

Village of Whitehouse State of the Village Address

As we begin a new year and reflect on the accomplishments of 2011, I realize what an exciting time this is for the Village of Whitehouse.

Financially, the Village is sound and we begin 2012 with a balanced budget. The Critical Economic Indicator analysis as well as efforts led by department heads and employees held expenditures to approximately 82% of that budgeted, which is roughly \$375,000. Income tax collections for 2011 resulted in an increase of 12.1% over 2010. This represents approximately 40% of the total revenue, and the enterprise funds, water and sewer, provide approximately 16%. Life Squad is approximately 15% and Lucas County property taxes equal only about 5% of the total. Of the property taxes a resident pays, only about 6 – 7% goes to the Village.

In 2011 we received approximately \$1,005,173 in grant funds which is a 37.4% increase over 2010.

In the overall operations of the Village, there was significant cost savings of approximately \$290,000. This was achieved through several initiatives. The continued reduced personnel cost of the combining of Administrator and Finance Director positions save approximately \$70,000. The new meter and effect of I & I (inflow & infiltration) programs save an estimated \$100–150,000 per year. Negotiated reduced workers' compensation fees saved \$50-70,000. Reduced energy costs through a new electric utility distributor achieved savings of \$6-7,000 per year.

We continue to pursue way to strengthen relations with neighboring entities and reduce costs through collaboration.

Economic development continued to increase as a focus in 2011. In January, a strategic plan was presented to council by Kirk Kern, Economic Development Coordinator. Many projects are currently in the works based on that plan, and in 2011, the Village has realized its greatest income tax collection and business income three times that of the prior year. We feel that part of this is the result of our economic development plan.

Discussions continue to form a partnership to bring a satellite of a higher education provider.

In December, Mr. Kern, resigned for another position. We have begun the process of finding a qualified replacement. In 2012, we will continue moving forward with the marketing plan which has already resulted in the new Village logo. An updated website will be one of the projects for the new year. It's important that we are responsive to the needs of all member of our community. The ability to communicate effectively with the residents, business owners and visitors to Village is very important to us.

The JEDD (Joint Economic Development District) with Monclova Township was amended for the third time. This increases the geographic area of the JEDD and includes two businesses which provide increased tax revenues. One of the many goals for 2012 is to work with Waterville Township on expansion of the JEDD located there.

As a result of the expanded role of Barbara Knisley, Community Development Coordinator and the initiatives of that division we have seen many additional events such as Winterfest, which was a great success, and the seven free concerts in the park. The Farmers' Market was expanded to include a Flower Market during the month of May, and additional plans for 2012 include expansion of vendors to the plazas on both sides of Providence Street with additional types of items to be offered. The 2012 Winterfest is planned for February 11th which will again include a light parade and many activities for the entire family.

A joint event with the Metroparks was offered in December with many more to come.

The Whitehouse Art Advisory Board's first year was very successful. Several events were sponsored such as the Juried Art Show and Art Bike Contest at the Cherry Fest, to most recently a Holiday Art Show and Sale. The WAAB offered classes and has many activities and additional classes planned for 2012.

The Downtown Grant is halfway through the third round of funding which provides matching funds to business owners to improve and upgrade the buildings in the downtown area. The improvements are very visible and will continue through December of 2012. This is just one step in the goal of revitalizing this area and bringing new businesses to the Village. In the plans for 2012 is an update to the Comprehensive Land Use Plan which was last revised in 2005.

The Fire Department and EMS have been extremely busy in 2011. They offered many training opportunities such as fire extinguisher classes and twenty-three CPR classes, one of which resulted in the saved life of a child soon after the class was taken.

Our volunteers support the Village in many ways such as participating in many events offered for the community like Winterfest, Safety City, school tours, Cherry Fest, Founder's Day fireworks, emergency presence at football games and high school bonfire, assistance to other area departments, and Take Back Day for control of excess or expired prescription drugs. They have also participated in many hours of additional training, such as Firefighter II training, pump testing, new engine training, and self-contained breathing apparatus training. The training of our firefighters is a priority to continue to offer excellent care and service to our residents.

The hydrants and hoses have been tested for the year.

