

**RECORD OF PROCEEDINGS**  
**MINUTES OF VILLAGE OF BLANCHESTER REGULAR COUNCIL MEETING**  
**December 14, 2023**

The Village of Blanchester Council met in regular session on December 14, 2023, at 7:00 p.m. with the honorable Mayor John Carman, presiding.

All Present stood and recited the Pledge of Allegiance and had Opening Prayer

Roll Call	Mr. Harry Brumbaugh	Present
	Mr. William Garner	Present
	Mr. Don Gephart	Present
	Mr. Reilly Hopkins	Present
	Mrs. Lynn Lewis	Present
	Mr. Josh Parks	Present

**Agenda**

It was moved by Mr. Parks and seconded by Mrs. Lewis to approve agenda.

Vote:     Yea – Mr. Brumbaugh, Mr. Garner, Mr. Gephart, Mr. Hopkins, Mrs. Lewis, Mr. Parks  
              Nay – None

**Motion Passed**

**Public Comment**

**Pete Keefer**- 303 N. Columbus St, Blanchester, OH. He expressed his concerns about the speed limit and the loud noises on Columbus Street. It isn't sure if there is a loud noise ordinance. He would like to have a speed limit sign like the one on Middleboro Road which light up. Mayor Carman explained that the sign was free and the estimated price is \$35k. Those signs are nice because they can be easily moved. Mr. Keefer stated that the signs are solar or battery operated. Mayor Carman will mention the issue to the Chief about the concerns.

**James Constable** – 135 N. Orchard View Lane, Blanchester, OH. He spoke on the agenda subject of hiring an administer. In 2023 without a budget to show the incoming expenses in this village has created a big problem. To resolve the problem is you are asking for an income tax to fix the problem. On Nov 13 2023 an Amendment A Certificate was approved for the director Ram Reddy which it showed is pay as \$6,694 every two weeks. A public records requests for his pay stub shows a he got get paid \$7,416 every two weeks. In the three weeks period there is a \$700 every two week pay raise. There is a problem either we are paying too much or the pay scale that council approved didn't just weeks ago didn't reflect the correct amount money. The pay stub I gave you \$183,076.00. 182 person hours, or gets paid before he leaves. 699 sick hours take or get paid when he leaves or 184 vacation hours he can take or gets paid for when he leaves. Resolution 2021.029 amendment 9/9/2021 was half passed suspending the rules.

There weren't enough people on the council meeting that night. I gave you a copy of there was only four people you need five 5 people to suspend the rules you didn't suspend the rules and you didn't make it an emergency. Therefore, you have an illegal contract and you need have your solicitor look into it. Mayor responded to Mr. Constable's statement that the reason that pay scale reflects for the utility director is because he is not paid for that pay-scale he is paid per a contract that was negotiated with the board so that is kind of a mute-point. He is paid based on the contract which spells out what he receives. The pay scale did not change because of his pay increase. Mr. Constable suggested council members were not aware of the contract. Mayor reported Mr. Reddy has a contract approved by the board. The council members approved the contract and the pay scale that Mr. Constable is referring to is there for future utility directors. As far as sick, personal time, the most anyone gets is 25% or 30 days so he may have 60 days or 100 days he will only get paid 30 days max because per the handbook. Mr. Constable reported back that if we recall when it was passed that it didn't reply to him because he was grandfather clause in and hours that he had at that time he could carry over.

### Guest Speaker

Dave Kramer-Altafiber Introduction 221 East Forest Street, Cincinnati, OH. He is here to explain to the village plans about extending fiber into the Village of Blanchester. Altafiber is actually Cincinnati Bell Telephone. A 150 years company that changed the name to Altafiber private a couple years ago and went private. One reason they went private is to expand our traditional legacy telephone footprint and provide highspeed broadband to areas like the village. They are Cincinnati Bell legally, but simply doing business as Altafiber.

