

**Village of Whitehouse
Village Council Meeting As A
Committee of the Whole
Village Hall, Whitehouse, OH
6:30pm October 8th, 2024**

CALL TO ORDER – ROLL CALL

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

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

Council Members Absent: Carrie Tuohy

Staff Present: Administrator Jordan Daugherty, Deputy Administrator Joshua Hartbarger, Solicitor Kevin Heban, Director of Public Services Steve Pilcher, Fire Chief Jason Francis, Clerk Nicole Hartbarger

Guests Present: Karen Gerhardinger, Rebecca Conklin Kleiboemer

Motion by Councilman Steve Fine, seconded by Councilman Steve Connelly to approve the minutes of the September 10th, 2024 Committee of the Whole meeting. 5 ayes

CITIZEN COMMENTS ON COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE AGENDA ITEMS

Council President Louann Artiaga asked if there were any citizen comments to be made regarding the agenda items.

Rebecca Conklin Kleiboemer, 10934 Lone Oak Court

Conklin Kleiboemer shares that her comments are on the topic of Council term limits. She shares that she is a previous Council member that served two terms – not planning on running in the upcoming election cycle but does currently appreciate if she does have the choice in the future. She comments that she likes voting for new people, spirited people. She asks Council to hear comments from her tonight as a voter – feels all decisions on who can run for Council sit in the voters' hands. Council has done a commendable job all year long soliciting community input including sending charter and legislative issues to the ballot – she asks why now you would not send the idea of term limits to the ballot as well for voters to decide. Conklin Kleiboemer shares that the timing seems unfortunate at a time where come election cycle if certain ballot items pass there will be people who cannot run. She asks why focus on Council term limits but not Mayor at all. She comments that she understands the review of neighboring communities term limits but suggests now we need to review their strength as a Council currently, etc., not just their stance on term limits. She says she does not want to assume that this is coming across as forcing people out. Conklin Kleiboemer says this could be a good or necessary thing for Whitehouse in the future, just do not see that it is necessary now. Creating the opening can create a deeper candidate pool; she says it doesn't seem right now that it is a cultural problem – new people doesn't always mean new ideas - many were motivated to come to Council for supporting current ideas. She

comments that long-term serving people do not always mean they are stuck, negative or drawing people down; it should be commended to want to serve their Village and the public that long, not considered something bad or 'crazy'. Conklin Kleiboemer shares that before it is said there is no value to serving on Council for multiple terms, need to sort through the culture first. She says it would make more sense if majority of seats were being held over and over by long term incumbents, but that is not currently the case – new people can get elected here - that is not an issue that is trying to be solved. She encourages Council to vet it through charter, to take a look at what has historically been happening with the elections here and historically what has happened with communities with term limits. Do not want a candidate to only run when it is 'easier' by creating openings more often – want someone willing to run when it is hard times too. Conklin Kleiboemer comments she understands to advocate for it and participate in it from a charter review process perspective but put toward the community as a vote to make sure they know their voice matters. She says the length of time Council should serve should be a decision put in the voters hands – put it on the ballot at the next opportunity. She concludes her comments by thanking Council for their time and the opportunity to speak.

GENERAL

Administrator's Spending Limits

Artiaga asks Heban to share items that were prepared and reviewed. Heban comments he sent to Council the proposed ordinances. Heban comments that ORC 125.061 was reviewed and similar language used for this suggested ordinance. He says that without this currently, spending limit is set forth by ORC at \$75k – if we do not enact ordinance. If do want to enact ordinance, need to know the amount limit and if Council would want to have the ordinance be able to be suspended during a Governor set forth emergency – or it could be during an emergency declared by someone else who is chosen. Artiaga asks if limit removed during emergency, there is no spending cap at all, Heban says yes; Artiaga comments we could still put a cap on the emergency period spend amount. Heban suggests to not rely on Governor for emergency declaration, keep that to a more local source such as President of Council, majority of council – would require a meeting – or Mayor.

Riggenbach still likes the limit idea but does like escalation thought as well. Connelly agrees with process, agrees that \$30k seems like a reasonable amount as previously discussed. Fine agrees, just need details worked out regarding the emergency. Asks if Administrator is not available can someone else step in, Heban says it would flow through charter steps. Daugherty comments charter is silent on this topic but will check Deputy Administrator Hartbarger's contract to verify that he steps in as Administrator. All agree power to declare emergency should be Mayor. Yunker agrees with spending limit ideas. Heban asks for discussion on auto renewal of amount. Riggenbach suggests CTI or asks does it need to be part of appropriations. Heban suggests a flat rate would work too. Fine suggests flat rate might be easiest as well since there are so many inflation gauges. Artiaga recaps, spending limit of \$30k, inflationary adjustment rate, what limit for spending in emergency that is declared by Mayor – all agree no limit during that period.

