He suggested that the township should consider setting more ambitious revenue goals in the budget.

Mr. Cordrey responded that the county must certify revenue projections, limiting the township's ability to adjust them freely. Mr. Sousa noted that, historically, the lowest revenue collection over the past decade was 107% of the budgeted amount, yet the township continues to budget at only 97% of the previous year's revenue.

Administrator's Report

Mr. Wright gave the following updates for the Administrator Report:

Fire Department: The department will be offering an Officer 2 Class this summer at no tuition cost to our fire employees, thanks to a tuition credit partnership with Great Oak. Additionally, the I-WORQ system for fire permits is now live.

Parks Department: The removal of the athletic court fence and footer is underway in preparation for the installation of new fence posts. Residents can expect to receive event calendar mailers within the next two weeks.

Police Department: Chief Hughes provided an update on the health condition of Officer Megan Graham, who is currently battling stage 4 cervical cancer. A GoFundMe page has been set up on the Hamilton Township Police Department's Facebook page to support her. Chief Hughes expressed his gratitude to local news stations for their coverage, which has helped raise awareness, and he thanked the community for their support. He shared a statement from Megan, who noted that when she comes into the office, she does not feel like a cancer patient. Chief Hughes emphasized the strong sense of camaraderie within the department, describing it as a true sisterhood and brotherhood. He concluded by thanking everyone again and asking for continued thoughts and prayers for Officer Graham.

Trustee Comments

Mr. Sousa expressed his gratitude to the staff for their preparation of the reports presented at the Retreat, noting that it was a productive meeting with meaningful discussions. He also thanked Chief Hughes and the police department for keeping the public informed about recent activities and arrests in the township.

Mr. Cordrey congratulated Mr. Baston and his family on the naming of the road, sharing that he met Clyde about nine years ago when he became a trustee. He described Clyde as a dedicated and passionate member of the community. He also gave a shoutout to Mr. Oeder and two other gentlemen who recently retired from the Salem Township Fire Department, recognizing their remarkable 120 years of combined service. As spring approaches, Mr. Cordrey encouraged everyone to get out and enjoy the various events happening in Hamilton Township. He also