As of the end of this year, 1.4 million addresses that they serve fiber to. In 2010 they started replacing copper lines with fiber. They are probably the largest private fiber providers in the state of Ohio. By the end of this year, their legacy footprint will be 100% fiber. They want to come into the village to service the residence

They have identified approximately 3500 locations in the Blanchester for their fiber expansion. Green/Clinton County line and everything in Village Blanchester will be certified fiber and outside village up to Cowan Lake. Primarily a residential fiber build which includes small business. All commercial business will be handled on a case-by-case basis.

Mr. Kramer stated they announced about 90 days about their expansion and Blanchester was one of those announcements. Residents can visit the custom landing pages on [altafiber.com](http://altafiber.com) to be notify when fiber will be available. Most importantly for communities, residence can report any issues through the construction web page. Altafiber will respond by the next day at noon Monday through Friday. If someone calls on a Friday, respond will be Monday.

Construction will be 100% underground.

Tech 100% fiber which is future proof technology. They will only have to come in once. The equipment station will be one small cabinet set up in the village upon deciding location. Mayor Carman as far as everything under ground, boring under roads if anything has to be moved. Mr. Kramer stated if needed directional boring would be done. This usually only happens in extreme case and they will work with Blanchester officials.

Councilman Reilly asked Mr. Kramer to explain the benefits of partnering with the village and only having to come to the community once but you technically never leave us. Altafiber has several partnerships. One of the traditional partnerships is legacy financial partnership. County level and then expansion areas outside partnerships. They decided to treat both partnerships the

same and become fixtures in the communities. Mr. Parks asked if there will be technicians in the area daily. Mr. Kramer explained they will have technicians that work from home and they will have local technicians respond to service. Mr. Parks also asked about the service call response time. Mr. Kramer explained that next day installs are available and for repairs if someone calls before noon it should be same day service and if they call after 12 noon it would be next day. Mr. Constable asked who will be handling the billing. Mr. Kramer replied they will do their own billing.

Mr. Constable asked if Altafiber will compete with Spectrum.

Spectrum monthly bill is \$80-\$90.

Lowest 300x300 \$40-\$50 is the best package you can get out here. The three-year fix package is \$60.00

### **Minutes**

It was moved by Mr. Hopkins and seconded by Mrs. Lewis to approve minutes from the November 9<sup>th</sup> regular meeting, November 14, 15, and 17<sup>th</sup> 2023 special meeting minutes.

Vote: Yea – Mr. Brumbaugh, Mr. Garner, Mr. Gephart, Mr. Hopkins, Mrs. Lewis, Mr. Parks  
Nay – None

### **Motion Passed**

### **Bills and Reallocations**

It was moved by Mr. Parks and seconded by Mrs. Lewis to approve the current Bills and Reallocations.

Vote: Yea – Mr. Brumbaugh, Mr. Garner, Mr. Gephart, Mr. Hopkins, Mrs. Lewis, Mr. Parks  
Nay- None

### **Motion Passed**

### **Committee Reports**

**Finance Committee** – Don Gephart stated that the next finance meeting is on 12/28/2023, at 6:00 p.m.

**Safety & Service** – Nothing to Report.

**Cemetery** – Tom Lee stated the solicitor is working on documents that the Cemetery Board submitted and they should be ready by the December 28<sup>th</sup> council meeting.

### **Old Business**

Mayor Carman reported on the Resolution 2023.018. This is a resolution renewing the lease agreement entered into between Village of Blanchester and Blanchester Senior Citizens, Inc., located at 707 N. Broadway Street. This is the third and final reading.

It was moved by Mr. Hopkins and seconded by Mr. Gebhart to approve first reading of Ordinance 2023.018. The ratification needs to be signed by the seniors, board and council.

Vote: Yea – Mr. Brumbaugh, Mr. Gephart, Mr. Hopkins, Mrs. Lewis  
Nay – Mr. Garner, Mr. Parks

### **New Business**

2023.023 Resolution establishing New Fund 2905 Department of Justice Grant (100k), Grant will be used to purchase vehicles and technology updates.

It was moved by Mr. Gephart and seconded by Mr. Hopkins to approve establishing first reading of Ordinance 2023.023.

