VERMILION PORT AUTHORITY MEETING MINUTES

November 12, 2026 – 6:30 p.m.

Roll Call: David Miklos, Larry Drouhard, Heidi Riddle, Jonathan Hauck. Absent: Peter Corogin.

Present: Mayor Owens; Marty Sekeres, Port Operations Manager; Bill Yancar, Assistant Operations Manager; Drew Werley, Council Representative; Melanie Wood, Clerk of Council.

Meeting video is available on the city website at www.cityofvermilionohio.gov under Meetings and Ordinances.

David Miklos, Vice Chairman called the meeting of November 12, 2026, to order at 6:30 p.m. at the Vermilion Municipal Court Complex.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

H. Riddle MOVED; L. Drouhard seconded to approve the minutes of October 8, 2026. Roll Call Vote 4 YEAS. **MOTION CARRIED**.

CORRESPONDENCE/OPEN DISCUSSION:

B. Yancar noted they received a lot of communications from the state accounting firm, and they have been working through all their communications and their requests for information.

FINANCIAL REVIEW:

Cash Position

M. Sekeres reported that he had nothing new on the statement of cash and expense since the last meeting, and that the 214 and 411 accounts were unchanged. He stated that the cash position as of the current month was $243,136.34. Compared with 2024 and 2025, the Port was right in line with 2025, a year that included many donations. He pointed out that lease income was beginning to come in from the various leases.

Water Works Marina

For Waterworks Marina, M. Sekeres reported 2026 year-to-date revenue of $74,743.95 against a three-year average of $64,532.75, about 15.825 percent above the average. Compared with 2025, the increase was about 8.44 percent.

McGarvey's Landing

For McGarvey's Landing, year-to-date revenue was $22,739.50 against a three-year average of $20,974.78, about 8 percent above the average. Compared with 2025, however, it was down about 15 percent, or roughly $4,000. M. Sekeres said staff understood the reason for the decline and that it was nothing "earth shattering." D. Miklos asked whether it was weather, and B. Yancar confirmed it was, saying that was about a club and a half.

South Street Ramp

For the South Street ramp, year-to-date revenue was $40,300.14 against a three-year average of $40,586.92, a little below the average. Compared with 2025, it was about 6 percent higher. In total, the three facilities were up about 3 percent this year.

J. Hauck asked whether November was expected to come in about the same as last year or better. B. Yancar said it would be about the same. He explained that staff used the three-year averages to estimate potential revenue for next year's budget.

ACTIVITY REPORT:

Water Works Marina:

M. Sekeres clarified that the docks were in the process of being pulled and were expected to be out by the end of the week. Winterization was complete. The water lines had been blown out and everything shut down, and the red antifreeze had been put in the lines. The next task was installing the Christmas lights.

McGarvey's Landing:

M. Sekeres reported that there was a water leak of unknown origin. McGarvey's had been winterized the previous day. Staff tried to isolate the leak and opened the manholes and all the pedestals but could not tell where it was coming from. M. Sekeres said he would work with the City to try to locate it. The only remaining task was shutting down the restrooms, which were mostly ready. All backflows had been removed at Clarion and Exchange, and the handicap dock had been pulled. Freeze plates had been installed at McGarvey's. Christmas decorating would follow later.

South Street Ramp:

M. Sekeres reported that the courtesy docks had been pulled, the pedestal winterized, and the kayak launch pulled.

Clarion Drive:

M. Sekeres reported that Clarion is completely winterized, and only the Christmas lights remained.

Exchange Street:

M. Sekeres said the backflows had been pulled and blown out and antifreeze installed, so the site was ready. Little had changed regarding the meetings and planned activity at Exchange. The condominium work was supposed to start but had not started as of that week. All docks had been pulled there as well.

Miscellaneous:

M. Sekeres reported that new lease information had been sent out and leases were beginning to trickle back in.

Fundraising:

M. Sekeres said the Port still needed to identify and select what it would do, under the guidance of the committee. Staff could begin planning once that information was available.

