

**Village of Whitehouse
Village Council Meeting As A
Committee of the Whole
Village Hall, Whitehouse, OH
6:30pm March 12th, 2024**

CALL TO ORDER – ROLL CALL

Meeting called to order at 6:30pm by President of Council Louann Artiaga.

Council Members Present: Dave Riggensbach, Carrie Tuohy, Steve Fine, Steve Connelly, Larry Yunker and President of Council Louann Artiaga

Council Members Absent: None

Staff Present: Administrator Jordan Daugherty, Deputy Administrator Joshua Hartbarger, Council Clerk Nicole Hartbarger, Mayor Richard Bingham (online)

Guests Present: Jamie Beier Grant (Kleinfelder), Greg Telecky (Kleinfelder), Karen Gerhardinger (online), Harley S. (online), Jennifer Bingham (online)

President Artiaga asks to reserve the right to enter into executive session at the end of this meeting for a personnel discussion.

Motion by Councilman Steve Connelly, seconded by Councilman Larry Yunker to approve the minutes of the February 13th, 2024 Committee of the Whole meeting. 6 ayes

CITIZEN COMMENTS ON COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE AGENDA ITEMS

Council President Artiaga asked if there were any citizen comments to be made regarding the agenda items. There were none.

FINANCE

Targeted Revenue Enhancement Proposal

Administrator Daugherty starts out with an explanation of the first topic in the agenda. He shared that when thinking about revenue pursuit - where is the best use of staff time and more of his time has been dedicated to this topic. He said to put the upcoming presentation into context, he will give a quick summary of what has been done with economic development over the years. Revenue pursuit does not just mean economic development, there are other creative ways to find revenue. Daugherty said the last thing he wants anyone to think is Whitehouse has just sat on their hands and not focused on increasing revenue - past mayors and council have worked hard at trying to come up with new ways for more income. Whitehouse is a bedroom/agricultural community, we do not necessarily have well known regional history with a large draw, not close to any major transportation routes – but now closer than in past. A history of what Whitehouse has done - up to 2010, economic development and revenue pursuits were based on time that was left over for the administrator to focus on that topic – in 2010 an economic development consultant was hired to help get the Whitehouse name out there. It was the first time really dedicating money toward human resources toward economic development. Whitehouse had 2-3 years with this first consultant; then the Village moved to another coordinator who helped get the JEDZ in Spencer Township before their contract ended. The Village then went without the extra resource for about a year before contracting with Whitehouse Chamber of Commerce – pursued route with this organization instead of person/contractor and this was for 2-3 years. Daugherty shared the new JEDD with Monclova Township was started and has since been amended several times; Whitehouse has one with Waterville Township as well but no activity. He stated while we have been trying to drum up traditional revenue, we have been doing these other things to try and keep

budget above water; ten years ago without the JEDD and JEDZ we would not be able to function financially – these were necessary for revenue stream. Administrator Daugherty says the question is always there as to why we haven't got many new business or buildings; he stated that he is not sure at this point, a lot has been tried.

Administrator Daugherty commented that during organizational transition was discussed and put into place - how do we put Whitehouse staff in best position of their gifted abilities, to start there and outsource areas not of greater strength – asking ourselves who does things better than we do. He stated that administration does well – very good planning and ideas, great rationale for ideas, community centered and well vetted, economically responsible. But what an outside resource, like Kleinfelder group (partner over 30 years) does includes being incredibly good at helping us win grants, institutional knowledge of Whitehouse, adept at aligning what our vision is including what projects do we have in mind, etc., know who to contact. Daugherty shared that Mayor/Council/Staff has done an incredible job collectively getting grant funds. What we want to do now is putting staff and Kleinfelder in positions of strengths along with Mayor and Council in order to go after specific funds. He stated it is Whitehouse and many other communities all vying for same dollars available with the same problems – what if we did things differently with relationships that Kleinfelder has where there can be more informal conversations where people are comfortable with Whitehouse - the extra knowledge that Kleinfelder has gets us there – how to target state/federal/other funds. Daugherty stated this is all with Council's buy in on where we are going – Village staff needs Council supporting them. Even if the presentation and proposal is not approved, this is still being done, some projects on the line where we are going after with those informal relationship conditions.

Administrator Daugherty introduces Greg Telecky and Jamie Beier Grant from Kleinfelder – here representing their teams of specialists and 30+ years of institutional Whitehouse knowledge.

Telecky and Beier Grant address Council and comment that they understood that the proposal they will be reviewing was provided in the COW packet – Council agrees that it was provided and they have reviewed.

