

TONTOGANY VILLAGE COUNCIL

MEETING MINUTES FROM: January 19, 2026

Council called to order in regular session at 7:00 p.m. with Mayor Matthew Shanahan presiding. Opening ceremony: Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag, led by Mayor Shanahan. Roll call of members: Brenda Mackey, here; Connie Mehring, here; Mark Smith, here; Robert Bergfeld, here; Paul Neal, here. Also present were Utilities Superintendent/Meter Reader Chad Johnson and Fiscal Officer/Utilities Clerk Ryan Harnishfeger. Visitors present: Brad and Keri Hain; Deputy Snider, from the Wood County Sheriff's Office. Mayor Shanahan administered the Oath of Office to reelected Councilmembers Mehring, Bergfeld, and Neal. Minutes from the December 15th meeting were approved as submitted.

FINANCE and CLAIMS: A spreadsheet of the current invoices was reviewed and approved by members. Councilwoman Mackey made a motion that these bills be allowed and orders drawn for same. Councilwoman Mehring seconded this motion. All were in favor; motion carried. Copies of the December Bank Reconciliation, Fund Status, Revenue Status, and Appropriation Status reports were given to the mayor and the Finance Committee to review.

Mayor Shanahan welcomed Sheriff's Deputy Snider and asked if members had any questions or concerns for him. Councilwoman Mehring asked if the Sheriff's Office might be able to do something with two abandoned children's bicycles that were found in town, such as taking them away, fixing them up, and donating them to whoever they may choose. Councilman Smith commented that they don't do that anymore. Mayor Shanahan added that he was intending to donate the bicycles to the school. With nothing else to discuss, the mayor thanked the deputy and he left the meeting.

Mayor Shanahan told members that he invited Brad and Keri Hain to sit in on the meeting tonight, giving them a chance to ask questions about Council and its operations, because they had expressed some interest in getting involved with the village. He offered them the floor to ask questions or introduce themselves. Keri told members that they just bought the house across from the hall last year. She commented that her husband, Brad, has lived here practically forever and is well known in the town. Members agreed that they have known Brad since he was a baby.

Fiscal Officer Harnishfeger reported that there is one hall rental scheduled in February so far, which is on Saturday, February 28th. Mayor Shanahan commented that he had marked a Togany Fest meeting on the hall-rental calendar for February 1st. He also said that he has told the Togany Fest committee that they are welcome to use the hall, but, if we receive a hall rental request for the same day they want to use it, the renter will take precedence and their meeting will be bumped to another day.

Mayor Shanahan reminded members that Fiscal Officer Harnishfeger had sent them an email about Rick Crozier experiencing damage to his vehicle. The mayor asked Utilities Superintendent Johnson to recount to Council what had happened. Mr. Johnson said he received a call from Rick Crozier on Monday morning, saying he had a waterline break. So, he went to inspect it and found water leaking. It was an unusual case with the actual break almost appearing to be in Mr. Crozier's yard. While Mr. Johnson was waiting for Palmer to come to fix the waterline break, Mr. Crozier told him that, being unaware of the hole created by the leak, he had backed his truck into the hole and damaged his truck. Mr. Johnson commented that the hole he saw was about a foot and a half deep. Councilwoman Mackey asked if this was after Palmer was there. Mr. Johnson answered that it was before Palmer arrived; Mr. Crozier's truck was parked over the hole and he didn't see it when he backed up his truck. Ms. Mackey said she thought she read that it was after Palmer came. Mr. Harnishfeger apologized that he got that detail wrong when he sent the email to members, having not clearly understood the timeline of the event. Mr. Johnson told members that Mr. Crozier called him back a few days later and wanted to know if stone could be put in that spot. He said he told Mr. Crozier that he would have to ask Council about that, because it would probably take a truckload of stone plus equipment to spread it, which would not be cheap. He commented that the spot does probably need some stone, due to this situation as well as a hole by the mailbox. The mayor asked if a whole truckload of stone is really needed. Mr. Johnson answered that he