Vote: Yea – Mr. Brumbaugh, Mr. Garner, Mr. Gephart, Mr. Hopkins, Mrs. Lewis, Mr. Parks  
Nay – None

### **Motion Passed**

Due to not having a template for this fund, the solicitor will approve the language before document is sent to the auditor. Council has entered into motion to allow this process in order to prevent having to schedule another meeting.

It was moved by Mr. Hopkins and seconded by Mr. Brumbaugh to approve solicitor to proofread Resolution 2023.023.

Vote: Yea – Mr. Brumbaugh, Mr. Garner, Mr. Gephart, Mr. Hopkins, Mrs. Lewis, Mr. Parks  
Nay – None

### **Motion Passed**

### **Department Reports**

**Solicitor** – Mr. Barbieri reported that the ratification of the Senior Citizen Lease must be signed by the senior board and council at the same time.

Mr. Barbieri also reported that the Ohio House recently permitted local municipalities to ban local dispensaries from selling marijuana. You can choose to by majority of vote prohibit or limit the number of adult cannabis operators within uncooperative territory municipalities. Blanchester has a choice to prohibit or zone pacific designated areas to have dispensaries.

Mayor Carman replied that Jeff is going to get with the county for direction. Councilman Reilly stated we can prohibit dispensaries until we get further guidance. This would have to be placed

on an ordinance. Council Gephart mentioned that the village can't get tax money if dispensaries are prohibited in the Village.

Mr. Parks mentioned he would rather do what ever was signed by the governor. The solicitor stated that as of December 6<sup>th</sup> municipalities are allowed to prohibit dispensaries.

Mayor Carman asked Chief Houghton his thoughts on this process. Chief Houghton concerns with the selling cannabis is that what Colorado and Michigan sees is the increase of fatal accidents. The cannabis stays in the system longer.

Paul Jackson expressed his opinion that people will travel outside the village to other dispensaries and then bring it back to the village. Tom Lee stated he wants something to protect the children at outside events. Chief mentioned whatever the village gets here will highly regulated by the state. He imagines it will have a lot of restrictions.

Mr. Constable commented about the revenue that they were going to be tax 15%. He wonders how much Blanchester will get. Mayor Carman replied the same as we get for the lottery and gambling which is none. Mr. Parks asked they could vote on percentage of tax. Mayor Carman responded those are questions we need to ask.

It was moved by Mr. Hopkins and seconded by Mrs. Lewis to have the solicitor move forward with creating a temporary moratorium ordinance.

Vote: Yea – Mr. Brumbaugh, Mr. Garner, Mr. Gephart, Mr. Hopkins, Mrs. Lewis, Mr. Parks  
Nay – None

### Motion Passed

**Parks** – Mr. Paul Jackson spoke about the 2024 events. The gym construction has started, but they can't move forward until everything is moved out.

Councilman Hopkins asked if a deadline can be determined for departments to move rooms in order to free up space. Tom Lee announced that the Parks is giving up the second-floor office.

**Police** – Chief Houghton reviewed last month's activity. They had 222 calls for the month of November, made seven arrests, 1,323 business check, and 5500 miles patrolled. They did K9 security sweep at the high school. They had a meeting with Brightview and Chamber of Commerce annual dinner, Det. Jeffers was a nominated for an award and she attended a class for collaboration for better outcome sexual assault responses. Lt. and Chief attended a use of forces legal standards in real life application training class and all of the staff has completed the state minimum and CPT hours and they have done extra hours. Chief, Lt., and Det. Jeffers visited Clinton County Resource Center to offer their assistance. Chief mentioned the resource center may have children available to volunteer for work. They have participated in firearms training, coffee with Chief, Chief's meeting, EMA meeting and they are working on an end of the year report. They are looking into implementing a CAD system which will help to identify all calls. Chief is looking for the levy to be put on the May ballot. His question was during the finance meeting if the levy fails the police department will be cut by 40%. Chief announced he would be the first to be cut because we promised people jobs. His second question if the May levy fails can they place the levy back on the November levy. He wants to ensure officer that everything is being done to retain jobs. Chief reported they obtained \$17,400 in trust fund which will be used

to improve upstairs area. Improvements will include new carpet, creating training room/community room for the public and neighborhood watch.

