

Executive Summary Council Work Session / Strategic Planning Session

Sunday, September 27, 2026

1. In Attendance: Councilpersons Koss, Paessun, Pinter, Grant & Martin

2. Executive Overview

The September 27 strategic planning session focused primarily on how to strengthen the Village's administrative capacity and establish a clearer organizational structure for the future. **The dominant issue was creation of a full-time Village Administrator/Manager position.**

Council members generally expressed support for moving forward with the concept independently of the Charter process. The discussion emphasized the need for a professional position capable of managing day-to-day municipal operations, infrastructure, public works, employees, vendors, engineering projects, maintenance, the pool, code enforcement coordination, and implementation of Council decisions.

A second major theme was the **relationship between the proposed administrator and the Charter Commission**. Council members generally expressed support for the Charter Commission's work but favored keeping the proposed Charter relatively simple and allowing operational issues to be addressed separately through ordinances, policies, or future Charter amendments. The group also discussed maintaining a living document of organizational problems and potential solutions so that issues could be addressed without attempting to place every operational matter into the Charter.

The session also addressed:

- The need for clearer assignment of responsibilities among Council, the Mayor, staff, contractors, and committees.
- The potential restructuring of the Village Planner function if an administrator is created.
- Qualifications, compensation, and recruitment strategy for a future administrator.
- Improving communication between Council and Planning & Zoning, particularly regarding Cleveland Avenue redevelopment.
- The importance of maintaining flexibility in future development while establishing clearer zoning parameters concerning building height, parking, traffic, and land use.
- Police staffing and 24-hour coverage, including the relationship between service expectations, staffing requirements, and long-term finances.
- Broader concerns about capital spending, future operating costs, and the Village's financial capacity.

Overall, the meeting moved the Council from a general discussion of organizational needs toward **specific preliminary action steps for establishing and recruiting a Village Administrator**.

3. Strategic Planning Direction

The meeting began with a discussion about whether Council should focus on:

1. What it wants to accomplish over the next year to year-and-a-quarter; or
2. Broader long-term planning and work backward from the desired future structure.

The Charter Commission was identified as one possible starting point because its work could address both near-term and long-term governmental structure. However, the Village Administrator issue quickly emerged as the most immediate organizational priority.

A recurring theme was that the Village needs to make meaningful institutional improvements while experienced Council members remain in office. During the meeting, members noted that **two Council members are expected to roll off in approximately one year**, creating additional urgency around completing important organizational work.

4. Charter Commission

General Council Position

The discussion reflected broad support for the Charter Commission and its ongoing work. Council members noted that the Commission brings an independent perspective and includes individuals with useful experience and differing viewpoints. There was particular appreciation for having perspectives that may not have been uniformly supportive of the Charter in the past.

The predominant position expressed during the discussion was that the Charter should remain **simple and focused** rather than becoming a comprehensive document containing every operational issue facing the Village.

The reasoning discussed included:

- Keeping the proposal understandable to residents.
- Avoiding unnecessary additions that could complicate the Charter.
- Establishing the basic governmental framework first.
- Addressing specific operational problems separately.
- Preserving the ability to amend the Charter later if recurring problems cannot otherwise be solved.

The transcript specifically describes the Charter as a potential foundation that could evolve as the Village identifies additional needs.

Council/Commission Liaison

Council discussed whether there should be a formal Council liaison to the Charter Commission.

At the time of the meeting, **there was no formal Council liaison**. Some Council members had nevertheless been following the Commission informally. There was also discussion about maintaining appropriate independence between Council and the Commission and avoiding the appearance that Council was directing the Commission's work.

The issue of a formal liaison was left for additional discussion at a future work session.

5. Village Administrator / Village Manager

Central Strategic Priority

The proposed Village Administrator/Manager position was the most extensively discussed subject of the meeting.

Council members generally agreed that the position should be pursued **separately from the Charter process**. The position could be created under the Village's existing governmental structure and would not need to wait for Charter approval.