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didn't know for sure, but probably. The mayor said he was trying to understand if Mr. Crozier is asking for stone to cover the break area or for his whole driveway. Mr. Johnson replied that he wants stone at least to cover where the break was. The mayor suggested that we start by getting a quote for putting stone in there. Mr. Johnson replied that he would do so. Councilman Smith commented that a truckload is the minimum quantity of stone you will be able to buy. The mayor told members that Mr. Crozier saw him the afternoon of the waterline break and told him about the sinkhole and showed him the damage done to his truck. He said he encouraged Mr. Crozier, if he thinks the damage was caused by the waterline break, to follow the right process by submitting something to his insurance and sending something to the Village for us to consider, as opposed to just fixing it and then wanting reimbursement. The mayor reminded members that Fiscal Officer Harnishfeger had said in his email that Council could decide to file a claim with our insurance or just pay for the damages ourselves, since the general fund could easily handle the cost. The mayor asked if Council had any preference. Members asked for the total of Mr. Crozier's repair quote. The mayor answered that it was \$1,606.49. Mr. Harnishfeger pointed out that Mr. Crozier's quote included a little over \$100.00 of tax for materials and labor, which would need to be removed from the quote. The mayor suggested that, if we decide to pay for it ourselves, we could have Mr. Crozier pay for the repairs up front, send the receipt to us, and then we could reimburse him. Mr. Smith commented that it is such a small claim that we would be better off to just go ahead and pay it ourselves and not incur points against our insurance. He also said he thought the estimate from Crozier Body Shop looked pretty accurate for the repairs it covered. Councilman Bergfeld asked if more than one estimate was needed. The mayor replied that, if run through our insurance, they would probably need multiple estimates. He also commented that another option for us would be to just have Crozier Body Shop send us the bill directly. Members voiced agreement that this might be the best method. The mayor said he would be happy to follow up with Rick Crozier and to Call Crozier Body Shop to talk through the process of them removing the tax and sending us the bill directly. Councilman Smith made a motion to pay the vehicle damage repair for Rick Crozier, caused by a hole formed from our waterline break. Councilman Neal seconded this motion. All were in favor; motion carried.

ZONING: Mayor Shanahan reported that he will need to update the zoning spreadsheet, but he and Councilman Smith did get a response from the owner of the property across from the post office with all of the vehicles and other items in the yard. The owner is in the process of getting it cleaned up; therefore, the mayor and Councilman Smith agreed that a second notice was not needed at this time. He reported that we still have not heard anything from the resident on Lincoln Street regarding the vehicle in the driveway, so, we will most likely be sending another notice to them. He said that he and Mr. Smith discussed over the weekend that they still need to go down and talk to the household with the camper.

Councilman Neal reported that he prepared a new manual for the zoning inspectors, and he passed a copy of the manual to the mayor. [**Amendment to correct the previous sentence, approved February 2, 2026, to read as follows:** Councilman Neal reported that he prepared a new manual for the zoning inspectors, and he passed copies of the manual to the mayor and the president of council.] He told the mayor and members that the manual contains all of the Tontogany zoning-related ordinances that are in force right now, as well as a rewrite of the process of dealing with nuisance complaints, and a collection of forms that we have used in the past. He pointed out that the first page in the manual is an index to all of the ordinances in the manual. The mayor thanked Mr. Neal.

Mayor Shanahan reported that the former owner of the downtown corner carryout received his letter from the county and immediately the building went up for sale. It was sold on the day before Christmas. Derek Kramp is the new owner. While taking down the Christmas tree, he said that he and Councilman Smith had a chance to chat with Mr. Kramp. Councilman Neal commented that he notified the Wood County Building Inspector that the property had been sold. The mayor asked if the inspector responded and Mr. Neal answered that he did. The mayor told members that Mr. Kramp's plan is to

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renovate the two apartments on the second floor and rent them out. He added that we have passed along to Mr. Kramp information about a couple of people with possible business interests for the downstairs of the building. The mayor commented that Mr. Kramp probably won't have anything ready before spring, but he has started cleaning up the bricks in the back and he started working on the roof right away. He also said that they mentioned to Mr. Kramp that we had the Wood County Inspector look at the building and send out a letter about the structural condition of the building, so he is aware of Council's concerns about the building. Mr. Neal asked if Mr. Kramp needs a copy of the letter and said he could provide him with a copy. The mayor answered that he himself had already sent him a copy of the letter.