Motion by Riggenbach, seconded by Connelly to present to Council an ordinance that includes a \$30k spending limit for the Administrator with a 3% flat inflation rate yearly with no limit on spending during emergency declared by Mayor. 5 ayes

Discussion on Term Limits

Artiaga asks for comments and direction from the Committee. Yunker makes comments that legislation suggested wasn't to bar people from running permanently. The suggestion is for consecutive terms, two terms with eight years total, then sit out for one term of four years before eligible to run again. He comments it was a good point from Conklin Kleiboemer, only speaks to members of Council, not Mayor position this is something he wanted to bring up as well. Any reason why we are not looking at Mayor position – unsure of the rationale. Artiaga comments not sure that we have progressed that far to take on the Mayor position yet for term limits, if any. She comments she has had a lot of time to think about this, discussion was to pass now and then update down the road for preparation of new charter for city status in the future – Artiaga supports Conklin Kleiboemer's request to hold off on this and put on the ballot for next year for community to vote – return this to the Charter Commission for their input then Council can accept or reject. Why we were elected, to represent their views and opinions and we do not know what that view is currently, would be more comfortable putting on the ballot next year. Fine agrees, after more consideration would be taking something away from the voters if we pass right now – do not want to jump the gun. Connelly agrees good point on the Mayor position being reviewed; thinks term limits are critically important, need to make the commitment to put on the charter if that is the path we choose. He comments we do get entrenched and rigidity to a degree and want to avoid that for Council members. He says for charter review need to include Mayor position. Artiaga asks for consensus on tabling until Charter can review and suggest back. Connelly asks to qualify 'crazy' comment from Conklin Kleiboemer's comments – he suggests any person in office for 20+ years is 'crazy' to him, not directed at any one person. Conklin Kleiboemer asks to consider a two-year waiting period instead of full four-year term.

Motion by Riggerbach, seconded by Fine to refer Council and Mayor term limits to Charter Review Committee for review and suggestion. 5 ayes

Council Wish List

Artiaga asks for any thoughts from Council to incorporate into budget, even over next 5-10 years down the road. Daugherty asks to make a few comments. He shares this started about 10 years ago – by Pilcher asking how do we engage Council more proactively instead of reactively in regard to budget spending. He wants Council to think about what 'dream' would be something to think of for the Village such as KOGS events, shelter house updates, municipal pool, etc. Some are on the radar; some have been completed. What are the things that you want Administration to spend some time focusing on.

Yunker suggests we are pretty good on this topic but would like to continue to increase the walkability of neighborhoods and different areas of town by extending sidewalks, etc. Have talked to many residents interested in swimming whether it is quarry or some other pool or idea. Would like to extend Village limits to where Waterville is, work on annexation to whatever extent we can with property owners – feels most commerce will be that way toward Route 24, might be four lanes down toward Waterville to handle more traffic and more commerce – property out there will get developed whether it is Whitehouse or Waterville owned. Connelly reiterates that connectivity topic for in town.

Fine likes Connelly and Yunker suggestions. Would like to see updates to walking path around park in town, seems to be in bad shape lately. Improvements to Village park for recreation for adults such as wind screening on pickle ball court, horseshoe pits, etc. Survey did suggest ideas for senior center, could we invest some money into looking into this topic to see what it would take. Some basic ideas and thoughts would include changing street light bulbs to LED or cost effective, super oxygenation for sewage system – understanding is we have several mile long connector from Village to Fallen Timbers Mall, at times we don't have enough sewage to keep things moving and there is chemical reaction when low that can erode current pipes; we can spend on oxygenation that will help save on \$80k sewage budget. Anything else with reasonable capital investment that we could reduce operating costs.

Riggenbach has two bigger ideas. He suggests aggressively pushing to finish downtown areas, most buildings are looking great and push just for those last few, support the local business owners to complete this. Lots talking about swimming and outdoor activities, concern is lack of space to be active in the winter – would love to see YMCA come in or make own for indoor facility that can encourage all age groups to stay active and encourage social engagement, easy to get to with transportation with walking or quick drive. Need to continue to entice the younger working generations into our community, they are the ones paying income tax. Need to be a place to continue to draw in younger people and families. And everything said before, really like the annexation idea suggested by Yunker.

Artiaga suggests doing something with the caboose uptown. Have talked over the years to make accessible with ramps, etc. Take some Whitehouse history and displaying up there – seems to be a shame to just sit there and get fixed up but have no additional use. Would like it to be made into something of a showcase.

Riggenbach suggests outdoor movie night, something fun for adults with summer concert series, now let's do something for the kids with a movie. Artiaga comments that since that was brought up, she and the Mayor have talked over the years for the summer student recreation program to come back as well.

Usage of Remaining Covid Funds Balance

Daugherty comments that we've been talking about the uncommitted, remaining funds from COVID. Committed funds are already spent – what we have left is just over \$47k. Need to commit funds by end of this year – will have no problem finding how to use it but want Council input.

Connelly went to Tree Commission with open question regarding funds. Very creative and passionate group. Most discussion was around a story walk. Story book can be alternated and switched out, stations would be around the pond, around 16-20 posts, company is Story Book Solutions. Estimate is around \$7k to have this set up. Thought they might get some funding, but that funding fell through. Can be refreshed based on seasons, fits in with art around the trail currently. Artiaga asks how many, 32-40 pages per book, divided by 2, so 16-20 posts. Artiaga likes idea, a new activity for kids in park, promotes some exercise walking around the pond.