The transcript indicates that an administrator position had previously been contemplated and that an **\$80,000–\$100,000 compensation concept had appeared in prior budgets**, but Council had never completed the legislation establishing the position or appropriated the funds specifically for it.

Why Council Sees a Need for the Position

The discussion identified a recurring lack of clear ownership for municipal responsibilities.

Examples included:

- Streets and street projects
- Infrastructure
- Engineering projects
- Capital projects
- Maintenance
- Landscaping
- Leaf collection
- Pool operations
- Drainage and lake management
- Vendor management
- Contract management
- Code enforcement coordination
- Employee supervision
- Implementation of Council decisions

Council members described situations in which responsibilities are informally distributed among staff, Council members, contractors, and others without clearly documented ownership.

The proposed administrator was therefore viewed as a professional operational manager who could provide continuity and accountability while allowing elected officials to focus more heavily on policy, oversight, and major decisions.

6. Proposed Responsibilities of the Administrator

The discussion envisioned a broad, full-time management position.

Potential responsibilities included:

Administration

- Day-to-day municipal administration
- Implementation and follow-up on Council decisions
- Administrative accountability
- Coordination among departments and personnel

Personnel

- Employee supervision
- Hiring and training
- Identifying staffing gaps
- Evaluating whether municipal functions are being adequately performed
- Potential involvement in hiring decisions, including police-related personnel

Public Works and Infrastructure

- Streets
- Sidewalks
- Maintenance
- Infrastructure
- Engineering coordination
- Capital projects
- Project schedules and milestones

Vendors and Contractors

- Vendor management
- Contract oversight
- Monitoring contractor performance
- Coordinating engineers and outside professionals

Village Operations

- Pool operations
- Landscaping
- Leaf collection
- Drainage/lake issues
- Code enforcement coordination

The goal discussed was not necessarily for the administrator to personally perform every technical function, but to ensure that each responsibility has a clearly identified owner and that projects and services are actively managed.

7. Organizational Structure and Checks & Balances

Council discussed the appropriate relationship between the Mayor, Council, and Administrator.

The discussion recognized that state law establishes certain responsibilities for the Mayor and that the administrator would operate within a structure involving both the Mayor and legislative authority.

Council emphasized the importance of establishing a **clear check-and-balance structure** rather than simply transferring all governmental authority to one individual.

The general concept discussed was:

- Administrator: professional day-to-day management and execution.
- Mayor: appropriate statutory and oversight responsibilities.
- Council: legislative authority, policy direction, budgetary oversight, and approval responsibilities.

The transcript also discusses a statutory framework under which Council would establish the administrator position by ordinance, the Mayor would appoint the administrator, and Council would approve the appointment. The transcript itself notes that these statutory provisions should be reviewed and confirmed as the legislation is drafted.

8. Timing for Establishing and Hiring the Administrator

Council expressed a desire to move quickly but also recognized that hiring a qualified professional could take several months.

The discussion produced the following preliminary timeline:

Milestone	Target Discussed
Develop/review job description	Immediate
Review example ordinance and statutory requirements	Immediate
Draft administrator ordinance	Approximately within one month
Further Council discussion	Next work session/Thursday
Job description available for recruitment	January
Recruitment/interview process	Potentially several months
Potential hiring window	As late as May
Overall hiring horizon	Up to approximately six months

Council specifically rejected the idea that simply passing an ordinance would be sufficient.

Members wanted an actual hiring timeline so that the position would move from authorization to recruitment and ultimately to a candidate.

9. Administrator Job Description and Candidate Profile

A preliminary job description had already been drafted as a working document using an AI tool.

The draft contemplated:

- Administrative management
- Financial management
- Personnel management
- Hiring/training
- Public works
- Streets
- Infrastructure
- Maintenance
- Project management
- Vendor/contract management
- General municipal operations

Council agreed that the draft should be treated as a **starting point rather than a finished document**.