UTILITIES: Utilities Superintendent Johnson reported that the waterline break was pretty normal, requiring just a repair band, rather than having to cut a section out. Concerning the downtown carryout, he recalled that the water meter had frozen, blown apart, and was dumping water in there for a long time. The mayor responded that Mr. Kramp had asked about that. Mr. Johnson commented that he didn't remember exactly why, but we paid Palmer for a brand-new shutoff for that. He told members that it would be up to them whether we would want to relocate the water meter outside or leave it inside. Members discussed the matter briefly and decided that there is no need to relocate it, since the shutoff is accessible outside. Mr. Johnson also reminded members that the water leak had caused damage to Mr. Woodbury's place next to the carryout. Members couldn't remember exactly what was done with the piping situation there. Mayor Shanahan asked what would be the easy way to figure that out without digging up everything. Mr. Johnson said he could probably look at it and figure it out. Councilman Smith commented that if we put in a new meter pit while Mr. Kramp is working on the building, it might easily get damaged and then we would have to go back and do it again. If he wants one later, we can have that conversation then. Councilman Bergfeld asked if the water meter at the carryout is still working or if we have to put in a new one. Mr. Johnson answered that it blew apart and is not working, but Mr. Kramp doesn't appear to be interested in having a new one installed until spring.

Councilman Smith brought up the topic of utility rates. He commented that we don't supply our own water and electricity; we buy it from Bowling Green, who has made known their intention to raise their water rates by 7 percent this year. He said he hates to do it, but he thought we should talk about raising our rates to match our supplier's increase. Councilman Bergfeld asked when we will find out about when they intend to start charging us the increased rate. Councilwoman Mackey responded that they said their water rate increase will go into effect on April 1st. Mayor Shanahan commented that an April 1st increase gives us time to properly communicate with the community about why we need to raise our rates, like we did the last time we raised the rates. Mr. Smith commented that Bowling Green said they would be following up with electric rates too. He said he thought that we need to match, or come close to matching, what they are doing. Ms. Mackey said she thought that would be reasonable. Mr. Bergfeld said he thought we should at least match Bowling Green's rate increase, especially since it has been a few years since we raised our rates. Mr. Smith said he wanted to bring it up now to give us time, before it goes into effect, to put it in the minutes, write a letter, inform people, and answer their questions. The mayor suggested to members that we should come to our first February meeting with numbers and either make a decision at that meeting or at the second meeting in February, so we can have time to get the rate increase adopted in time to coincide with Bowling Green's April 1st increase. The mayor asked Fiscal Officer Harnishfeger to provide Council with the current water rates and calculations for a 7 percent increase, and to email the information to everyone to give them time to review it ahead of the first meeting in February.

STREETS and ALLEYS: Nothing to report.

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SIDEWALKS and TREES: Councilman Smith said he thought we should discuss our 50-50 sidewalk program for 2026. He said he would find the letter we previously used and get it ready to be sent out, to tell people what we did last time and find out who may be interested in participating this time. Councilman Bergfeld commented that a rates letter could be included in that mailing. Councilman Neal asked if the sidewalk between the village hall and the railroad tracks would be included in the sidewalk project. Mr. Smith answered that it would. He commented that the more a contractor can do at one time, the better; it is cheaper for them and we don't want to have to hire two contractors to do sidewalks at different times. Mr. Bergfeld suggested that we would probably need to get another quote. Mr. Smith agreed and commented that we know concrete people who want to put in sidewalks.

DRAINS and SEWERS: Nothing to report.

CITY HALL and PARKS: Councilman Bergfeld asked about advertising for job openings and where we think we should post them. He said he didn't think the paper was a very viable option anymore. Councilman Smith said he thought the village revitalization page can post something. Mayor Shanahan said he would reach out to the other three Otsego mayors to see if there are any part-time personnel in their communities, having familiarity with billing systems, who might be interested in also working part-time for Tontogany. He noted that we are looking at the positions of zoning inspector, village administrator, and Ryan's positions of utilities clerk and fiscal officer. Mr. Smith commented that we will have Haley put all of this on the website too.