**Street** – Paul Daniels reported the leaf machine has been put up, so all leaves must be bagged to be picked up. The bucket van will have an inspection on the boom and hydraulics. The street department ordered a new material called qua-fault cold patch material. They tried it in several pot holes and will decide if it will be a cold patch replacement. Stone and aggregate material is due to increase 12% in 2024. Mr. Daniels also mentioned he is happy with his current crew.

**Zoning** – Nothing to report.

**Fiscal** – Nothing to report

**Mayor** – Police department obtained a quote for replacing a few windows. Training room window, patrol room, and the copy room. John Hill confirmed that the copy room window needs to be replaced. The prices will be going up in January 2024, so a decision needs to be made. The funds would be generated from lands and buildings. Mayor’s recommendations would be to move forward with the quote.

It was moved by Mr. Hopkins and seconded by Mrs. Lewis to move forward with the obtained window quote. Mr. Hopkins also motioned to get pricing for the fiscal office windows too.

Vote: Yea – Mr. Brumbaugh, Mr. Garner, Mr. Gephart, Mr. Hopkins, Mrs. Lewis, Mr. Parks  
Nay – None

### **Motion Passed**

### **Executive Session**

Enter Executive Session for the purpose of items under Ohio Revised Code 121.22 G1 – To consider the appointment, employment, dismissal, discipline, promotion, demotion, or compensation of a public employee or official, or the investigation of charges or complaints against a public employee or official.

**Present in Executive Session:** Mayor Carman, Mr. Brumbaugh, Mr. Garner, Mr. Gephart, Mr. Hopkins, Mrs. Lewis, Mr. Parks, solicitor, and Carla Flannery, Interim Fiscal Officer.

It was moved by Mr. Parks and seconded by Mr. Brumbaugh to enter to executive session at 8:21p.m.

Vote: Yea – Mr. Brumbaugh, Mr. Garner, Mr. Gephart, Mr. Hopkins, Mrs. Lewis, Mr. Parks  
Nay – None

### **Motion Passed**

**Mayor Carman asks for motion to come out of executive session.**

It was moved by Mrs. Lewis and seconded by Mr. Gephart to come out of executive session at 8:51p.m.

It was moved by Mr. Hopkins and seconded by Mr. Gephart to extend offer to candidate.

Vote:     Yea – Mr. Brumbaugh, Mr. Garner, Mr. Gephart, Mr. Hopkins, Mrs. Lewis, Mr. Parks  
              Nay – None

**Motion Passed**

**Discussion Items:**

- Cross Roots \$450 3 to 4 logos proposal with unlimited edits. Mayor Carman asked how do we come up with something of ours. It would be nice to have something nice for our website. Councilman Hopkins asked Carla Flannery to speak about the website. She spoke about a Govsites Team Meeting that introduced their web design and how they can work with us to enhance our Village Website. Don Gephart mentioned a BlanPlan that was put together and would like to pick a logo that council likes. Mr. Parks mentioned making logos through ADOBE. He asked the Parks Attendees if they thought Paul Casteel would be interested in creating a logo. They replied that they can't answer for Mr. Casteel. Mr. Hopkins stated he thinks we need a professional website/logo.
  - Jeff Hurst suggested we get the school involved. Mayor Carman replied that was mentioned before. Councilwoman Lewis liked that idea.
  - Don Gephart asked Mrs. Lewis if she would volunteer to put contest together.
  - The criteria would need to demonstrate the history, future, and represent the community
  - Mayor Carman, Mr. Hopkins, Tom Lee, Jim Constable, John Hill agreed to donate a \$100 each towards a contest to a high school student first, second, third place
  - First Place \$300.00, Second Place \$150, Third Place \$50.00
  - Who will decide the winners? Community
  