D. Miklos asked for an update on the internet connection at South Street. B. Yancar said it was much improved. The only recent issue arose when the treatment plant took down its power for repairs or similar work, and loss of connectivity had almost gone away. M. Sekeres's laptop still seemed to have a problem. M. Sekeres described intermittent outages and said he was unsure of the cause. J. Hauck suggested it was probably a device issue. B. Yancar said that some work had been done on the computer in connection with a proposal to temporarily change how material was stored, possibly moving to OneDrive. That change was not going forward, and the Port would remain on its standard storage methods. He said something appeared to have changed during that work, but he did not know whether it was causing the disconnections. He did not believe it was the fiber, because his desktop was not disconnecting. The Port had worked with tech support without an obvious result, and he described the problem as a nuisance rather than a shutdown. M. Sekeres said he was connected by VPN and would take the laptop home to see whether it behaved differently there than at the office. B. Yancar added that the fiber could become a long-term concern because the original cable had been installed incorrectly, which remained unresolved. For now, it was holding and not causing a problem.

D. Miklos asked Mayor Owens whether he had anything to add. The Mayor said the Port's issues were similar to the general service and IT problems experienced across the City. He acknowledged that normal glitches occurred and said that matters involving infrastructure and the cable connection were being examined. He expected a solution shortly. B. Yancar added that the Port was currently getting stellar service from tech support and that the technicians were right on top of every issue. Mayor Owens then explained that the administration was working in parallel with the current IT provider and the new provider. The new provider would have an accredited technician working in the Port's office, the water plant office, the wastewater plant office, or City Hall, four days a week and eight hours a day. There would be no tickets. A user would simply call, and the technician, being somewhere in the City, would be within minutes of solving the problem or any other citywide problem. Board members responded that this was a good thing, fantastic, and a great improvement. B. Yancar noted that most of the Port's problems were software rather than hardware issues and that technicians could often dial in to resolve them. The Mayor said the point of the arrangement was to have IT support effectively in-house. He noted that the same issues occurred in every City building and hoped the administration's actions would solve them for everybody. D. Miklos thanked him for the update.

M. Sekeres then reported on the State Auditor. Staff had been working with the auditor's office, and he credited B. Yancar with being a very big help. Staff had spoken directly with the auditor and had provided everything she had requested, and he said they felt good about it. He also reported that the Port had completed a revalidation for its Clover payment system and was compliant, having received its certificate that day. He said that was all he had on the activity report.

OLD/NEW BUSINESS:

Budget Discussion:

Mr. Sekeres said that additional information had been sent to the board that day, and he offered that the board could go into executive session to discuss the budget.

B. Yancar explained that the reason for an executive session on the budget was that wages were an element of it and wages were not discussed in open session. D. Miklos asked whether that was a valid reason, or whether only the wage portion could be discussed in executive session. M. Wood asked whether B. Yancar meant compensation, and B. Yancar confirmed it was a compensation issue. He added that if the board went into executive session on wages, that discussion would be part of the budget discussion. L. Drouhard said that if the budget was going to be held off for a while longer, the wage discussion should wait too. J. Hauck asked whether the final budget had been intended for the December meeting.

B. Yancar asked the board to back up. He said the activity report made clear that, for him or M. Sekeres to complete the budget, the board needed to provide its decision tree. The events committee that would develop the new funding source had to be determined before the next meeting, and he could not finalize the budget without it. L. Drouhard said the board needed to go to executive session. D. Miklos said he wanted to be sure the topic was proper for executive session. He thought compensation was, but not funding sources and general budget matters. M. Wood agreed that the budget as a whole probably was not, though compensation was.

D. Miklos asked what the Port was looking for monetarily from fundraising, noting that the Port had historically raised around $10,000. B. Yancar said the Port had a very expensive year. Accounting had given the Port its cash report only through August, which did not stop staff from projecting, and which validated their projections. The best-case carryover was about $18,000. When Mayor Owens asked him to repeat the figure, B. Yancar confirmed the carryover was $18,000. B. Yancar said staff projected everything so the budget process could be completed, and that expenses currently exceeded revenue. He said he was happy with the current budget. Any additional grants or projects, however, would rely heavily on fundraising, so the board needed to decide how much to raise and how many projects to take on.