Councilman Smith reported that Fiscal Officer Harnishfeger and he both received some mail from GSI. He said they are interested in continuing their business relation with us for weed control and fertilization of the parks. They sent out an estimate for the 2026 program, offering a discount if we prepay for their services. For Mehring Park, including spring and fall weed control and bareground herbicide in the playground area, the regular total would be \$462.10 and the discounted prepay total would be \$439.00. For Centennial Park, including spring and fall weed control and bareground herbicide in the playground area, the regular total would be \$1,016.74 and the discounted prepay total would be \$965.90. He commented that it is the same company doing the same thing they did for us last year. Mayor Shanahan asked if we were going to ask them if they had anything to spray or treat the sand for cicada killers. Mr. Smith answered that we were. He said he could ask them about that and have them include it in a revised estimate. He added that we have until the 27th of February to do the prepay if we want to take advantage of the discount, so he said he would email them about what they might do for cicada killers. Councilwoman Mackey remarked that GSI's estimates are a fraction of what we were paying TruGreen for lawn treatment plus Renewed Outdoors to spray the playground. Mr. Smith commented that when we did have some things that grew back in 2025, GSI came back and took care of it. Ms. Mackey stated that her only complaint was that they didn't come out very early in the spring to treat the lawn. Mr. Smith responded that if we get locked in early, they are already writing their route for the year, so we should be able to get earlier service in their spring schedule. The mayor asked if members wanted to take a motion to accept the quotes offered by GSI tonight and if we are okay with adding whatever they might suggest for treatment of the cicada killers. Councilman Bergfeld answered that he thought we should wait to see what the new quote would be and then do it all at one time, since we have until the end of February. Members agreed. Mr. Smith said he was good with everything in the original quotes, and he will send them an email tomorrow asking them to add what they may recommend for the cicada killers, so we can get it done and use the prepay option before the end of February.

Councilman Neal reported that efforts are being made to convert our website so that it is ADA compliant for people who are blind or deaf. He said there are tests that we have to run the website through to see if the conversion capabilities of the website do what they are supposed to do, and they rate us on it. The last test that we ran, we got an average total of 85%, which is very good. There are five

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different areas in the website that are impacted. We are on schedule and will have it close to 100% probably by May, but we have the difficult part done.

Councilman Neal reminded members that Solicitor Skaff had sent us a copy of Weston's cybersecurity policy. Mr. Neal said he is redrafting that for Tontogany and we have a deadline of July 1st for publishing our cybersecurity policy. He said he would give members a copy of it. He told members that the only thing we are trying to do to put this in perspective is to make sure we reflect the things that are already going to be delivered in the Muni-Link software package, as well as the brand-new meter reading software. He commented that those pieces of software have implications in terms of trying to prevent all kinds of cybersecurity threats.

Mayor Shanahan reported that the scout working on the Eagle project had his fundraiser a couple of weeks ago at Euchre Night. The mayor said he did alright, raising probably a few hundred dollars for the Eagle project. He added that we are still on target for that project in the spring.

Mayor Shanahan asked Fiscal Officer Harnishfeger to reach out to Josh Heckerman to see if he can provide us with a quote for 2026 mowing and landscaping services. The mayor added that he had received a text yesterday from someone else who was asking what all is involved in our quote for mowing and landscaping services. He said we will probably get a quote from that person, so he wanted to be sure we have Josh Heckerman's quote as well.

