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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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JERSEY TOWNSHIP FILES OPEN MEETINGS ACT LAWSUIT TO DEFEND LOCAL CONTROL AND PUBLIC TRANSPARENCY

Licking County, Ohio – In a move to defend its autonomy and uphold transparency in local governance, Jersey Township has filed a lawsuit in the Licking County Court of Common Pleas against the municipalities of Johnstown, Granville, and Alexandria—along with their respective leaders—collectively referred to as “JAG.” The legal action alleges that these entities conspired to take control of portions of Jersey Township through improper and unlawful closed-door meetings that violated Ohio’s Open Meetings Act (OMA).

The lawsuit alleges that on July 15, 2024, officials from the City of Johnstown, in concert with representatives from the Villages of Alexandria and Granville, participated in an improperly convened executive session during a Johnstown City Council meeting. During that closed-door discussion—held without lawful justification under Ohio’s Open Meetings Act—the parties allegedly coordinated efforts to obstruct the extension of sanitary sewer service to Jersey Township. The complaint asserts that this meeting constitutes not only a violation of the Open Meetings Act but also a civil conspiracy among the three jurisdictions to interfere with Jersey Township’s planning authority and future development.

According to Jersey Township officials, JAG’s actions constitute a coordinated attempt to assert authority beyond their legal boundaries—targeting land, residents, and future development decisions that fall entirely within the boundaries of Jersey Township. By conducting this planning in an improperly convened executive session and outside the public eye, JAG not only breached state transparency laws, but also undermined the democratic principle that communities should be governed by their own elected representatives—not outsiders.

“This lawsuit is about more than just illegal meetings—it’s about protecting our sovereignty,” said Township Trustee Dan Wetzel. “No political subdivision has the right to override the will of another’s voters. These backroom schemes are authoritarian in nature and contradict the most basic principles of representative government. Jersey Township has elected leaders for a reason, and we will not allow outside officials to usurp our authority or speak for our residents.”

On February 11, 2025, Jersey Township officials reaffirmed to Johnstown that the Township was not interested in ceding any authority. “I told City Manager Sean Staneart in no uncertain terms: Jersey Township governs itself,” said Township Administrator Rob Platte. “We didn’t ask for outside intervention, and our residents don’t want it. They remind us often—if they wanted to live in Johnstown, they would have moved there.”

Jersey Township officials also questioned the motivations behind the JAG coalition’s actions. “Johnstown is burdened by growing debt, and Alexandria has struggled with basic financial solvency,” Platte continued. “Now they’re looking beyond their borders for new revenue and control—but they won’t find it here.”

“JAG has already spent hundreds of thousands of taxpayer dollars pursuing this scheme—without transparency, oversight, or public consent,” said Platte. “They’ve done so behind closed doors, shielding their actions from their own constituents while targeting ours.”

“It is our hope that this lawsuit can be resolved amicably,” added Wetzel. “Public business must be done in public. Our neighbors should not be meeting illegally and conspiring secretly, and Jersey Township will not sit idly by and continue to be attacked.”

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