THE VILLAGE OF PHILLIPSBURG
COUNCIL MEETING
DECEMBER 16, 2025

Mayor Simpson called the meeting to order at 7 p.m.

Pledge of Allegiance

Moment of silence for first responders, military, veterans, and a moment of silence for our previous street and water commissioner, Wendell Harleman.

The Fiscal Officer took roll call: Heather - yes; Hope – yes; Jill - yes; Chris – yes; Jacob – yes; John – yes.

Approval of regular council meeting minutes from November 18, 2025. Hope motioned to approve regular meeting minutes from November 18, 2025. John seconded. Vote taken: Hope – yes; Jill - yes; Chris – yes; Jacob – abstain; John – yes. Motion carried.

Approval of special council meeting minutes from November 20, 2025. Hope motioned to approve the special council meeting minutes from November 20, 2025. Jill seconded. Vote taken: Hope – yes; Jill - yes; Chris – yes; Jacob – yes; John – yes. Motion carried.

Resolutions: There are three resolutions listed on the agenda that the council will not be deciding on because information was not received in time for this meeting. Those are Resolution 2025-0073, 2025-0074, and 2025-0076.

Resolution 2025-0071 Authorizing a Request for Advance of Taxes for 2025 (to be collected in 2026) and declaring an emergency. The resolution was read in its entirety. It allows Montgomery County to pay us monthly instead of quarterly. Derek Shell explained that the money will be given to the Village so the Village can place it in an interest earning account. The Village will be accumulating interest on the money as opposed to the County. John questioned why this is an emergency and why are we waiving the three-reading rule? Derek explained that we want to the funds to put into the STAR Account. John stated that we should not be approving resolutions on an emergency basis because it makes us look like fools, so if we're going to do business we should be doing it accurately by presenting resolutions and reading them as required and not have everything as an emergency. Again, nothing in the resolution justifies this as an emergency. Hope explained that this is a request made for advance tax collection and is requested every year. Lori Hartman explained that this has to be submitted to the tax office by the end of the year. John mentioned that this should have started three months ago. No one can read this and see what this is for. Resolutions need to be written so there is justification for why it's being declared an emergency.

John again stated that there's no reason listed for why this is an emergency, and that we should not have so many resolutions presented on an emergency basis. Jill pointed out some typographical errors in the resolution: the Resolution number should read 2025-0071 instead of 2025-071. John thinks the resolution should be rewritten. Lori Hartman noted that the resolution can be passed and the typographical errors can be corrected before the resolution is signed.

Hope motioned to waive the three-reading rule for Resolution 2025-0071 with the changes discussed, changing Chief Financial Officer to Fiscal Officer and adding a zero to the resolution number. Heather seconded. Vote taken: Heather – yes, Hope – yes, Jill – yes, Chris – yes, Jacob – yes, John – yes. Motion carried.

Hope motioned to approve Resolution 2025-0071 with the changes previously mentioned. Heather seconded. Vote taken: Heather – yes, Hope – yes, Jill – yes, Chris – yes, Jacob – yes, John – yes. Motion carried.

FO Hartman addressed a Resolution for street light assessment: Resolution 2025-0075. This is typically done in September, but it was not on the list of things to do. This is an assessment of the property taxes to pay for the street lighting, and it's something the council does every year. What was used in the past has been copied each year for the past several years. There was a question regarding whether the price has changed. FO Hartman stated that it has not.

Hope motioned to waive the three-reading rule, declaring an emergency for Resolution 2025-0075. John stated that it should be reworded as well, regarding justification because the assessments need to appear on the 2026 tax duplicates. FO Hartman stated that this has to be presented to the Auditor's office by December 31, and it was not listed in any of the information that we had until the Auditor's office contacted us. John stated that these resolutions should be written when they are due, and not just an open statement. If it is an emergency, there has to be justification. FO Hartman assured that it can be done that way in the future. John, I see we are making a list of what has to be done next year so we don't get caught like this again. Chris seconded. Vote taken: Heather – yes, Hope – yes, Jill – yes, Chris – yes, Jacob – yes, John – yes. Motion carried.

Hope motioned to approve Resolution 2025-0075 to levy special assessments for the improvement of streets, avenues, and public highways in the Village of Phillipsburg. Jacob seconded. Vote taken: Heather – yes, Hope – yes, Jill – yes, Chris – yes, Jacob – yes, John – yes. Motion carried.

FO Hartman stated that the final resolution to be addressed is Resolution 2025-0072 to open a STAR Ohio account. FO Hartman has provided information regarding the STAR Ohio program. FO Hartman read the resolution. It was pointed out by Jill that the third Whereas is the same as the second. FO Hartman stated that his was copied from the STAR Ohio site and will be corrected. The Account name of Village of Phillipsburg will be added to the resolution.