B. Yancar described Exchange Street. The Port was not totally in control of what happened there, and the work would proceed one way or another. The condominiums had not started. The Port's part would be electrical, plumbing, and concrete. The Parks Department wanted a whole new boardwalk and various landscaping changes, which would require the Port's pedestals to be moved. Touching the pedestals triggered ground-fault requirements that reached back into the electrical systems. J. Hauck said that if the pedestals were being moved for someone else's project, there needed to be a discussion before proceeding. B. Yancar said the Port could negotiate with the Parks Department and that he would be thrilled if Parks took on the concrete and walkway replacement, which had always been Parks' area. Pedestals, bulkheads, and docks had always been the Port's. J. Hauck repeated that without the project the pedestals were fine, and that the Port would now face more electrical work and pedestal replacement. L. Drouhard said the Port was a self-funded organization and could not do what was not in its budget. B. Yancar agreed that it was not currently in the budget.

D. Miklos asked whether the projection included anything for Clarion or Exchange Street. B. Yancar said it did not. Staff had gone through last year's expenses and built in the standard annual items, such as pulling and installing docks and backflow preventer inspections. There were no capital projects. The Waterworks walkway had been discussed, but no man-hours or related costs had been built in.

L. Drouhard asked Mayor Owens and D. Werley for their opinion, saying it seemed the Port was being pushed into a project it would like to do but had not asked for. Mayor Owens said the issue was simply revenue. The Port Authority's challenge was revenue, period, and the board would be better served focusing on how to increase it. L. Drouhard then asked about the four slips at Exchange Street (there was brief confusion over whether it was three or four), and whether making them transient rather than seasonal dockage would increase revenue and help improve the facility. Mayor Owens said he did not expect that question to be answered, and that regardless of the figure, such an increase would not be enough. He said the Port needed a facility that allowed it to garner more revenue from its assets. That included not only the docks but also the financing of projects outside what the Port Authority ordinarily did.

Mayor Owens asked whether it was correct that the Port Authority could waive sales taxes on anything it engaged in, with no sales tax imposed by Erie County. Board members confirmed that the Port was exempt. He said that was an asset which the Port was not using, even though many City projects could benefit from it, and that the matter was not being discussed. He said the board needed to make sure the Port took advantage of the asset it held as an institution.

D. Miklos said one historical barrier had been the lack of a year-round, full-time employee, given the limitations of the Port's services. Mayor Owens said the Port should start doing it anyway. D. Miklos said he agreed completely. He said the Port could sell golf cart tickets and duck race tickets until blue in the face and still not raise the money needed for these projects. He was all for exploring this approach but said it was completely uncharted territory for the Port. He did not know whether anyone in the City could help. Mayor Owens said he was there to help direct the conversation and was ready to engage with the Port Authority on what the process looked like and what needed to be done to move forward as a City.

D. Miklos said another possible barrier was that consultants who helped put such deals together might require substantial retainers, which could be an obstacle given the Port's situation. The Mayor agreed it could be, but said that as a businessperson from the private sector he knew such barriers could often be negotiated depending on the potential result. D. Miklos asked whether the City might help. The Mayor said it could, and that all he needed was for the Port to reach out.

Mayor Owens explained how the asset could be monetized. If a builder purchased, for example, $30 million in materials to build homes and would normally pay about 7 percent sales tax, purchasing through a port authority meant no sales tax was paid. If the Port charged 1 percent of that, it would be a lot of money. He said the Port's operational work was incredible given its financial situation, but that charging more for a City dock versus a transient dock would not solve the larger revenue problem. He said he had begun discussions with the Erie County Port Authority, which was willing to help structure a way forward, and that he might have mentioned this privately. He said this was the reason he attended the meeting, anticipating an executive session because of the sunshine laws. He pledged to use the City's attorneys and take the time needed to take the next procedural step. He repeated that it was a revenue problem.