Riggenbach likes Councilman Fine's idea to use funds to reduce future operating expenses such as the LED light bulbs in downtown. Artiaga asks Pilcher about talks with past Council regarding the street lights, he says current lights are LED in downtown. Fine suggests there are others around the Village that could be replaced/updated – Pilcher says around \$200k plus to replace all in Village and would recoup price in about four years. Artiaga asks about energy efficiency grants to help with this idea, Daugherty says yes, they exist but they are very difficult to get those funds; can work with Kleinfelder. Fine suggests Port Authority has energy efficiency loans; Daugherty says yes this is something to investigate as well – benefit is the lower cost financing but for most part Whitehouse already has that. Daugherty confirms must send in PO by 12/31 of this year.

Artiaga suggests would like to see sign at the front of Whitehouse Park be updated – well past its useful life. Knows it is expensive but would really like to see some of the sign characteristics on signs toward out of town to be reflected at sign in park. Daugherty comments about downtown being finished along with the updated park sign. There are two phases of downtown streetscaping that was formally approved by previous Council that could still go out to bid. Part of the Village park, that front area, is part of the streetscaping scope. Trick will be how do we get the right sign/design as we retrofit the streetscaping i.e. stone, cascading water feature, etc. Artiaga asks about previously discussed street wayfinding plans, Daugherty says yes would love to start incorporating those ideas again.

Fine comments some 'dream' ideas could be included, wind wrap around pickleball court, fix the walking path, etc. Daugherty says challenge will be getting some of these costs committed with an actual PO by the end of this year. Street sign might take more planning and time to get executed. For LED bulbs Pilcher suggests you would have to commit to the whole LED program of \$200k, not just update here and there.

Artiaga asks for any of these ideas to refer to Council. Riggenbach suggests the posts for the book story walk and the pickleball windscreen.

Riggenbach asks what Administration will spend on if not all spent. Daugherty says tree budget, improvements in council chambers, IT needs and keeping up with technology. All these ideas are ones that will have to be spent on for next year's budget, so trying to offset some of that. Artiaga asks is there any equipment that departments need that is not in budget. Nothing off top of the head. Artiaga asks can we get fire department lock boxes, they are under \$200. Pilcher says there are always needs, old furnaces in the building, LED opportunities in the building.

Motion by Artiaga, seconded by Fine to take ideas of cyber security seriously and to allow Administrator Daugherty to do what he needs to do by including Triotech as first contact and expense. 5 ayes

Fine suggests furnaces as Pilcher commented to avoid that cost for next year.

CITIZEN COMMENTS

Council President Artiaga asked if there were any general citizen comments to be made.

Rebecca Conklin Kleiboemer, 10934 Lone Oak Court

Conklin Kleiboemer comments that she loves the story book idea, will be very cool. Might have local authors that would like to write something. Suggests that Whitehouse Primary was built for idea of community space, Community of Christ church, etc., might just need programming instead of the space for the suggested winter activities.

OTHER BUSINESS

Artiaga asks Daugherty on any idea on update of building across from Whitehouse Inn. Deputy Administrator Hartbarger shares that the owner is still working with insurance company, has applied for downtown beautification grant working with him on that topic. It is being actively worked on. She then comments on the property at roundabout purchased by Village years ago, have made some economic development ideas on people who might fit that property – but should we put up for sale sign to see who is interested – would this speed up the process instead of waiting for economic development process. Daugherty says very valid question; yes, we could do that, and can't say it is a bad idea, may drum up more attention to the location. Prospective people call the Village and ask what land is for sale, do get these inquiries, just last year had a legit one, but never rose to level of actual request. Daugherty says he is open to thoughts, we could list it if that is decided. Artiaga comments only asking because of knowing how much property is worth and can be sold for and could help with budget for next year and even working on the additional projects discussed tonight. Daugherty shares that his general advice is to be picky until we absolutely can – it is so linked with the gateway to Village and beautification projects, do not want something to cast a different light on updates of corridor. Fine suggests waiting a bit and including Kleinfelder on economic development of this area. Artiaga agrees we need to wait and take time for due diligence.

Daugherty comments that he saw some reactions to Yunker's comment about annexation. It is very much on a strategic approach, do have defined water and sewer district lines, JEDD property makes it hard to be annexed, some protection to Whitehouse with that. He let Council know they are on the same page with administration, it is on top of strategic priority list. He also shares a reminder that they had a Planning Commission meeting last night – minutes will go out soon. Planning Commission, as a recommendation to Council, is to reject the zoning change from S1 to R3, that was the action item coming out of the meeting. Council as a body does not have to sustain recommendation, it can be rejected by approving the zoning change. Next Tuesday will have a public hearing at 5:45pm, then 6:30pm regular Council meeting will start where action will be taken on that topic.

ADJOURNMENT

Motion by Councilman Connelly, seconded by Councilman Yunker to adjourn the meeting at 7:52pm. 5 ayes

Respectfully submitted by Nicole Hartbarger, Clerk of Council