Telecky stated that he sat with Administrator Daugherty and Deputy Administrator Hartbarger starting in July. They spent time talking about a vision with Kleinfelder serving as a 'division' of the Village. Telecky says all revenue stream ideas Kleinfelder does understand and asked all to keep in mind we do still have Phil Whaley – soon retiring from Kleinfelder but is a Whitehouse resident - as a resource. Telecky stated that you don't just stumble into success, it is all part of a plan and process – goal is to get good in what you do and make sure it is a repeatable process. He shared that Kleinfelder has a good understanding of best processes. He commented that it is about telling your story, the Whitehouse story. Funding is very competitive; we need a targeted message and consensus – they want to give money to places that they can see will be successful with their projects and planning. Telecky says you want to look for partners, you don't want to go at it alone; ODOT, other counties/communities, etc. He said we want forward thinking and creativity, do not just go with status quo – one thing to do early on is to understand things that are important, dig deep into what certain things mean – tell Kleinfelder first the plans and vision, not just let Kleinfelder tell you what you need.

Beier Grant starts reviewing the PowerPoint. She states that the types of services to provide to Village are intentional. Beier Grant gave some of her personal work experience started working for Ohio Department of Development, before crossing to private sector as consultant. She stated the team at Kleinfelder includes Beier Grant and Telecky who have experience doing work at the ground level, federal, state and local programs, along with grant writers at very specific levels including transportations, water, etc. The focus is on the technical side and funding side to bring those together successfully. Beier Grant shared the proposed phases of planning including targeted

planning, funding pursuits, implementation of priorities – very intentional in developing these priorities and how to implement them.

Targets, Planning, Detailed Funding Strategies, Annual Program Monitoring, Interacting and Reporting are the 5 phases for success of Kleinfelder help. She stated that reporting includes going back to Council with how progress status updates. Beier Grant stated that ultimately how results are achieved includes Council telling Kleinfelder what the big picture vision is, it can be specific i.e. increase of income tax collections, but what is the bigger picture vision from community or economic development standpoint. Kleinfelder looks at the economic development standpoint – review planning documents, what has been accomplished, what is still relevant and can be used/refreshed going forward. She said to look at how the Village of Whitehouse is a part of a plan that is bigger than just us i.e. Lucas County, TMACOG, etc. – this helps tee up for what are the best funding streams to go after. Beier Grant stated that the pandemic has helped realize there are staple programs within government agencies for funding, but there are one off type programs that come out as well; Kleinfelder understands those programs and how Whitehouse would be eligible or compatible for them. She said with good planning and process ahead of time, it is easier to take advantage of these new/one off programs. Kleinfelder can be the eyes and ears on this side of things to bring these to administration. Telecky finished up the presentation stating that defining Whitehouse and where we want to go and what that vision is, is imperative. He stated that Northwest Ohio continues to be an area that is growing, it brings a lot of new opportunity that hasn't been here previously – land is less expensive, utility rates slightly lower, green space, access to Lake Erie; as a region there are a lot of great building blocks in place.

Some questions and discussions from Council members:

- Councilwoman Tuohy asked when this proposal and partnership would go into effect. Telecky and Beier Grant stated that Kleinfelder would be ready to start implementing at any time – flexible to work with time availability. Administrator Daugherty says mid to late spring for working sessions would be ideal.
- Councilman Fine comments that survey results would help with the planning and vision ideas. Beier Grant agrees and says that survey data is critical – do not want to have working sessions to steer in one direction where the community might not support those ideas or plans.
- Councilman Connelly asks what is investment for phases 3-5. Telecky and Beier Grant say it is variable based on the outcome of phases 1-2; they will take time for figuring out process for outcomes of phase 1-2 and can give that pricing feedback prior to any commitment.
- Councilman Connelly asked is there a strategy to balance proposal – long term looking - against anything that is a quick win. Beier Grant says if any ideas are far enough along in planning, they can maybe find something that marries up to a quick win in the summer. Administrator Daugherty commented that there are projects on the 5 year plan already approved by previous councils that could be executed on quicker than some new planning elements. Telecky stated that in conversations leading up to tonight there have been a dozen items discussed but do not yet know if these are something council wants to do.
- Councilman Fine asks if we look at current economic development plans and say some are out of date – do we need to redo those first or can be updated in parallel. Beier Grant with planning documents looking at them and seeing what is out of date, can pick and choose the priorities of Council and the community – along with being opportunistic with the funding that is out there – can pick most important and start there while working on some updates. Telecky commented that we do not necessarily want to take a very old plan and stick with that entirely – can make the request look antiquated to the funding organizations.
- Councilman Fine commented that it was mentioned to bring in more revenue, does team have skills to project return on investments, etc. Beier Grant says yes and could be by industry type, jobs, real estate tax, etc.