Desired Candidate Characteristics

Council members expressed somewhat different priorities regarding education and experience.

Qualifications discussed included:

- Professional education/training
- Municipal or planning background
- Management experience
- Experience managing teams
- Project-management capability
- Infrastructure/public-works knowledge
- Financial literacy
- Vendor and contract management
- Professional contacts and municipal network
- Ability to coordinate engineers and contractors
- Ability to identify problems and bring forward potential solutions

There was no final agreement on a rigid education-versus-experience requirement. The discussion generally treated these characteristics as a **wish list** that would help guide recruitment while recognizing the realities of the Village's size and compensation level.

10. Compensation

Council discussed an initial compensation range of approximately **\$80,000–\$100,000**.

The transcript indicates that the range had been associated with prior research of comparable small municipalities. Council discussed using the range as a starting point and adjusting compensation based on the qualifications and competency of the eventual candidate rather than assuming every candidate would receive the same amount.

Council also recognized that compensation would affect the candidate pool because Minerva Park is a relatively small municipality with a limited revenue base.

Possible candidate pools discussed included:

- Experienced municipal professionals

- Candidates with professional degrees and some experience
 - Individuals entering municipal management
 - Retirees or semi-retired professionals with substantial governmental experience
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11. Village Planner / Planning Function

The proposed administrator prompted an extended discussion about the Village Planner position.

Council considered whether an administrator could absorb some administrative functions currently performed by the planner while preserving planning and zoning responsibilities.

Several possibilities were discussed, including:

- Maintaining the existing planner function.
- Restructuring the planner's responsibilities.
- Contracting for specialized planning services when needed.
- Combining certain administrative functions with the administrator.
- Redirecting some existing planning-related expenditures toward the administrator compensation package.

Importantly, the transcript does **not establish a final decision to eliminate the Village Planner position**. Council recognized that existing ordinances and the exact separation between planning/zoning authority and administrative functions need further review. The issue was effectively tabled pending additional documentation.

12. Living Strategic Planning Document

One of the more significant organizational ideas discussed was creation of a **living document of problems, potential solutions, and strategic considerations**.

Rather than attempting to put every issue into the Charter immediately, Council could maintain a working list identifying:

- Current operational problems
- Potential solutions
- Problems that can be solved through ordinance or policy
- Issues that may ultimately require Charter changes
- Potential unintended consequences
- Items that have already been resolved

This approach would allow Council to continue identifying issues without prematurely embedding detailed operational provisions into the Charter.

13. Planning & Zoning — Cleveland Avenue Redevelopment

Council subsequently discussed communication with Planning & Zoning, focusing particularly on the **Cleveland Avenue redevelopment area**.

A Council member expressed concern that Council's direction may not have been communicated accurately to Planning & Zoning, resulting in a proposal that differed substantially from what some Council members believed they had requested.

The discussion identified a need for:

- Clearer Council-to-P&Z communication.
- Better alignment before P&Z invests substantial time developing a proposal.
- Clearer guidance concerning desired building height and land use.
- Maintaining flexibility for future development.
- Avoiding overly generic regulations that could permit development inconsistent with Council's future objectives.

Building height, residential uses, parking, traffic, neighborhood character, and infrastructure capacity were all discussed.

Some Council members expressed a preference for a lower-height development concept, including discussion of a **two-story limit**, while others emphasized preserving flexibility for future investment and growth. The transcript does not establish a final zoning decision.

Broader Planning Principle

The discussion reflected a tension between two objectives:

1. **Protecting the existing community** from development that could create parking, traffic, infrastructure, or neighborhood-character problems; and
2. **Maintaining enough flexibility** to allow appropriate redevelopment and investment.

The Council's discussion emphasized that future regulations should provide enough specificity to avoid unintended development outcomes while not unnecessarily eliminating future options.

