

Village Council Meeting As
A Committee of the Whole
6:30 PM February 14, 2023
Village Hall, Whitehouse, Ohio

At 6:30 PM, President of Council Rebecca Conklin Kleiboemer called the meeting to order.

ROLL CALL: Louann Artiaga, Richard Bingham, Rebecca Conklin Kleiboemer, Mindy Curry, Bob Keogh, Steven Connelly. Also present were the following: Administrator Jordan Daugherty, Planning Administrator Tiffany Bachman, Utilities Clerk Jill Gundy, Public Works Director Steve Pilcher, Fire Chief Joshua Hartbarger, Assistant Fire Chief Jason Francis, Council Clerk Susan Miller, Wendy Gehring, Steven Fine, David Riggenschach, Daniel and Karen Rauch; online, Mayor Don Atkinson, Mirror reporter Karen Gerhardinger, and Rita and Larry Yunker.

Motion by Councilwoman Louann Artiaga, seconded by Councilman Richard Bingham to accept the minutes of the January 10, 2023 meeting. 6 ayes

President of Council Rebecca Conklin Kleiboemer asked for Citizen Comment pertaining to Agenda items. David Riggenschach asked questions regarding process of considering taxation and finance items.

Finance

The first order of business was to discuss the financial revenue and expenses of the Village of Whitehouse, projected deficit spending, and options to bolster revenue. Similar options presented in early 2022 were reviewed, now following a citizen referendum that passed on the November 2022 ballot to repeal council's elimination of the income tax credit.

Administrator Jordan Daugherty noted projections cast for 2022 bore out as stated and that those for future years remained generally the same, forecasting more than \$500,000 in annual deficit spending plus other financial challenges should no action be taken to secure additional revenue. He noted an urgent timeline.

Conklin Kleiboemer reviewed the types of taxation methods available and what percentages of revenue they provided the general fund.

Mayor Don Atkinson, speaking online from out of state, encouraged council committee members to commit to a long-term solution at this critical juncture in Whitehouse's history. He called for unanimous support of placing a half-percent increase to the base income tax rate on the November 2023 ballot and that such was the only viable option to secure the amount needed. Mr. Atkinson noted that we must preserve what is special about Whitehouse and that he was committed to not cutting services or laying off employees.

Committee members shared the following comments during their discussion:

- Negotiations with Lucas County Commissioners regarding financial support of EMS Life Squad 9 point to the need to internally bolster revenue
- Concerns among residents what would be considered a fair and equitable solution
- Importance of education and clear message to voters
- Difficulties in countering referendum efforts, convincing all taxpayers that it affected them
- Supporting the sustainability and high quality of life in Whitehouse
- General support for a 2.0% income tax rate

Motion by Councilman Bob Keogh, seconded by Councilman Steve Connelly to recommend to Council to authorize the solicitor to draft legislation to place a 2.0% income tax issue on the November 2023 ballot. 6 ayes

Wage Study

Daugherty presented a summary of findings from an external wage study that analyzed Village employee salaries to comparable to similar positions in other area municipalities. He said most of Whitehouse salaries were in the upper third categories and that some consideration of overtime availability were noted. A chart of findings was presented.

Committee members shared the following comments during their discussion:

- Generally positive feedback on where Whitehouse ranked regarding full-time staff wages
- Discussion of how voters would need to interpret labor costs with regard to tax issue, as well as EMS funding concerns
- Council must work hard to have a unified message and unanimous support

Conklin Kleiboemer asked for Citizen Comments, and the following were offered:

Karen Rauch, 11027 Birch Pointe Drive, Whitehouse, offered feedback that people feel burdened by their workplace municipal taxes and that it is hard to take away the local income tax credit once they have been used to it; that it was not unreasonable to ask for a 2.0% base income tax rate as most of it goes to services that people do like; and that communication about the matter needed to be clearer.

Daniel Rauch, 11027 Birch Pointe Drive, Whitehouse, agreed that the options for council to consider were limited and that revenue must be secured.

David Riggerbach, 6313 Sydney Drive, Whitehouse, fully supported a half-percent increase to the income tax rate; noted that he did receive a credit and felt he was paying his fair share to the village; encouraged clear message that revenue was spent on only necessary expenditures.

Other Business

Artiaga requested a consideration of revitalizing the Summer Recreation Program for youth be placed on the April agenda for Committee of the Whole.

Bingham noted council members had received some emails from Whitehouse residents concerned about the proposed amphitheater development in Waterville, including requests to file a motion to intervene as Waterville Township did. Conklin Kleiboemer expressed reservations about wading into a divisive issue at such a critical time and that it was an undesired precedent to set for others to intervene on development matters in Whitehouse; Keogh agreed.

Councilwoman Mindy Curry requested the matters of whether to permit residents to keep chickens within village limits and revisiting placement of refuse/recycling containers as outlined in recently passed legislation be placed on the March agenda for Committee of the Whole. There was some brief discussion about container placement and legislation wording, and Daugherty said it would be a natural time to have a review of recent enforcement efforts.

Motion by Councilman Keogh, seconded by Councilman Bingham, to adjourn at 8:13 p.m. 6 ayes

Respectfully submitted by Rebecca Conklin Kleiboemer