In September, the Department took possession of a new engine. This vehicle will assist in replacing a heavy rescue vehicle which is in need of much repair. They will be able to respond to accidents with fewer trucks, and more personnel on the scene faster.

The Fire Department has been very successful in receiving grants for training and to replace much needed equipment. We received \$155,173 to purchase SCBA equipment. Our portion to replace this equipment which could no longer receive maintenance was only 5%, or \$8,167. A grant of \$1,160 for 36 hours of training was also received in 2011, as well as \$3,500 State of Ohio EMS grant for 2011-2012.

Ambulance billing has provided revenue of over \$37,000.

The number of runs for fire, EMS, and Life Squad has increased approximately 3.6% over 2010 and 11% over 2009.

Deputy Chief Marty Fuller has been appointed to the State EMS Board Medical Oversight Committee. This is one example of the excellence of our employees.

Life Squad 9's ambulance was replaced with a new vehicle this year and updated equipment.

In January 2011, the Police Department saw the retirement of Chief Ed Kaplan. We are currently in the process of filling that position. The Department also had another full time officer resign who was replaced with Officer Richard Feltner.

The third year of Safety City was attended by 43 children. Plans for the 2012 class are already in the works.

Arrests, accidents, citations, and reports were all down for the year 2011. There are many goals for the Police Department for 2012, several of which offer improved community policing and service to our residents and businesses.

The Public Service Department has a list of significant accomplishments. Completion of the downtown water main and storm sewer project will enable us to move forward with the much needed revitalization of this important area of our Village. This project total is approximately \$900,000 and will be funded by a long term interest free loan of \$400,000, the new utility capital charges, and possibly additional grant funds.

The Finzel Road water tower received interior and exterior rehabilitation, and the reclamation of Cemetery Road south of the Wabash trail was completed. We received grant funds to assist in the project on Cemetery Road. The Public Service files have been upgraded and digitized. The road maintenance crack sealing program was continued. Twelve storm sewer inlets in the Hickory Ridge subdivision were reconstructed in preparation for the 2012 road resurfacing project. A new 2-ton dump truck with snow plow and salt spreader was purchased. The department collected 2,523 cubic yards of leaves in the annual pickup.

The Safe Routes to School pedestrian bridge at Blue Creek, including sidewalk sections on Finzel Road, was completed. We are currently beginning planning for the Finzel Road/ State Route 64 roundabout. This will not be complete until approximately 2015, but planning now ensures the project to be completed as efficiently and economically as possible.

The department offered several opportunities for training of the employees which enable them to better serve the residents.

Improvements to the Blue Creek large quarry area began with the beautification project of fence removal. This opens the area for additional recreation uses and improved access to this exceptional parkland. The Public Works Department is continuing planning and engineering of the multi use trail

around the large quarry, which is scheduled to be installed in 2012. We have been awarded a grant for this project.

The Parks, Green Space, and Recreation Master Plan is scheduled to begin in late January. This plan will assist us in utilizing our budgeted funds to achieve the greatest impact and enable us to prioritize projects in order to pursue grant opportunities and develop these areas in a planned method.

We are further developing our wellness program which has a direct impact on reduced sick time, better insurance premiums, and overall employee productivity. Interest has grown for the workout room by Village employees and their families. It is our hope that by encouraging healthy habits we can decrease the possibility of illness. The Village Staff and Department Heads completed the third full year under the Village's new employee performance appraisal program. This has been a very successful program.

The Village Safety Team continues to be very active and successful. The Village received a check from the Bureau of Worker's Compensation in the amount of \$2,139.78 as a discount for being a member and attending Safety Council events. Because of employee consciousness, we have been without a lost time accident for over 5 years. This milestone was recognized with a luncheon meeting to thank the employees.

I would like to thank the Council, Administrator, Department Heads and all the employees for their continued dedication to the residents and businesses of the Village.

As I look at all the accomplishments made, and challenges we have overcome in 2011, I realize all of these things could not have been achieved if not for their hard work. I firmly believe we are on the right path to achieving great things for our Village.

As I begin my second term as Mayor, I would like to thank the residents for their vote of confidence and for the opportunity to continue to serve the Village of Whitehouse.

Angela J. Kuhn
Mayor