14. Police Staffing, Service Levels, and Financial Considerations

The session also included a substantial discussion about police staffing and 24-hour coverage.

Different perspectives were expressed regarding:

- The staffing level necessary to provide continuous coverage.
- Whether the Village needs two officers on duty at all times.
- The potential use of part-time officers.
- Community relationships and continuity associated with full-time officers.
- How staffing compares with other municipalities.
- The relationship between police staffing and the services residents expect from the Village.

The discussion did not resolve the staffing question. Instead, a request was made for additional factual information concerning staffing requirements, scheduling, comparable municipalities, and the financial implications of various staffing models.

Financial Context

The police discussion also highlighted a broader strategic issue: **the relationship between desired service levels, capital projects, and long-term operating finances**.

The transcript references concern that major capital expenditures could affect future income-tax requirements and operating capacity. Council members indicated that financial

information needs to be considered in context when evaluating service levels and capital commitments.

This was presented as an issue requiring additional analysis rather than a final financial conclusion.

15. Major Areas of Consensus

Based on the transcript, the following themes appeared to have substantial support:

A. Continue supporting the Charter Commission

Council members generally expressed support for the Charter effort.

B. Keep the Charter relatively simple

The prevailing discussion favored establishing a basic framework rather than attempting to solve every operational issue through the Charter.

C. Pursue a Village Administrator independently of the Charter

Council generally supported moving forward with the administrator concept regardless of the eventual Charter outcome.

D. Establish clearer organizational accountability

Council repeatedly identified unclear ownership of municipal responsibilities as a significant operational problem.

E. Develop a formal ordinance and job description

The next practical step is to convert the administrator concept into draft legislation and a clearly defined position.

F. Begin the recruitment process early

The desired approach was to have a job description available around January, recognizing that the eventual hiring process could extend into the spring.

G. Improve communication with Planning & Zoning

Council identified the need for clearer communication and expectations before P&Z develops detailed redevelopment proposals.

16. Overall Strategic Implications

The meeting points toward a broader organizational shift in how the Village may operate.

The recurring issue was not simply whether to create another position; it was whether the Village's existing structure provides sufficient **professional management, accountability, continuity, and operational capacity** for the responsibilities the Village has accumulated.

The proposed administrator is therefore being considered as a mechanism to:

- Separate day-to-day administration from elected-policy responsibilities.
- Create clearer accountability for employees and contractors.
- Provide continuity as elected officials change.
- Improve project and infrastructure management.
- Establish a central point of responsibility for municipal operations.

- Reduce the number of operational tasks informally falling to Council members.
- Improve coordination between staff, consultants, engineers, vendors, and committees.
- Provide a professional management structure capable of implementing Council's decisions.

At the same time, Council recognized that organizational restructuring needs to be accompanied by appropriate checks and balances, clear statutory authority, realistic compensation, and defined responsibilities.

18. Bottom Line

The September 27 session produced a relatively clear strategic direction even though many individual details remain unresolved.

The most significant outcome was the Council's movement toward establishing a full-time Village Administrator/Manager position outside of the Charter process. The immediate work is to develop the ordinance, refine the job description, determine the appropriate authority and reporting structure, establish compensation parameters, and begin preparing for recruitment.

The Charter Commission remains an important long-term structural initiative, but Council's discussion favored keeping the Charter relatively simple and addressing operational improvements independently where possible.

The session also identified **organizational accountability, Planning & Zoning communication, development standards, police staffing, and long-term financial sustainability** as additional strategic issues requiring continued attention.

The overall strategic approach emerging from the meeting can be summarized as:

Establish the basic governmental framework through the Charter, address immediate operational deficiencies through ordinances and management improvements, clearly assign responsibility for municipal functions, and maintain a living list of issues that can inform future policy or Charter amendments.

This approach is intended to allow the Village to make near-term improvements while preserving flexibility for longer-term organizational changes.

Jeffrey Wilcheck, Fiscal Officer

Tiffany Southard, Mayor