FO Hartman explained that the STAR account is an investment account, and the Village does not control any of the investments. The State of Ohio controls the investments. The Village currently gets about 1% interest from the bank account. Currently, STAR Ohio is at about 4%, and interest is paid every 28 days. So, rather than earning $300 per month from $200,000 in an account, the Village can get more than double that. Someone asked if this had been discussed before. Village Administrator Derek explained that he and Lori are relatively new, but he explained how the money invested in STAR is liquid money and can be drawn out at any time. Derek explained that all interest earned from the STAR account will go back into the general fund. That money can be disbursed into other accounts as needed e.g. the fire department or police department. John mentioned that it's not a bad thing, but why is it an emergency? FO Hartman explained that it was suggested by the traveling fiscal officer and the State Auditor. John added that it was months ago, why was this an emergency again? Hope, "why such hostility?" John replied that we seem to be behind on everything. If we're going to run a business, we have to run it correctly or start running it correctly sometime…or not. These are all audit hits that make us look bad because we force everything through. Hope said we all have to work together and respect one another in order to get things done. John said he's not disrespecting anybody. Hope said that she feels like John is being very hostile toward Lori. John said it is not all on Lori. Derek said that Lori is new and he (Derek) is new to Phillipsburg, and moving forward we should start having three readings on resolutions. Hope stated that we are approaching the end of the year and we want to get these things done before the end of the year. FO Lori Hartman stated that she was told that she had to take a class to participate in this program, but she then was informed by the Auditor's Office that she did not have to take that class. There was a waiver because we are not going to open an account where the account holders can choose the investments. The Village will be participating in the group plan where the plan managers choose the investments.

Mayor Simpson stated that he would like the current fund status of everything in the Village. The money does make these resolutions an emergency. The mayor does see John's point regarding these emergencies and the resolutions can list the reasons for that. Obviously, reading the resolutions three times is the best way to go, but coming toward the end of the year we had Jesse Harsh come on board as a fiscal officer assistant and then made contact with Richard Ford (traveling fiscal officer), and local government services to formulate a plan on how to do end of year accounting. As Derek previously stated, this is Lori's first year, so it is expected that she would need quite a bit of help as far as getting taxes done and budgets prepared for next year, so it is coming down to the wire. The mayor shares accountability for this. He stated that "We haven't stopped sprinting since we got in the door. We haven't been able to take a breath and when we look into something, it's a mess. One of the things that fixes messes is funding."

Jill said that next year we should not be in this position. She stated that "Everything I've seen in the last three months has been an emergency. Some of it is really important, and I get that. I don't understand why in December we're talking about something that we should have been able to plan for. I know we were aware of some of these things months ago. It just does not look great if

the representatives of Phillipsburg at the last minute are trying to get this stuff pushed through like we were unprepared or we didn't do our due diligence, it has nothing to do with respect. I'm not done, and I feel like we just need to be better prepared next year because we all represent the Village and it gets to be a little embarrassing if at the last minute we are trying to push things through…the County is going to see this stuff, so we need to be better prepared for this stuff." FO Hartman responded that is why we have the three reading rule, and the auditors did say that as long as you are waiving the three reading rule, the one person I spoke with at the Auditor's Office last said, "At least you're trying to do that, because most the smaller places aren't even doing that." Jill stated "I realize that and I don't think anyone is trying to attack you, it's just that it's getting frustrating that it's all the end of the year emergency. I just hope that next year we plan things out so we can do things…" FO Hartman stated that that is the goal. Jill said this is an open meeting and we're going to have disagreements sometimes, I don't think we're always going to agree and that's why we're here. Mayor Simpson said that we have been playing clean up for six months. If we are in the same position next year, then we do have a problem.

Hope stated that a lot of people are putting in a lot of effort. John put a lot of effort into the website and writing resolutions, but I also stop in the office quite often and I see Lori surrounded by millions of papers, she is also learning and she is overwhelmed. I don't like to see her personally being talked to that way.

Jill said that the role of business is sometimes if you're the fiscal officer, they're going to come at you. Hope answered that it has to be done respectfully.

Jill stated that she thinks it is respectful. I don't think anyone means anything except to do things right.

Heather said Lori is trying to do things right. She came into a mess, and it's been a mess for a year. Jill stated she meant we all have to do things right. Heather said she understands what Jill is saying, she is just explaining that Lori stepped into a mess that has been a mess for a long time. We are trying to claw our way out of that mess. So, it's not her fault.

