

**VILLAGE OF ST. BERNARD**  
**COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE**

**January 9<sup>th</sup>, 2025**

The St. Bernard Village Committee of the Whole was held on January 9<sup>th</sup>, 2025 in Council Chambers.

Roll call showed all seven members were present: Mr. Moreton, Mr. Stuchell, Mr. Edwards, Ms. Hausfeld, Mr. Schildmeyer, Mr. Culbertson, and Mr. Estep.

Motion made by Mr. Schildmeyer, seconded by Mr. Estep, to approve the written minutes of the December 19<sup>th</sup> council meeting. Motion passes 7-0.

Rich Surace, Ohio Energy Alliance- Thank you. My name is Rich Surace. We are a local energy consultant. Most of what we do is aggregation programs and Council Member Mr. Morton reached out to me several weeks back and said that it sounds like the village is considering looking at what it may take and if you want to do aggregations so that that's why I'm here today. So, I believe you have a few slides in front of you so we'll kind of go through. So, we're a local company and we favor everything around here. We have about 58 programs and 50 of them are within the four counties of Greater Cincinnati. We know the Duke footprint really well so that's why we stay here in Cincinnati. Some of our competitors sort of run around the state and get whatever they can but we really try to stay with our core focus and what we know except for those couple of communities that have reached out to us. Most people don't really understand what you can shop for. Here in Ohio, we have separated the generation and the supply of natural gas from the utility. So, Duke supplies the energy and gas. Where they come from are separate. We negotiate with the suppliers for you. Duke is the middle man; they do not own any pipelines or produce any gas or energy. All they do is move the product. So, aggregation is the ability to look out and find another option for your residents. 75% of the village's residents are still with Duke as a default. This shows a large portion of the residents could have more saving, but might be confused or might not know aggregation is an option. They are 157 offers in the Duke footprint trying to sell electricity. Aggregation can help by bringing them those offers. The program is governed by the Public Commissions of Ohio. There are 400 communities in Ohio running aggregation programs. Duke will continue to deliver the power, send the bill and take care of any outages. The program is very easy and seamless for the residents. They will still get all the benefit and payment options Duke offers. Any resident is eligible for the program as long as they are not currently on an aggregation program or on a low to moderate income program. Residents can opt out at any time or have the option to add their name to the do not aggregate list available through the Public Utilities Commissions. The programs we run will never have a termination fee. They can enter at any time and leave at any time with no cost. So, every 12 months, Duke updates their rates on electric, but their gas rates are variable. This program offers a ceiling so residents know what their rate is each month. Duke charges two different rates for your first 1000kwh and another rate over and above the next 1000kwh. So, aggregation rate could be lower or higher depending on that rate ceiling included in the program. So, we want residents to be educated and make the decision to opt in or out. We will make recommendation

depending on how the market is moving. It is like buying gasoline for your car. We want to offer the best rate and savings for your residents once they lock in, but the rate and market does move. As I said, people can leave the program at any time. Most of the time, we can provide the lower rate, and residents have the protection of that ceiling rate through the aggregation program. We are a full-service consultant. We are here every step of the way. So, the program will have to be put on the ballot, so we will help get that process started. We will offer public hearings so residents will understand what they might be voting on. We take care of drafting all paperwork and materials for your legal counsel to review. We make this process very easy for the community. We provide the customer service, which is us and it stays local. We provide and maintain each community's own and individual website available as a resource. We will also provide quarterly performance reports. Please consider getting certified for your community. Once certified, this does not commit you to moving forward with the program but it will give you the options. This would be the first step in moving forward with your program. We are here to help you administer your community's program through the lifetime of the program. Any thoughts? Questions?

Council Member, Mr. Moreton- So, what we need to do is get registered or certified with PCO, that is the same thing, correct? Then getting it on ballot is something you help with also? Can you talk a little bit more on what that process looks like? Would we need to pass legislation?

Rich Surace, Ohio Energy Alliance- Yes, so we have all the legislation and we can give that to you, as a draft, so you can make sure it fits within your charter. So, the time line, you would need to pass legislation to say you want to consider doing aggregation so it can be put in front of the voters. We would then help you get everything over to the Board of Elections. We will get everything filed and taken care of for you. Assuming it passes, you would then need to come up with a plan of operations. This would be the document that governs how your aggregation program runs. We will get that done as well. Part of that includes running two public hearings to give residents the opportunity to ask questions. We will also run those two hearings for you. After the public hearings are done, you then need to pass legislation adopting your plans of operations. Once it is passed, your application will be filed along with all your paperwork, which we will complete for you.

Council Member, Mr. Edwards- If the village would decide not to go to the program, is an individual allowed to opt in? If they are allowed to opt in, would there be additional savings if the entire village was a part of the program?

Rich Surace, Ohio Energy Alliance- No, we do not offer individual programs.

