

**Council of the Village of Yellow Springs  
Special Meeting Minutes  
Council Retreat**

**In Rockford Chapel, 9am-4pm**

**Tuesday, March 31, 2015**

**CALL TO ORDER**

President of Council Karen Wintrow called the retreat to order at 9:25 pm.

**ROLL CALL**

Present were President Karen Wintrow, Vice President Lori Askeland, Gerry Simms, Brian Housh and Marianne MacQueen. Village Manager Patti Bates was present, as were Village Solicitors Chris Conard and Amy Blankenship. Assistant Village Manager John Yung was absent due to illness.

**Agenda Review**

There were no changes made to the Agenda.

9:25 Input from Council, Village Manager, Clerk of Council and Solicitor regarding work and observations to date. Each member of the group reflected upon his or her experiences on or serving Council.

9:55 **Agenda Planning & Management and Consent Agenda Option.** A good discussion which encompassed both the desire to make Council meetings more accessible and the need to find areas in which to increase efficiency. Conard and Blankenship will provide sample legislation for a consent agenda option so that Council can discuss this at their next meeting. Council and Bates agreed that they would like to give the option a trial run to see how it functions for Yellow Springs.

10:45 **Council Meeting Format/Work Session Option.** The option of work sessions was discussed at great length. Council members heartily agreed that they see the option as a less formalized way in which to gather information and discuss it in a public setting, which gives greater latitude for public input. There was general agreement that the agenda tends to be overfull such that in order to allow proper discussion and input, meetings are running too long.

Wintrow suggested that only one potentially lengthy or controversial topic be permitted per Council meeting if at all possible. This was met with agreement, and there were a number of scenarios given for the usefulness of a work session format in increasing meeting efficiency. Council discussed and discarded the notion of adding a third monthly meeting as a work session.

As with the Consent Agenda, Council members stated that they would like to try the Work Session option as a pilot to see whether it achieves the goals of increased efficiency and greater ease of staff and citizen input.

Notes were made to the effect that if work sessions are introduced, the following guidelines should be implemented as a starting point:

- The work session would be the second monthly meeting so that the Finance Director is better able to attend.
- Legislation would need to be shunted to the first meeting of the month.

- Legislation could be introduced or, in the case of a resolution, voted upon, only if Council moved to enter regular session, typically at the end of the work session.
- Special Reports and presentations would be shunted to the second--work session--meeting.

Conard and Blankenship will provide information to Council on this option in the next month.

12:45 **Improving Council Effectiveness.** This topic was a running theme throughout the day, and was not sectioned out as a separate topic. Several strategies were brought up during the day, and are noted here:

- When a new topic is introduced by a Council member or board/commission it is helpful to present it as: Statement of Issue; Relevant Facts; Possible options/consequences thereof; Possible actions/responses.
- As much as is possible, keep meetings under two hours, after which citizens tend to leave and Council members are becoming tired.
- Bates stressed the need to check in with her to assure that staff are able to support Council with information or action.
- The idea of adhering to the rule that citizens can speak only once on a topic was examined.
- Council agreed with Conard's suggestion that no responses be given during a citizen's time to speak. The 3 minute clock would run continuously until the speaker is done, and questions would be addressed at the end of the citizen comment period.

1:45 **Project Management.** Bates led off the session by stating that it is critical for Boards and Commissions to have a process for approval of projects, given that this often translates directly into staff time. Council members spoke to a lack of clarity in the establishing ordinances as to how much latitude any given board or commission has to determine its own priorities. Housh noted that he is making it a practice with his commissions to adhere to setting annual goals, which are then sent on to Council for review so that projects that may involve extensive time or effort can be either planned for or eliminated from that board's goals.

Conard suggested a classification of topics such that any project involving land use, money, using significant staff time, raising legal issues or requiring Council action would be considered in need of a full Council discussion. This classification would assist Council members in deciding when to ask for agenda time at a meeting, and when matters would need to be presented ahead of time.

3:00 Solicitor's Report on Charter Review Progress. Conard, Housh and Simms updated those present as to the work to date.

4:25 **Adjournment**