Hope motioned to waive the three-reading rule for Resolution 2025-0072 authorizing the Village to open a STAR account and appoint authorized representatives. Chris seconded. Vote taken: Heather – yes, Hope – yes, Jill – yes, Chris – yes, Jacob – yes, John – yes. Motion carried.

Hope motioned to approve Resolution 2025-0072 authorizing the Village to open a STAR account and appoint authorized representatives. Jacob seconded. Vote taken: Heather – yes, Hope – yes, Jill – yes, Chris – yes, Jacob – yes, John – yes. Motion carried.

Mayor Simpson noted that sees where Jill is coming from and a team of "yes men" led to the position the Village is in. The mayor did not think that John was disrespectful as there was no name calling or raised voices. Bringing things to people's attention does keep people online. Not that anyone has been out of line, but if you have questions, ask them so that we can get answers and go back and forth to hash things out.

Heather (?) mentioned that she agrees there has been no name calling, but she has seen emails that are very accusatory. The Council and Fiscal Officer are supposed to be a team. If something happens, we need to take care of it as a team and not necessarily direct that toward one person. I've been on a few emails that have just rubbed me the wrong way.

FO Hartman mentioned Resolution 2025-0076 will be discussed later because Derek wants to study the reports and give his input.

No special guests.

Old Business: Mayor Simpson mentioned the Park Grant update. Hope and Josh are waiting for grant money. They have a quote from Playground Boss for equipment. If and when that money becomes available, the Council will decide how to spend that money. The Council would like to replace some of the playground equipment little by little. The mayor has provided information to the council members on how tax money may be distributed. A decision regarding how property tax will be handled will affect any grant money. The mayor will follow up on this.

Reports: FO Hartman explained that Jesse Harsh has been given an account to access the UAN. A warning was posted that the Village has not reached certain budget guides in certain departments. This is something that had not shown up on FO Hartman's account. The mayor and council were informed of this. After contacting local government services, which is part of the State Auditor's Office, FO Hartman was instructed to pull certain budget information. Contrary to popular belief, if the local government services comes in, they don't take us over; they actually give us guidelines and tell us how to fix things. The only budget that we're concerned about right now is, unfortunately, the fire department. When looking at certain things, the first thing the Auditor's Office said was this just gives very specific lines in budgets that aren't making revenues. So, his first look was when items were budgeted, they were not budgeted in the correct lines, or they were not appropriated to the correct lines when they entered the info into the system. Over the past two weeks, the FO has been going through everything and have provided Council with requested reports. The FO is waiting to hear back about the temporary appropriations, because they can help to better budget where things need to go. The FO explained that there were things that have not been paid. The FO went back to January 1 and that wasn't even far enough because some employee taxes had not been paid from fourth quarter of 2024. This info does not automatically appear in UAN. This process has to be done manually and sent to the IRS. Those are things the FO had to go back and find. The FO has been reconciling with the bank on paper by scanning the reconciliations to the bank. The bank had the FO again go back to January 1to verify everything that was done since January 1; making sure that every deposit was entered. There was a payment to Montgomery County Dispatch that initially indicated that the check had cleared, but upon further inspection it was determined that the check had been returned. This occurred because after submitting a check for payment, the bank must be notified to clear that check. This is a security feature and that had not been done with several items throughout the year. One of those was the taxes.

Hope asked if there is a report that could be run to identify the unpaid checks. The FO stated that the UAN marked the check as cleared, but the bank statement was marked as denied. That's why the FO went back through the year of bank statements. The FO recently found files with bills that had been paid, but the receipts had not been logged. The Auditor's Office assured FO Hartman that things are not as bad as she or the Council thought. The revenues were overstated, mostly by the fire department, but the Village has more money coming in from two sources. The FO is diligently working to get the problems addressed so that there won't be the same problems in the future. Mayor Simpson stated the there needs to be a financial committee and liaison to help with budgeting and quarterly financial meetings. There will be a report distributed to the Council every quarter. Chief Aldrich spoke on fire department revenue and expenditures. The mayor noted that there were issues with payments to the Village from Clay Township and that was getting taken care of.

FO Hartman said there was a $35,000 bill out of the water fund that was paid on July 1, before Charity left, that was a misbill. She should not have paid it and the company didn't inform the Village of the mispayment. The company (Badger) asked if the overpayment can be applied to the next bill. FO Hartman was not ever aware of the credit/overpayment. Once this was revealed, the FO said the payment should be returned to the Village.