- Councilman Connelly asks what is a biggest success story to share. Telecky says a recent one is the Amazon fulfillment center in Perrysburg – Kleinfelder was heavily involved. Amazon dealt with large consulting firm but ended up not dealing with anyone at the local level. Kleinfelder pursued \$5.5MM of infrastructure funding for roads, etc. – now in place where it supports the whole area around the Amazon center – things that are taking off around there are because of the help Kleinfelder supplied. Beier Grant commented that she was part of a 50k sq ft build of a speculative building – leveraged \$2.5MM from state grants/loans – has now since tripled in size for employment – it was intentional she said the conversation was ‘we lack this in our community and know we need to attract it, how do we do that’. Beier Grant also shared a project at a Fostoria parish/catholic school – the city received money to tear down and figure out how to redevelop commercially – Kleinfelder helped with those plans, in less than two years did the tear down and found developer to go forward.

Motion by Councilman Rigganbach, seconded by Councilman Connelly to make a recommendation to Council to support the Kleinfelder proposal as presented. 6 ayes

Discussion on Electric Aggregation Options

Administrator Daugherty starts off the conversation sharing that this is not a new topic. This is an option that local governments have – buying power in order to have negotiating leverage. Daugherty shared that Whitehouse is one of the few municipalities currently not in aggregation – the option to have aggregation has to be placed on a ballot and go to the voters. He stated the process can be pretty cumbersome. Process includes presenting to the Committee, Committee recommends to Council and then Council will vote to put it on the ballot if decided. Voters at that time are not voting whether they are in or out on a supplier – simply voting on being able to have the option. Council then engages a broker; broker on behalf of municipality goes out and does the bidding process to look for best supplier. Daugherty stated Council then has authoritative say to agree on supplier that is suggested. The broker works on Whitehouse’s behalf to get the best bid. If decided to go with chosen supplier all residents will move to the updated supplier at the lower rate – then an opt out letter will go out to residents for them to stay with new supplier or to opt out. Daugherty states the bottom line is it is giving customers two options with goal of one being a lower rate.

Some questions and discussions from Council members:

- Councilman Fine comments that when this came up last year there are two ways to do it – people can negotiate their own rate and choose supplier ‘opt in’ second way is the ‘opt out’ as Administrator Daugherty described. State law specifies that the opt out has to go to the voters – then citizens won’t have to do anything themselves.
- Councilman Rigganbach asks when it would go into effect. Administrator Daugherty states it would be the beginning of calendar year, January 1st after vote.
- Councilman Rigganbach asks if users can opt out before they are opted in. Daugherty says no. He states that the broker hired covers a universal term that covers all. Fine says there are other things that have to happen after vote before fully in effect.

Motion by Councilwoman Tuohy, seconded by Councilman Fine to recommend to Council to put the electric aggregation plan toward the voters. 6 ayes

GENERAL

Continued Discussion of Survey Purpose and Questions/Content

Councilman Connelly started the discussion by sharing that he and Councilman Fine met about a week ago to talk through some of the framework of executing the survey. They put together an agenda to guide discussion of survey process.

First discussed is the survey content and framework. The goal is to keep it short – 10-15 questions. Councilman Connelly confirms that it is a community pulse survey, all of Council in agreement. Councilman Fine says yes, along with seeing where residents want to see the future of the Village going. It was stated that the goal for tonight is to get clarity on what questions Council really wants to ask.

Next discussed were the specific questions to put in the survey. The first grouping of questions is for demographics – plan to include all as optional response. Councilman Riggensbach likes the idea of including an age range. Councilman Yunker asks if we need to include household income; Riggensbach says this already exists from RITA info.

The next topic of questions discussed were around satisfactions/challenges of living in Whitehouse. Some council comments/discussion on this topic:

