

**Village of Whitehouse
Village Council Meeting As A
Committee of the Whole
Village Hall, Whitehouse, OH
6:30 June 10th, 2025**

CALL TO ORDER – ROLL CALL

Meeting called to order at 6:30pm by President of Council Dave Riggenbach.

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

Council Members Absent: Louann Artiaga – excused absence

Staff Present: Administrator Jordan Daugherty, Deputy Administrator Joshua Hartbarger, Public Works Director Mike Hill, Clerk of Council Nicole Hartbarger

Guests Present: David Prueter

Motion by Councilman Yunker, seconded by Councilwoman Tuohy to approve the minutes of the May 13th, 2025 Committee of the Whole meetings. 5 ayes

CITIZEN COMMENTS ON COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE AGENDA ITEMS

Council President Riggenbach asked if there were any citizens present to comment on the Committee of the Whole agenda items. There were none.

GENERAL

Backflow Program Implementation

Deputy Administrator Hartbarger begins the discussion. He shares that several years ago the Administration asked previous Director Pilcher and current Public Works Director Hill about any challenges that public service could face in the future. They brought up the topics of lead lines and backflow issues within the water system. Hartbarger comments on the importance of protecting the water system for all 2,000 customers on the water source within the Village.

Public Works Director Hill describes backflow for Council. He shares that it is when water from your house flows back into the water main. There are two types of backflow issues. The first is back siphonage when pressure in water main drops; this could happen with a watermain break, fire department is using hydrants to put out a fire, etc. The second is back pressure when the boiler system pressure is more than what is in the water main system and pushes water back into the system. Hill shares common hazards to look for in the prepared PowerPoint. The hazards are found by staff when conducting in home inspections – these inspections are done during meter appointments, or anytime staff can get into a home or business. If a hazard is found, they can remove or mitigate the hazard if possible or they can install a containment backflow device and test. Hill comments that when a hazard is found staff provides the homeowner information on how to mitigate issues going forward.

Hill discusses Aqua Backflow and how it tracks testing – testing results go to Aqua Backflow and information comes back regarding compliance or non-compliance. If non-compliance, home or business owner is notified. Hill provides some history on the backflow topic. In 2018, the EPA did a sanitary survey, which is done every three years, and found there was no backflow program in Whitehouse. In 2019, a program was instituted, including going house to house to review and inspect for hazards. In 2020, during COVID, the inspections slowed down. Then in 2023, public works staff began with appointments and inspections again. Last year, in October 2024, the EPA

was here for another survey, and the Village received a notice of violations, approximately 35 backflows in the system that were out of date on being tested or corrected. Hill comments that the EPA gave a deadline of May 1st, 2025, originally to complete these corrections; the Village has asked for an extension to October 2025 and it was granted.

Public Works Director Hill shares the updated plan now going forward. Compliance is key at this time, get all 35 violations fixed. This will be accomplished by first a phone call from the Village office asking for inspection access, if there is no answer after several attempts there will be notice given of water off, if access to compliance fixes is not given. The beginning date for the compliance fixes is June 13th, 2025, to give enough time for the October deadline. Hill shares that the larger picture includes around 1,000 households that have not been inspected and need to be. This includes businesses. A survey will go out, like the lead line survey, listing hazards and asking if any are present, along with asking if backflow has been tested in the last year. After the surveys come back, they will be reviewed and decide if any in-house inspections need to occur. If a backflow device is needed to be installed, the Village will give them 6 months to be compliant and get this installed. Hill talks about changes from the old program. The Village now has authority over containment devices. A Pressure Vacuum Breaker (PVB) is now allowed if no other hazards are present, this is now considered a containment device and can be tested by the Village. No need to install a backflow and a meter. Overall Village compliance will start third quarter 2025 – staff will send out surveys and promote videos online regarding importance of backflow. Hill shares that they reviewed 29 communities, and all have some sort of backflow program and are working with the EPA; this is now common and required.

Administrator Daugherty shares a bridge from 2018 to now; Pilcher was regular in updating Council that this requirement was coming up – there are budgetary concerns with increased mandates from the EPA; this will take a lot of staff time. Pilcher and Hill have been working directly with the Ohio EPA and have been given more flexibility on getting households and businesses in compliance, along with getting the acceptable form of compliance device updated to the PVB. He comments that this is the responsibility of having a residential water system. The EPA is wanting to make sure the public water system is safe, and backflow prevention is a big part of this. Daugherty comments that this is not a choice, it is something the Village must do; the goal is deploying as customer friendly as possible while getting all in compliance. He confirms what Hill commented; all communities surveyed are under these same requirements.