Fire Chief Report

Personnel: Chief Aldrich requested a reinstatement of a firefighter/EMT Thomas Lee. He is retired from the Air Force and wants to come back to the department and can work nights. Rate of pay would be $13/hr. There would be no onboarding costs. Hope motioned to reinstate Thomas Lee as a firefighter/EMT at the pay rate of $13/hr. Heather seconded. Vote taken: Heather – yes, Hope – yes, Jill – yes, Chris – yes, Jacob – yes, John – yes. Motion carried. The Chief would like to hire a couple more paramedics at the first of the year at their request. He will elaborate on this in January.

Equipment and Maintenance: The 2007 truck is still at the maintenance facility. Due to design flaws, it is having trouble passing the pump tests. The repair cost will be a 2026 budget item.

Grants and Outside Funding: The remaining BWC grant – the last project on that grant is the remote-control nozzle on the Brush Truck. The parts are in and scheduled for installation in January. Phillipsburg will be covered by a Brookville truck to be placed in our firehouse in the meantime, and the Village's insurance must cover that. The FEMA Assistance to Firefighters (AFG) grant has been accessed by the hard work of FO Hartman, and will be accepted in the coming days to purchase the self-contained breathing devices (air packs). That's a $165,000 grant that has been awarded and we have to match $16,000.

General Health of the Organization: All has been going well. With approval of the 2026 budget, we can implement some projects that have been previously discussed. The Department is running about 96% of crews being covered, so there is not a lot of gap and we are not losing a lot of calls. The Department is running fewer calls because of the lack of the 2007 truck. The schedule is looking good, things are going well. The guys ran a cardiac call, and the Department received some kudos from the hospital for their patient care during the response. The new Village medical director was at the hospital at that time. It turned out well for the patient and for the Phillipsburg Fire Department.

Capital Improvement for 2026: The Chief has discovered that the Village has paid for multiple studies about what's wrong with our Fire Department going back many years, and the Village and Fire Department has never done anything that the studies have suggested. Chief Aldrich has read the studies and is trying to implement changes suggested. The biggest priority should be acquiring a newer Medic Unit. He has requested $20,000 to be considered for the purchase. The goal in this 5-year plan is to have 2 units – a primary and a reserve. Also, the plan is to explore the option to re-chassis the reserve unit. This will give the Department 15 years of life. Also, a self-loading cot option needs to be considered. The SCBA project is also considered in the 2026 budget.

Volunteer Fire Dependents Fund: Chief Aldrich needs a committee of 2 elected officials, 2 fire department employees, and 1 member of the public and will only meet if needed. FO Hartman explained that the VFDF is a state fund that the Village pays into. Mayor Simpson and Councilmember Heather Craft have volunteered as elected official committee members. Chief Alrich has two department members signed up for the committee. He is just looking for one resident to volunteer.

Police Chief Wysong is working on the 2026 police department budget. He has met with Fiscal Officer Hartman to discuss. He will have the budget prepared before the deadline to do so. He is also working on a more extensive report that he will present at a future meeting. Heather asked about the police contract. The mayor stated that there is one more meeting needed to complete that before December 31, 2025.

Nathanial Davis Zoning: The Village is making improvements and has had discussions with local businesses. Additional improvements and development are in the works. Improvements for Vik's property have been approved locally, but it is being held up at the county level. Heather asked if there is anything residential to be addressed as far as any zoning issues are concerned. Nathanial Davis stated that he attended a workshop through MVRPC at Sinclair CC. Mr. Davis has a plan to address the issues. Derek Shell explained the process regarding cars with expired tags and vehicles in yards that have not been moved for a certain period of time. Heather mentioned that cars are being dumped on property in the Village. There was a discussion regarding the process to remediate the problem.

FO Hartman mentioned that through the MVRPC. There will be some follow-up with that. Nathanial Davis stated that Lori Hartman and Derek Shell have helped him a lot in the learning process regarding zoning.

Derek Shell presented the December 2025 report. He spoke about treating and plowing the roads and some issues with that. Derek also had updates on the water project. He spoke with Mote Engineering in Greenville, and they have done some work here. I believe they worked with Montgomery County on the sanitary sewer system for the Village. They are interested in doing the design of the treatment plan, however, they are not interested in pursuing the funding. Derek then spoke with RCAP, Curtis Strickland, who informed that it is his job to secure funding. RCAP is still willing to work with the Village. Artesian is also interesting in working with the Village regarding construction and treatment. Derek then mentioned that the water rates have to be increased. There is no option. The increase will be in the range of 25%. He stated that other Villages do not use 6,000 gallons as the minimum. It's usually 2,500 gallons to 3,000 gallons.