B. Yancar said absolutely, and L. Drouhard said the board was all on board. H. Riddle said the last thing the Port might do was fundraise. D. Miklos said this approach would not help the Port put together a number for next year's budget in the short term. B. Yancar said fundraising was not out of the equation. He agreed the Port had never had the structure to take advantage of its powers as Lorain and Sandusky did, and that a new organizational structure would be welcome.

D. Werley said the conversation, though interesting, did not address the question that had been posed. He would not allow another entity to force his hand into expenditures he was not prepared to make, especially an entity with several tax-funded revenue sources. If the Parks Department were not doing anything with the pedestals, the walkway, or the concrete, the Port would have no expenditures. He would put it back on them. B. Yancar said force might have been too strong a word and described the Parks Department as good neighbors. Mayor Owens asked whether the Port had discussed this with Parks. B. Yancar said it had, regularly. The Mayor suggested continuing those discussions, and L. Drouhard said the board would like to move forward with the project, but they can't.

B. Yancar noted that part of the funding for Exchange Street could come from grants. The Port could apply for grants for the pedestals and for two additional docks if it chose to replace them. J. Hauck asked whether most grants required matching funds, and B. Yancar said some did and some did not. J. Hauck should still apply because it would cost nothing to do so and then decide when the grant was awarded whether to accept it. B. Yancar agreed they were on the same page. D. Miklos pointed out that the Port's last grant had been in combination with the Parks Department and said any combination would help. M. Sekeres said the Port had already had that conversation with Parks. Mayor Owens said he had not been part of those discussions. If the arrangement was cost-negative to the Port Authority, he said there should be a discussion so that Parks clearly understood the challenge, and he would gladly take part. J. Hauck suggested a partnership in which the Port applied for the grant and Parks supplied the match, with the Port contributing time and manpower. B. Yancar said the administrative details could be ironed out. D. Miklos said grants were still an unknown because nothing was guaranteed while the project was going ahead regardless. He said that with the administration's help the Port should tell the Parks Department that it needed to have more skin in the game. B. Yancar said the Mayor's participation would be critical, and the Mayor said the Port had it.

Mayor Owens asked whether the pedestals, which he said he had mistaken for something to sit on, were necessary. M. Sekeres and B. Yancar confirmed they supplied water and power and were necessary.

D. Miklos asked what else the board needed to prepare to bring to B. Yancar and M. Sekeres for the next month's budget. B. Yancar said that in light of the Mayor's comments, the Port could proceed with no fundraising and stay as it was. The only remaining item to discuss was wages. D. Miklos asked a procedural question: whether items could be added to the budget after adoption if revenue materialized. B. Yancar said he wanted to confirm with Chad, who took the Port's budget and combined it into the City budget, which then went through City Council in a chain of approval. In the prior administration, he said, the Port's overall budget had been increased midstream after the Port showed the City it had the revenue stream to support it. J. Hauck asked whether the Port was a separate entity able to make its own decisions, and B. Yancar answered no and said the Port was subject to the state, as far as he knew.

Mayor Owens spoke about fundraising from his private-sector experience. He said fundraising required marketing and marketing cost money, so the Port had to ask whether the effort was worth it. He proposed using the City's marketing capabilities, including the Parks Department, to develop a more dynamic and collaborative fundraising approach that could have a larger financial impact than the Port could achieve on its own. He suggested possibly involving the Chamber of Commerce and Main Street, adding that he did not think they understood the Port's challenge. J. Hauck said the Port was intertwined in every aspect with the parks but did not share finances. He agreed with the Mayor that this would be impactful, observing that the Port was doing a great job, met its numbers, and brought a very large amount of revenue to local businesses. He said the benefit to the local economy was hard to quantify, so support from the City would have a great impact. Mayor Owens said that as Mayor he was willing to participate, engage, facilitate, and drive the effort to help make the Port Authority a revenue generator rather than a flat-line operation. L. Drouhard said the Port needed to take itself to the next level. D. Miklos said that with aging infrastructure and rising costs, expenses were far outpacing the Port's limited ability to raise revenue, such as through the per-foot dock rate. Mayor Owens said that in business such a situation was not sustainable, and D. Miklos agreed. J. Hauck added that revenue was essentially flat while costs had risen tenfold.