Riggenbach asks for comments from Council. Tuohy asks cost to get backflow device installed for homeowner – Hill says it varies by plumber; the Village buys the device at cost/wholesale and sells at cost which is around \$270. Yunker asks about the cost of the annual inspection; Hill comments \$75-100. Yunker asks about cost of Aqua Backflow – Hill says the Village spends nothing, when a plumber does inspection there is a \$14.95 charge to the plumber/inspector from Aqua Backflow. Riggenbach comments that we are relying on a survey to identify households that have hazards, relying on self-reporting – is the EPA ok with this process; Hill says yes, they support this. Village is not on the hook for any mistruth from a resident, but if staff see a hazard during an inspection the Village is then responsible as they have witnessed it. In 2018, on-site inspections were required, now in 2025 the self-reporting is acceptable. Riggenbach asks about no reply – Hill says we will then be contacting the resident about scheduling an on-site inspection. Riggenbach asks if resident fills out truthfully and says they have an irrigation system are they on the October timeline – Hill says they will have the 6 months to comply; the October deadline is for the known 35 hazards at this time. Yunker asks about allowing point wells for irrigation systems; Daugherty comments about a previous amendment with Phil Whaley; Hill says it cannot be anywhere in the house. Fine asks about the 35 houses that have the violations, we have not acted on that yet, is there something in current process that needs to be changed to catch these sooner. Hill comments that Covid was a big disconnect with these processes and not being able to enter homes. There is a good process now going forward. Hill comments he has not ever had to go through to the final step of threatening to shut off water to get compliance – homeowners have

been good at scheduling inspections. Riggensbach asks about the survey, is there a portion that is educational in nature and non-threatening. Hartbarger says it has a very similar approach to lead line survey including education. Fine asks to keep Council informed on how things go. Hill asks for Council to relay any questions that come up.

Review of Council Rules

Riggensbach asks to move this topic to the August committee of the whole meeting as Artiaga has been the main driver of this topic and would like to make sure she is included.

Fine suggests there are so many things that could be changed in the document, asks about using google docs to share with only three Council people. Tuohy comments that we want to make sure Artiaga can be as involved as possible. Riggensbach comments there are a lot of notes that she has that can be translated to the google doc. Tuohy suggests emailing all comments and suggestions to one person and that person could add to the google doc. Yunker volunteers to help with this along with Fine and Artiaga. Fine says to target August for the review of the draft.

Discussion of Finance Dashboard Layout

Administrator Daugherty comments that a mockup is in front of each Council person. This comes from the last Finance Committee meeting that requested some transparency on Village financials. Daugherty comments on how to get info accessible to the public – worked with Mark Schriefer on how it will look either on the website or Access Whitehouse. This mockup includes everything from the meeting notes, and Daugherty did include additionally the payroll to date numbers as people might be interested in that. Approval of financials will be at the next Council meeting, this data will then roll forward to May.

Daugherty shares he did include some other detailed reports that might be interesting including the general fund past five years and projection five years, monthly financial statements that are Council approved along with the grants that are approved/awarded. Links are not yet live but wanted to share the mockup.

Riggensbach comments that the dashboard is great; it looks clean and simple. He comments that at a high level this is good – would like to understand a little more of the detailed reports, will be some version of what is being shown. Daugherty comments these are reports that Council has already seen and approves, same format, will not be new reports. They will be uploaded after Council financial approvals. Daugherty confirms all will all be pdf/non-editable. Riggensbach says it is a wonderful start to continue to push the idea of transparency. Connelly thinks it looks great too; he comments about color coding for under, on and over target if this is a possibility, but knows it could be hard or confusing. Daugherty says he had thought the same about taking one more step to make it a quick assessment but run the risk of making it worse or harder to review. Says it does not hurt to add if there is any feedback that comes back. Fine asks about the paid to date Daugherty mentioned, will it show that we are on track; Daugherty says it is the annualized paid to date number that has been shared before; budgeted expenses versus expenses, shows percentage – annualized takes the question out of the calculation by using a full 12-month average of the expenses and budget expenses. Daugherty says for payroll number will share the budgeted amount as well for comparison – Yunker suggests including the number of employees that make up that payroll number. Daugherty comments he agrees it is a good next step to collect feedback. Connelly asks about next finance meeting, Daugherty confirms it is at 6pm before the July 1st, 2025, Council meeting. Daugherty asks for a bit of time on the links for them to be live; looking to have ready for July meeting but dashboard numbers are correct and can go live.

CITIZEN COMMENTS

Council President Riggensbach asks if there are any citizen comments to be heard.

Dave Prueter - 10104 Saddle Bridge Drive: shares an estimated cost of \$1,300-\$1,500 for backflow installation, testing and Aqua Flow cost. Question to Hill, a PVB device is now acceptable; Hill comments yes this is acceptable if there are no other hazards that need to be mitigated. Tuohy comments questioning the \$270 cost estimate previously mentioned, had friends mention the \$1,500 as well, Hill says it is dependent on the plumber and what they charge – if a second meter is added this alone is \$500.

OTHER BUSINESS

Council President Riggensbach asks if there is any other business to discuss from Council members.

Connelly shares his brother lives on Weckerly and is concerned with new sidewalks flaking near the funeral home area - new sidewalks that were just put in. Hill comments he believes it is caused by usage of salt on the concrete rather than a different product that is safer for concrete. Riggensbach suggests this is an opportunity for education.

Riggensbach shares a final reminder that this is last Committee of the Whole meeting until August.

ADJOURNMENT

Motion by Councilman Connelly, seconded by Councilman Yunker to adjourn the meeting at 7:20pm. 5 ayes

Respectfully submitted by Nicole Hartbarger, Clerk of Council