Jill and Derek also meet with AWP regarding treatment options. Jill mentioned that the EPA is more comfortable with AWP because they use the carbon method of remediation. All that being said, the entire water project would have been $9 million, but will now have a cap of $3 million. The Village will have to borrow about $1.5 million instead of $6 million.

Derek then stated that he has the 2026 budget for the street and water. He has been working with FO Hartman regarding the fund statuses and looked at the revenue and expenditures. The Village has used very little money from the street fund. To that much in the checking account at the end of the year is a good amount of money. Derek has suggested that the Village mill and resurface Milan from Main Street until it ends at the gravel. Wagner Paving gave a price of $39,951.20. Snowplow repairs are needed at the cost of $1,200 because there are some cylinders that are leaking and repairs need addressed. It is an important piece of equipment. Derek would also like to budget $250 for flowerpots at Main Street and State Route 49 (four flowerpots, one on each corner), and maybe the fire department can keep them watered. It would dress up the town a little bit.

Regarding the water, Derek got a proposal for tower cleaning and inspection and a full written follow-up report using Ohio EPA guidelines, but it's $5,423. That would be money well spent, because if the integrity of the tower is still there, necessary repairs can be made. Derek spoke about the treatment plant costing $8,500. He then mentioned the chlorine pumps. Each well house has a chlorine pump and they are old. Derek would like to purchase new chlorine pumps, and have the existing ones rebuilt, and there is $1,500 budgeted for that. The total amount for 2026 for water and street is $63,742.20. Derek says the Village is in good shape with its funds. The water fund is going to need to be addressed in the future.

The paving and graveling of streets was discussed. Chirs Steiner mentioned that we can have potholes and bad gravel if the ball diamonds are going to be used. There was discussion regarding paving Jesse Haines Way and Milan.

Derek does not believe the property that the Village wants to sell has an easement. Derek spoke with a real estate agent about the property, and that person provided the name of an appraiser. Derek will reach out to that person.

Mayor Simpson presented the Fire/EMS Contract. It is the contract to make the fire chief position filled by Patrick Aldrich permanent. He suggested that the Council read through the contract; specifically the termination of the contract by either party upon 30 days' written notice, and grounds for immediate termination are listed as well. Rather than another six month term, we'll make it permanent, and we wish that Pat stays with us for many, many years.

Chief Aldrich stated that he had a good meeting with Clay Township last month. That alleviated some of his uneasiness. That 30 days is good for everyone involved moving forward.

Hope motioned to approve Patrick Aldrich as the permanent fire chief and approving the contract. Heather seconded the motion. Vote taken: Heather – yes, Hope – yes, Jill – yes, Chris – yes, Jacob – yes, John – yes. Motion carried. The mayor asked Chief Aldrich and Heather Craft for their signatures on the new contract.

Mayor Simpson asked if there was any new business. John Ritter stated he has sent everyone a copy of the IT manual that he created. He explained it is a "road map" to get us to how to build our computers, and how to build our network and manage it to get us compliant with HB 96. It requires new equipment. John asked that the agenda for the next meeting include the Council approving the purchase of new equipment, even if funding is not yet available. The Council needs to show the State of Ohio that the Village is acting in good faith to proceed toward adopting HB 26. John further explained that the manual is quite lengthy, but it is written to handle all the processes and procedures for compliance with HB 96 and outlines completely how it can be managed going forward. John also worked on getting park department payments available online and compliant with state auditor guidelines. This issue also needs to be on the next meeting agenda for approval.

Heather asked if there were any plans to decorate the town for the holidays. Derek spoke about maybe erecting banners for veterans from the Village. Derek also mentioned that he has a brochure for decorations that can be purchased for next year. There was discussion about getting electrical outlets installed for light up decorations and how the Village used to decorate for Christmas.

Public Comments: None

Council Reports: John stated that some of the items on the to do list have stalled, such as getting computers and being compliant with HB 96. John also talked about working more on the website. He wants to get all resolutions and ordinances searchable on the website.

The mayor stated that the Village is waiting for new credit cards to arrive from Huntington Bank so that computers can be purchased. FO Hartman stated that she has completed the paperwork and submitted it to the bank. She will inform Council when the cards are received. Heather stated that when the purchase is approved, she has the list of what is needed. The mayor mentioned that he knows someone who can do computer wiring. There was discussion about how to go about setting up the computers.

Hope thanked everyone for helping with the holiday party. She is also looking for two more park board members.

Mayor Simpson asked about setting a date for the next meeting before adjourning. December 29, 2025, at 6:15 p.m. was selected for a special meeting to discuss a temporary budget.

Hope motioned to adjourn. Heather seconded. All in favor. Meeting adjourned at 9:12 p.m.

Mayor: 

Fiscal Officer: 