Council Member, Mr. Schildmeyer- If this program would pass, when people are deciding if they want to opt in or out, do you have the rates at that point already? How do you get the rates if you do not know how many people are going to opt in or opt out?

Rich Surace, Ohio Energy Alliance- So, we will bid with multiple suppliers and we get a list from Duke of all the accounts within the village limits. We typically see 85% of people opt in, so the suppliers wear that risk. They know roughly estimated how many people will leave the

program. So, if you have 1,600 people in the village and 1,599 people opt out, the 1 people who opted in would still get that price. It would have no impact on the price at all.

Auditor, Ms. Brickweg- So everyone using Duke right now, would automatically be opted into the program on day one, until they opt out?

Rich Surace, Ohio Energy Alliance- Yes, anyone using Duke directly. They will receive an opt out letter but if they do not opt out, they will receive the program automatically.

Council Member, Mr. Moreton- Do you happen to know the percentage of people whose bill might be higher using this program versus Duke? Also, is this graph showing positive performance as in 100% of accounts are seeing the cheaper price?

Rich Surace, Ohio Energy Alliance- That would depend on the community and the price. There would be no way to make a blanket statement because it depends on the price versus Duke's rates at that time along with their usage. Yes, the graph is showing 100% of account are seeing a cheaper price.

## **REPORTS OF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICIALS**

Mayor, Mr. Stuchell- Before I read my report, I would like to welcome Kim Derrenkamp as the new Treasurer and we will be swearing her in this evening.

Ms. Kim Derrenkamp was sworn in to office as Village Treasurer.

Mayor, Mr. Stuchell- Of course a big thank you to our awesome service department for the great response to the recent snowstorm. What an incredible job they did. We definitely had the most passable roads in Hamilton County. I would also like to thank our residents for their patience after this last storm as well. This was a tremendous amount of snow in our compact village and it was a challenge to get the parking restored for our residents but again thank you to everyone who helped with the cleanup. Lastly, if you're looking for a fun winter indoor activity this weekend the St. Clement athletic booster cornhole tournament will take place this Saturday January 11th from 6:00 PM to midnight at St. Clement in the gymnasium. Admission is \$10 includes foods and soft drinks. Bring your own adult beverages. Register by 6:30 for a \$10 luck of the draw tournament play starts at 7pm. There will be prizes for the top three teams. The event also includes raffle baskets, split the pot, door prizes and more so we look forward to seeing folks out this weekend and don't let a little snow get you down and you can just walk right up the street to have a good time. Thank you that concludes my report.

Auditor, Ms. Brickweg- I am introducing Resolution 1 2025 tonight. This is the resolution is to provide food and beverages at village events using public funds. This is the same resolution that is passed each year. The W2s are out and available on the CHIPS site. Thank you, that concludes my report.

Motion made by Mr. Schildmeyer, seconded by Mr. Estep, to place Resolution 1 2025 on the table for the next council meeting. Motion passes 7-0.

Law Director, Ms. Van Valkenberg- I would also like to thank the service department for the great work they've done as well together and the firefighters and the police department. I have no report tonight. On a personal note, I would like to thank whoever came along Monday night and cleaned off my porch and my steps. That was really nice and they did it so quietly the dogs didn't even alert me to the fact that it was happening so thank you very much.

Treasurer, Ms. Derrenkamp- I have the STAR Ohio account balance for December 2024. The balance was \$11,137,728.30. That concludes my report.

Safety and Service Director, Mr. Werdmann- I want to thank the service department as well for all they did during the snowstorm. I know they worked long hours and this historic village with narrow streets and finding the places to put all the snow was difficult. I wanted to thank the residents for their patience. I am sure they were frustrated because snow was put back in front of their driveway but there is really no other place to put it. The village offices will be closed and there will be no trash pickup on Monday, January 20<sup>th</sup> in honor of Martin Luther King Day. That concludes my report.

Tax Administrator, Ms. Helmes- DECEMBER 2024 end of month receipts

- Tax collections for DECEMBER 2024: \$1,857,960.00.
- December 2024 is down 1.34 % or \$25,202 from December 2023.
- Refunds for December: -\$2,233.39
- Delinquent tax collected with Capital Recovery: \$459.54.
- Delinquent tax collected with the Ohio Attorney General's Office: \$479.24.
- Year End collections for the tax department: \$12,459,922.00

111 residents were on the State of Ohio tax list for not filing a tax return. They will be added to the list of 550 residents who have not filed their 2023 tax return. We are currently working on the warrants for those who have not filed for 2023. If you get an assessment or tax form, please do not ignore this and call the tax office. I also wanted to let everybody know that someone is calling people acting like a representative calling people on behalf of the St. Bernard tax office. They are calling people acting like they are collecting taxes over the phone. This is a scam. Our office does not do this. We only use Capital Recovery and Ohio Attorney General's Office to collect taxes. Please do not give your credit card information out over the phone. When in doubt, call my office. We will go over your options with you. The e-file portal will not be available from January 16<sup>th</sup> through January 27<sup>th</sup> due to maintenance. Thank you that concludes my report.