Mayor Shanahan reported that they had a downtown revitalization meeting on Thursday at Gail Christofferson's studio. He said that Paul, Mark, himself, and Gail will be sending an invitation to all building and business owners to join us for a quick revitalization meeting. It will be basically a meet and greet meeting; no direct plans will be set at that meeting, but it will be an opportunity for invitees to get an idea of what our outlook and vision is for downtown. The mayor commented that, through the survey we did a couple of years ago, we collected a list of names of people who said they would be willing to volunteer in various capacities. He said that there are two optional meeting dates at the end of February that are being offered to the building and business owners to meet with us, which dates he will share with council members, who are welcome to join in the meetings as well. He said that after the meetings with the building owners, they will have another meet and greet meeting with volunteers who had said they would be happy to help in various ways with revitalization labor. The mayor commented that the Revitalization Committee will probably be a pretty big focus in 2026, now that the 150th Celebration is behind us. He said they will be making an effort toward getting some of the downtown buildings occupied and making the downtown area more lively. He reported that they felt pretty good after the revitalization meeting, regarding the direction in which they are heading. Gail sent some follow-up notes to committee members. She has also already emailed the volunteers and given them some follow-up notes and dates. The mayor told Fiscal Officer Harnishfeger that he would be emailing him the text of a letter that he wants sent out to the building and business owners, plus a list of their names and addresses. Councilman Neal commented that he thinks the level of excitement is increasing, and the new owner of the old Moser building is turning that problem building around. He added that we have received a letter from an individual who wants to open a pizza kitchen and pizza delivery business in Tontogany. The mayor commented that the pizza guy lives in Weston and he just wants to do a delivery business; he doesn't want to charge a delivery fee, he doesn't want to accept tips, he just wants to make a good product and serve the Otsego community. The mayor said that, at the time the pizza guy reached out to us, he had emailed him that we don't have anything available. Then, after Derek Kramp bought the old carryout, he emailed the pizza guy back again to tell him we now have a new owner of a building downtown. He also shared the pizza guy's information with Derek Kramp, and Mr. Kramp has since reached out to him and left some messages. The mayor also mentioned that Miss Lily's, in Grand Rapids, has gone out of business, and the owner has expressed interest in having a conversation about something on a smaller scale in the old carryout building. So, there are a couple of different possible options for the corner carryout building, which may or may not come to fruition. The mayor told

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members that, when he sends them the zoning sheet update, he will also send them all of the revitalization meet and greet meeting dates.

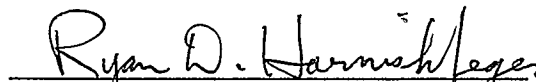
Mayor Shanahan told members that we can look at committees in February, if they want to. He also said he would entertain a motion for who will serve as Council President, as we do each January. Councilwoman Mehring made a motion to have Councilman Smith remain as Council President. Councilman Bergfeld seconded this motion. The mayor asked Mr. Smith if he accepted the motion. Mr. Smith answered that he accepted it. All were in favor; motion carried. Mr. Smith thanked members for their confidence; he added that, as much as he jokes about it, he does appreciate that they trust him to do it. The mayor commented that Councilman Smith has provided vital participation in many conversations and projects outside of meetings and has truly been a benefit to the village.

Mayor Shanahan asked if visitors Brad and Keri Hain had any questions. Keri asked about the meeting schedule. The mayor responded that there are two meetings per month, on the first and third Mondays of the month. The ordinance says that council members have to at least attend one meeting per month. He explained that sometimes members will let him know that they will be absent for something like attending their child's ballgame. He said that a council member is a paid position--\$100 per month for Lincoln Fox's open seat and three others; still \$64 per month for two seats, which will go to \$100 when their next term begins. He described how committees work, doing the legwork on projects and then bringing back information and suggestions to Council for final decisions. He related how members help out, if they can, with various small projects that come up, such as putting up and taking down veteran banners. He said that we begin budget discussions in November. After the final meeting of the year, we have a little Christmas social time together and share some snacks and beverages. We try to treat each other and village residents as friendly neighbors. He noted that we only usually have zero to a few visitors at meetings, which we take as a compliment that the citizens trust us to take care of village business. He asked Brad and Keri to let us know if either of them is interested in the open councilmember seat. Keri responded that she is definitely interested in becoming a council member. The mayor suggested that she and Brad talk it over when they get home and then let the mayor know what their decisions is. He said that, if interested, one of them could be sworn in at the next meeting on February 2nd.

Utilities Superintendent Johnson brought up a question he had about Lane Lee's Golf Shack at 18550 Washington Street. He seems to be using water in the Golf Shack, but there is no water meter account that shows up in our meter reading device for that building. Utilities Clerk Harnishfeger commented that he thinks we only bill for electric at the Golf Shack building (as it also was for the previous owner), whereas we bill for water and electric at the house. Mayor Shanahan suggested that we can ask Lane Lee about it.

With nothing further to discuss, Mayor Shanahan declared the meeting adjourned at 8:03 p.m.


Matthew Shanahan, Mayor


Ryan Harnishfeger, Fiscal Officer