- UDF – Street Parking-Mayor Carman brought up the previous council meeting discussion about removing all the parking in front of UDF or taking out the first spot closest to entrance to UDF on Broadway. Don Gephart stated he thought they were going to remove the last two spots closest to Cherry Street. It was decided to remove only one.
- He doesn't see any benefit for removing the first spot on Broadway. By removing the first spot next to the entrance on Broadway it gives a little more clearance from railroad tracks. Mayor Carman suggested to go with Chief's idea to make Broadway a one way.
  - It was moved by Mr. Hopkins and seconded by Mr. Parks to allow street department to black out the first parking spot next to next to Main Street by the UDF Broadway St entrance.

- Flooring-Mayor Carman needs to have a discussion with Jeff Hurst and James Bowling about which department is moving. He mentioned that the flooring on the second-floor needs replaced. Councilman Hopkins suggested to purchase the material and have an employee lay it. Paul Jackson disagrees that a new floor can be installed on top of the old material. John Hill got a quote from a carpet layer for \$1050 installed. Mayor suggested someone get the square footage and buy the flooring and have internal person install it. Mr. Hopkins asked to have the floors repaired in both rooms.
- Hiring a Village Administrator-Mayor Carman will have to research minutes about a motion to not bring up this subject again. Mr. Parks replied the motion was for chickens. Mr. Parks spoke about his email stating he wanted to make action on hiring an administrator. Mayor Carman told Mr. Parks to go ahead and make a motion.

It was moved by Mr. Parks and seconded by Mr. Garner to hire a village administrator. As a discussion how are we going to pay for a village administrator. Where is the money going to come from? Mr. Parks replied it will be split between multiple funds. Mr. Parks indicated it was the mayor's decision to determine pay rate. Mayor Carman replied council approves, he recommends. Mr. Parks stated it was discussed to pay an administrator \$55k. Mr. Carman asked if anyone knows what happens if an administrator is hired. Mr. Parks replied the administrator is in charge of all departments except for the police department. It was agreed that only the BPA Board would be dissolved if an administrator was hired. Mr. Hopkins asked Mr. Parks do you value this administrator more than the Board and do you think this person would do a better job than this board? Mr. Parks replied yes. Mayor Carman allowed Donna Johnson to speak on the subject. She explained that if an administrator is hired be prepared to give up the kilowatt tax. Mr. Constable disagreed. Mr. Hopkins asked for the administrator job description. Mrs. Lewis suggested the people to vote for an administrator. Mr. Parks then agreed with Mrs. Lewis and Mayor Carman stated then there should be a motion to put hiring a village administrator on the ballot.

Mr. Parks and Mrs. Lewis agreed.

It was moved by Mr. Parks and seconded by Mr. Garner to put hiring a village administrator on the ballot. Mr. Gephart reminded Mr. Parks of his first motion; therefore, Mr. Parks resend his first motion and made a second motion to put on ballot.

It was motioned by Mr. Parks and seconded by Mr. Garner to put the hiring a village administrator on the ballot before the people pending any legality of what the Ohio Revised Code or Board of Elections says.

Mr. Hopkins asked Mr. Brumbaugh for his opinion about hiring a village administrator. Mr. Brumbaugh replied he would very easily vote no. He has seen the BPA Board work and he believes there is some bitterness somewhere. Mr. Gephart offered his opinion about the BPA. He is very satisfied.



Vote: Yea – Mr. Garner, Mrs. Lewis, Mr. Parks  
Nay – Mr. Brumbaugh, Mr. Gephart, Mr. Hopkins, Mayor Carman

**Motion Failed**

It was moved by Mr. Hopkins and seconded by Mr. Parks that the meeting be adjourned at 9:23 pm.

Vote: Yea – Mr. Brumbaugh, Mr. Garner, Mr. Gephart, Mr. Hopkins, Mrs. Lewis, Mr. Parks  
Nay – None

**Motion Passed**

Approved: December 28, 2023

Mayor: John M. Carman

Attest: Carl J. Flannery