## **REPORTS OF STANDING COMMITTEES**

Finance, Mr. Moreton- Thank you Mr. President. The next Finance Committee Meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, January 15<sup>th</sup> at 6PM in the Lower Level of City Hall. We will be discussing a LISC Supplement program and enterprise leasing options. Again, thank you to the folks who have attended any of the Community Connects so far. Per the feedback from many attendees, these Community Connects have moved to a quarterly cadence. The next Community Connect is scheduled for April 3<sup>rd</sup> at 6PM in the Lower Level of City Hall. Of course, my email and phone remain open to discuss any concerns or to schedule an in-person meeting. I also would like to again thank Rich Surace from the Ohio Energy Alliance for his time spent preparing and delivering his presentation today. That Concludes my report.

Service, Mr. Stuchell- I have the waste collection fees for the month of November 2024. \$25,483.42 was remitted to the Village. For the waste collection report for the month of December 2024, the Service Department completed the following:

- 25 dump trucks placed at residences.
- 23 dumpsters placed residences.
- 184 special pick-ups for residences.
- 206.55 tons of garbage taken to the landfill.
- 26.8 tons of recycling material sent to Rumpke Recycle.
- 2 car batteries recycled.
- 3,200 lbs. of scrap metal to the scrap yard.

#### Service Department Updates

The Service Department would like to share the following with residents:

- Please be patient with our Service Department workers as they continue to clear our streets. If you are digging your car out of the snow, do not throw snow back into the street, as it creates hazards for other drivers. Instead, place snow away from the street and as close to the curb as possible.
- The Service Department will be working to remove and haul away excessively large snowbanks. This process will take time, so we ask for your continued patience as they work to ensure our street remain safe and accessible.
- Lastly, I would also like to thank our Service Department for their quick and efficient response in clearing the heavy snowfall we received this week.

Public Improvements, Mr. Edwards- Thank you Mr. President. I have no report for the public improvement committee meeting but I would also like to thank our service department for another tremendous effort digging our village out from the recent snowstorm. I can only remember four or five times in my almost 69 years in Saint Bernard that we received this much snow. Once again, our roads are better than most. Our service department once again did a great job. Thank you, Mr. president, this concludes my report.

Safety, Ms. Hausfeld- No report. Thank you to the service, police and fire departments for their work in cleaning up the roads and getting out and working in such awful weather. Thank you so much.

Laws, Contracts and Claims, Ms. Schildmeyer- No report.

Marketing, Mr. Culbertson- Thanks Mr. President. The recreation department will be hosting sports sign-ups at the rec office on the following two dates: Saturday January 25th from 11:00 AM to 2:00 PM and Saturday February 1st from 11:00 AM to 2:00 PM. Activities include knothole baseball ages 7 to 13 residents \$50 nonresidents \$75, girls softball ages 7 to 13 \$50 residents 75 for nonresidents, winter swim lessons all ages \$25 Tuesday evenings or Saturday mornings, mommy and me swim lessons ages 6 to 36 months on Thursday evenings in March \$25, Stingray's swim team \$50.00 for residents \$75.00 for nonresidents, t-ball ages 4 to 7 \$25, SAY soccer ages 6 to 13 \$50 for residents \$75.00 for nonresidents, lollipop soccer ages 3 to 5

\$25. You can also sign up at City Hall during business hours. The village is now accepting applications for summer employment at the Aquatic Center. Deadline to submit the application is Friday February 14<sup>th</sup>. Finally, the next Historical Society program is on Monday January 20<sup>th</sup> at 7:00 PM in the municipal building. The program is abandoned subways. The presentation will be given by Reid Growthouse and ditto on the service department. That concludes my report.  
Business and Industry, Mr. Estep- No report.

Thomas Fox, 309 Jackson Ave- Will you cancel the cornhole tournament for 5 inches of snow?

Mayor, Mr. Stuchell- No, we will not cancel the cornhole tournament. We have everything in order even if people have to walk up. The service department has everything ready to keep the roads and sidewalks clear.

Service Department Foreman, Mr. Middendorf- I want to thank everyone for their kind words along with the rest of the service department. As we know, tomorrow we will be getting more snow around noon. We do already have a plan in place with 2 separate shifts so we can get a jump on everything. This should not be a snow storm like we just had. I think my guys did a hell of a job this past storm and we are prepared again.

The next council meeting will be held Thursday, January 23<sup>rd</sup> at 7:00pm in Council Chambers.

Motion made by Mr. Culbertson, seconded by Mr. Estep, to adjourn. Motion passes 7-0.

Meeting is adjourned.