

W3 Steering Committee  
Thursday, August 25, 2022

The meeting was called to order by Jordan Daugherty at 9:35 a.m. with the following members present:

Waterville – Doug Meyer, Jon Gouchenour, John Rosik, and Nick Sargent

Whitehouse – Jordan Daugherty, Wayne King, Louann Artiaga, Josh Hartbarger

Waterville Township – Jean Taylor, Kyle Hertzfeld was absent

Others Present: Jason Francis, Daryl McNutt, Josh Bingham, and Gary Summer

Gary Summer summarized the process to fill the ninth seat on the committee. This person serves as chairman of the committee and serves at the pleasure of the committee.

The members from Waterville then nominated Tim Guzman for the ninth seat. Mr Guzman is retired from Dana Corporation, is a former Waterville Councilman, and currently serves on Waterville's Safety Council. Mr. Guzman is willing to serve on the W3 Committee.

Whitehouse then nominated Kevin Herman, the assistant principal at Anthony Wayne, because he represents all three entities with no bias. Mr. Summer expressed a concern that there could be a conflict of interest with Mr. Herman should the schools and the Fire co-op put levies on the ballot at the same time. In order to resolve a conflict of interest Mr. Herman could choose to abstain from voting. Mr. Herman has not been approached about serving on the W3 committee due to a death in his family. Waterville Township presented no names for consideration. As there are two outstanding candidates for this position it was decided to ask them both to attend the next meeting on September 22, 2022. This will give the committee members a chance to meet both candidates and ask questions.

Chief Hartbarger and Chief Meyer both presented reports reviewing the first half of 2022. Both reports show the goal of fully staffed departments and decreased turn out times has been accomplished. This is due in part to the shared employees between the two departments. Equipment purchase goals have been accomplished as well. Chief Hartbarger stated that the turnover problem is nation wide. Whitehouse has had 3 turnovers but have part time staff to step up. Waterville is in the same position. The number of volunteers has decreased in volume but both departments are fully staffed with full and part time people.

It was mentioned that the departments are recruiting out of the trade schools and that the Fire Marshall has put together a task force to address staffing problems. Part of the problem in hiring is that the pool of candidates is not getting bigger. Oregon, Toledo, and Monclova are all hiring putting a strain on the pool of candidates. Raising pay to get staff has led to wage wars and is only driving wages higher and higher. Chief Meyer discussed the culture that has been created by the departments and that pay is not always the driving force. The culture of the departments and time off now plays just as important role in the hiring process. Mr. Sargent asked about education reimbursement and if employees had to sign a contract to stay for a specified length of time or face paying the department back for education expenses.

Educational reimbursement is set by employer and can vary between departments. Chief Meyer does teach classes and therefore gets free classes for his employees.

Mr. Sargent asked if most of the employees lived in their respective towns. There is a wide mix for part time employees outside the areas but most have some connection to the entity in which they work. Volunteers are usually full or part time somewhere else. It was noted that part of the reason volunteers or part time employees with full time jobs in other municipalities hesitate to work in our Co-op departments is that the Payments from the Bureau of Workers' Compensation is much less for volunteers or part time employees than for full time employees. If a volunteer or part time employee is hurt on the job the BWC will pay benefits on the wage rate as a volunteer or part time employee, not the rate of their full time job. The BWC premium rate charged to employers for volunteers is much higher than for part or full time employees.

The last order of business was a presentation by Chief Hartbarger regarding a Chief on call proposal. Currently there are only 4 individuals that can take charge of an incident 24 hours a day 7 days a week. This tends to lead to burnout and effects longevity. The Chief on call proposal would be a rotation of these individuals for operational expectations only and would be in charge of the incident from start to finish. The administrative and discipline would be left to the individual entity. Since both Waterville and Whitehouse have begun working simultaneously, training and working together it would make sense to have only one individual called out to a scene instead of one or more from each department. Mr. Summer asked that this proposal be tabled until he could consider the legal ramifications of this proposal before its implementation. The final step in this process would be for a formal agreement to be approved by each council.

A motion was made by Wayne King to adjourn and motion was carried.

Respectfully Submitted  
Louann Artiaga