



2025 Summer General Assembly Village Caucus Notes Friday, August 8, 2025

Call to Order/Welcome/Introductions – The Village Caucus met on Friday, August 8, 2025, at 8:45 a.m. in Heritage Hall Room 151 at the Owens Community College Toledo area campus in Perrysburg, Ohio. Quinton Babcock, mayor of Oak Harbor Village and the caucus moderator, called the meeting to order and welcomed everyone present. Introductions were made around the room.

Caucus members in attendance included:

Quinton Babcock (Moderator), Mayor, Village of Oak Harbor
Josh Bender, Village Administrator, Village of North Baltimore
Bob Bethel, Village Administrator, Village of Holland
Rich Bingham, Mayor, Village of Whitehouse
Dave Borer, Mayor, Village of Fayette
Mason Davis, Economic Development Specialist, Village of North Baltimore
Joshua Hartbarger, Deputy Administrator/COO, Village of Whitehouse
Brittney Klockowski, Council Member, Village of Weston
Heather Phillips, Council Member, Village of Ottawa
Shannon Shulters, Administrator, Village of Swanton
Bryan Stambaugh, Village Administrator, Village of Fayette

Other guests in attendance included:

Tim Bock, Principal, OHM Advisors
Michelle Carpenter, Client Representative, OHM Advisors
Lauren Ewing, Admin Assistant, Collier Engineering & Design
Victoria Martinez, Funding Specialist, Kleinfelder
Paulette Mills, Client Account Manager, Kleinfelder
Rob Vela, Director, Collier Engineering & Design
David Zubenko, GIS Specialist, Fishbeck

TMACOG staff in attendance included:

Kari Gerwin, Director of Water Quality Planning
Yaw Kwarteng, Transportation Planner

Caucus Overview – Mayor Babcock gave an overview of the Villages Caucus and reviewed topics and issues to be discussed.

Discussion of Topics/Issues – Caucus members discussed the following topics:

Topic 1 – Legislative and Budget Updates

- The following Legislative and Operating Budget updates were highlighted by Mayor Babcock for their relevance to villages. Mayor Babcock provided a printed summary to all attendees.
 - New cybersecurity requirements
 - Increases the signature requirement for municipal and limited home rule township zoning
 - Creation of a Residential Development Revolving Loan Program

- Prohibitions on a state or local law enforcement agency from charging victims of a crime a fee for dash and body cam videos. Members expressed that this is a problem for villages due to the costs incurred to redact video with an outside contractor and the risk of a victim releasing unredacted footage to the public.
- Newly established the Ohio Election Integrity Commission and elimination of the Ohio Elections Commission
- Specifies definition of "record" under the Public Records Law
- Allows counties to offer a property tax exemption that would build on the existing state homestead exemption.

Topic 2 – Property Taxes

- Property Tax Veto updates were provided by Mayor Babcock - The following provisions were vetoed by Governor DeWine, but veto overrides are possible:
 - Elimination of replacement levies (as opposed to renewal levies)
 - The House overrode this particular veto. It is anticipated but ultimately unclear whether the Senate will do the same.
 - Allows county budget commissions to reduce millage on any voter-approved tax levy aside from a debt levy if the commission finds it reasonably necessary or prudent to avoid unnecessary, excessive, or unneeded property tax collections.
- Voters to approve income taxes to reduce property taxes. For providing property taxes relief, Mayor Babcock talked about options for a possible property taxes reduction, including increasing license plate dollars or any other innovative ways of raising revenue for villages. Whitehouse Mayor Rich Bingham asked whether raising income taxes is ideal, as it may overburden village residents, especially the most vulnerable. Weston Council Member Brittney Klockowski noted the pushback from RITA if certain village residents are charged less than others, so countermeasures need to be contemplated beforehand.

Topic 3 – Economic Development Issues

- Mayor Babcock raised the question whether any village has a facade grant. Mayor Bingham said the Village of Whitehouse has it, but village residents must apply and develop the facade in a predetermined development standards and requirements. Klockowski said the village has a downtown historic district where businesses can apply, but they must meet building/design requirements.
- How committee meetings are held was raised by Klockowski. Village of Weston has different committee meetings and thus takes a long period before issues are ultimately brought before council. Village of Fayette, Whitehouse and North Baltimore all have one meeting for all committees, effectively and efficiently reducing the amount of time for meetings.

Topic 4 – Other issues of interests or concerns

- Members expressed concerns about feral cats in their villages, highlighting risks and threats to humans and other animals. Mayor Babcock noted that Oak Harbor has an ordinance that prohibits feeding cats outside because of its potential contribution to feral cat populations. Other members, such as Weston and North Baltimore, have made efforts through ordinances and veterinary programs to improve the health of the outdoor cat population and reduce the impact on residents.

What legislative action might be helpful? – Mayor Bingham asked whether the state could help with ditch maintenance issues, with ditches in Lucas County experiencing issues of debris buildup and flooding. Efforts for grants from different sources have failed in the Village of

Whitehouse. Councilwoman Heather Philips, Village of Ottawa Hills, said they were able to acquire a grant from ODNR to clean ditches before Swan Creek because there was green space before the creek. Mayor Bingham suggested that there may be a role for TMACOG on this issue.

Questions for State Lawmakers Panel Discussion – The caucus chose two potential questions for the legislative panel discussion:

1. Primary question: There is a school of thought in the legislature that municipalities have alternate ways to generate revenue other than property taxes. However, this impacts certain urban populations. How do we address this without impacting vulnerable populations?
2. Back up Question: Is there a plan for the state to fill in the Federal budget cuts impacting communities?

New Business/Next Steps – Rob Vela, Colliers Engineering & Design, talked about Ohio Transportation Engineering Conference (OTEC) and the possibility of learning and discussing ditch maintenance issues with professionals. Village representatives were invited to attend the conference.

Adjourn – Mayor Quinton Babcock thanked everyone for attending the caucus and the session was adjourned.