M. Wood suggested that, regarding the Exchange Street project, members review the September minutes, which covered the discussion of the Exchange Street park. She said many of the questions raised that evening had been answered two months earlier. J. Hauck asked whether the board had held a different opinion at the time, and M. Wood said it had. J. Hauck said the board's view had changed, and M. Wood said she was only recommending that members look back at the minutes.

D. Miklos asked whether there was any other discussion or whether the board needed to turn to wages. J. Hauck said that, like personal finances, circumstances changed and decisions had to change with them, and that he could not do a home project without money unless he came up with a different plan. B. Yancar summarized what he understood the board to be saying. The Port would move forward for now, and if financial opportunities or additional revenue appeared, such as non-participatory grants rather than matching grants, the board would decide in 2027 once revenue was identified and make changes at that time. D. Miklos said the earlier approval discussion had taken place without as much information about overall revenue as the board now had. M. Wood said she did not think the Parks Department had forced the Port's hand. She said the project was already going ahead, and the Port would get a cheaper rate by participating, which had been much of the earlier discussion. J. Hauck said the Port was essentially making a decision because inaction would cost more later, but that the Port did not have the money. M. Wood repeated that she did not think the Parks Department was forcing anything. J. Hauck said the board needed to talk to the Parks Department, and that the word was strong. B. Yancar said members of the community had approached board members asking why the Port would let Exchange deteriorate while the boat club and condominiums were making improvements. The board had given an unofficial go-ahead to see what the Port's part would cost, and that was how it got there. He said force might be a strong word. J. Hauck said the Port would not have made the decision on its own and a finer word could be used but the meaning was essentially the same.

D. Miklos said the board had reached the consensus it needed at that point. He described the budget as a dynamic process that would continue to evolve until the board had to commit it to

paper, which was coming up quickly. He then moved to enter executive session. M. Wood confirmed he was permitted to make that motion.

D. Miklos MOVED; J. Hauck seconded to adjourn into executive session to discuss compensation of a public employee. Roll Call Vote 4 YEAS. **MOTION CARRIED**.

D. Miklos adjourned the meeting into executive session.

At the conclusion of executive session, D. Miklos called the regular meeting back to order.

H. Riddle asked about the bank card fees shown in the budget and whether the Port charged for them. B. Yancar explained that the bank card fees were what the City paid to process credit cards, and that to date the Port did not charge a premium for credit card use. H. Riddle said that should change, noting that the fees totaled $4,500. B. Yancar clarified that the figure shown was only what the City paid to do business with its card processor, which he believed was Huntington. What H. Riddle was describing was additional revenue from charging a percentage or fee for credit card use. He said the Port had discussed this before, noting that some cards, American Express in particular, were expensive to accept. Many businesses charged 3 to 4 percent as an administrative fee. He said he would prefer a flat charge rather than a percentage.

J. Hauck said such a fee could be billed automatically in the Clover software and that the Port would simply tell the system what to charge. B. Yancar said he did not know whether that was possible. L. Drouhard suggested the Port contact the sales representative to confirm and asked whether a motion was needed to ask the representative whether a credit card fee could be built in. M. Wood said no motion was necessary. L. Drouhard then asked Bill to proceed on that basis. B. Yancar said the Port had talked about it before but had never acted. J. Hauck asked what percentage of revenue came from credit cards versus cash, and L. Drouhard said it did not matter. B. Yancar said staff could obtain that figure. He said he had no problem with the fee as long as the functionality existed and the system could calculate it automatically.

D. Miklos MOVED; L. Drouhard seconded to set the 2027 budget for wages at $108,000. Roll Call Vote 4 YEAS. **MOTION CARRIED**.

Upon no further business, D. Miklos adjourned the meeting.

Next Meeting:

Tuesday, December 8, 2026 – 6:30 p.m.
Vermilion Municipal Court Complex, 687 Decatur Street, Vermilion, OH

Minutes by: Melanie Wood, Clerk of Council 11/18/2026 with assistance of Clerk Minutes