- ‘Overall satisfaction’ is that a good question – Councilwoman Tuohy asks if they disagree or have low score can the resident have a box to add reason why; Councilman Fine agrees and says lets say the same for the high score. Council agrees this is good approach.
- Most important problems facing Village today, along with good opportunities – goal is to find out what residents think we should focus on. Councilwoman Tuohy asks to please include ‘in your opinion’. Councilman Fine comments that we want to make sure to include option for opportunities as well as challenges. Councilman Connelly asks do we want to make this a separate question – Council agrees to make separate.
- Please rate the current level of trust in elected leaders – Councilman Connelly comments that we have to hear opinions on this in order to continue to gain trust. Administrator Daugherty shares that he has dissertation data from survey on public trust in Whitehouse done recently that can be reviewed as well.
- Aspects where Village is working well – Councilman Connelly asks is this redundant. Council agrees it is ok and not redundant. The idea is to have a 1-5 scale for each listed option – list each department. Councilman Fine asks is there anything in addition we should add like communications – anything other than departments. Councilman Yunker comments yes, anything we can identify that we can get feedback on.
- Share concerns or compliments – Councilman Riggensbach asks can this be included as an ‘in addition’ to question above with a comments box – Council agrees.
- Councilman Riggensbach asks, should we have a bigger question on how the resident prefers to be communicated with i.e. online, emails – include ways we can communicate as radio buttons and have them pick options – Council agrees this would be good as a separate question.
- How can local government better include residents in decision making process – Councilman Riggensbach comments that this is a hard question – suggests to leave it in and try to narrow down how it should be answered.

The next topic of questions discussed were around financials of the Village. Some Council comments/discussion on this topic:

- Questions or concerns on Village revenues and expenses – Councilman Riggensbach asks can this be radio buttons as answers to easier track answers but include open ended option.
- What factors influenced decision to support or oppose the tax increase – Councilman Yunker comments that the answers to question above feel like they could answer this question; do we need to consolidate.
- Councilwoman Artiaga comments that this whole section feels like its solely focused on the idea of a tax increase – why don’t we put another question in here that feels out the support of other fee or income-based areas. Riggensbach asks at what point is it a tax without being a tax - ‘charge a fee’ seems to circumvent election process. He states that fee based would be very different to one person than another where a tax-based percentage is the

same percentagewise. Artiaga comments that this isn't comparing apples to apples as the fee would be in direct support of a function and across all households not just taxpayers.

Councilman Connelly discussed the next agenda topic and the preference for proceeding. Some council comments/discussion on this topic:

- Include reference to budget trends – is this something that would be worthwhile for residents to have in hand.
- If finances are on track for a deficit how likely would you want Village services to be reduced to avoid increasing taxes – very specific question to ask if we want that detail.
- Connelly says the sequence of questions in this section needs to be worked out.
- Councilman Fine says we do want to understand perspective from the residents. Yunker and Tuohy agree that we need a pick list so we can analyze the data that comes in – Yunker says it would make sense to include options of revenue or budget cuts where these will actually impact the budget not small, little amounts.
- Riggensbach cautions against trying to be perfect with the first survey, can do another in the fall for more information – caution to be shorter on first one where we can get more responses.

Councilman Connelly reviews use of the Alchemer survey tool. He states that he can create the survey quickly and reporting is quick. Other options include Google and Microsoft Forms. Connelly recommends Alchemer for the best reporting and creation usage - he confirms there are better out of the box controls that can be utilized. Connelly states that this is the 'mom/pop' style of survey creation in order to handle this as fiscally responsible as possible – on a longer term there is a nationally based community survey that you can buy into, worth talking about. Connelly confirms online only for first go round – target is 400 responses for a 95% confidence rate. The question is asked do we want to provide paper copies of this at Cherry Fest and with the QR code. Connelly comments that a general timeline is about 25 days – if the goal is to have ready ahead of Cherry Fest we need to finalize during next meetings. Connelly says he will own the next step of cleaning up and creating a base version of the survey for ease of review during next meeting.

Councilwoman Artiaga asks if there is a large agenda for the Tuesday, March 19th Council meeting; Administrator Daugherty says no it is relatively short. Artiaga comments that if there is short council meeting that night, we can do a Committee of the Whole meeting after to help move up timeline for review. Daugherty says he will schedule a Committee of the Whole for after the next council meeting, the survey will be the only agenda item.

Councilwoman Artiaga comments to wait for executive session for the next council meeting since Administrator Daugherty has it scheduled on the agenda.

CITIZEN COMMENTS

Council President Artiaga asked if there were any general citizen comments to be made. There were none.

OTHER BUSINESS

Council President Artiaga asked for comments on other business from all Committee of the Whole members.

Councilman Connelly shares his thanks to Administrator Daugherty and staff for bringing in Kleinfelder for their detailed presentation – it is appreciated and was good. Councilman Fine and Councilwoman Tuohy agrees with this sentiment and thanks the team.

ADJOURNMENT

Motion by Councilman Connelly, seconded by Councilman Riegenbach to adjourn the meeting at 8:40pm. 6 ayes

Respectfully submitted by Nicole Hartbarger, Clerk of Council