



# THE VILLAGE OF —NELSONVILLE—

## Board Member Orientation

## WELCOME

Congratulations on being elected/appointed as a Village of Nelsonville board member. We welcome you and look forward to working with you. If we can be of assistance regarding questions and/or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact the Village clerk's office at 715-252-6386.

## PURPOSE OF ORIENTATION

The purpose of this orientation packet is:

- Assist you in becoming familiar with the workings of village government.
- Explain some of your duties and responsibilities.
- Walk you through the procedural functions of the village board meetings.

## MISSION STATEMENT

To promote an environment where the residents of the Village of Nelsonville can reside, work and play to the highest standards the community can achieve.

To give residents and employees of the Village of Nelsonville a voice by maintaining open communication with the board of trustees.

To provide the highest quality of service available and strive to maintain expenses at the most reasonable rates as possible.

## **OFFICE OF VILLAGE PRESIDENT/VILLAGE TRUSTEE**

The Nelsonville village board is made up of two trustees and a president. Board members serve 2-year staggered terms. Board members are elected on the first Tuesday in April and take office on the third Tuesday in April.

**The village president.** The village president shall be elected at the annual spring election in odd numbered years for a term of two (2) years.

The village president shall by virtue of his/her office be a trustee and presides at all meetings of the board, have a vote as a trustee and sign all ordinances, rules, bylaws, resolutions and commissions adopted or authorized by the board and all orders drawn on the treasury. The village president shall maintain peace and good order and see that the village ordinances are faithfully obeyed.

The village president shall vote on all matters in the same way other trustees vote. The president has the power to make motions, and to introduce ordinances, resolutions, and the like as any other trustee.

**Village Trustee.** The Village of Nelsonville shall have two (2) trustees in addition to the president, who is a trustee by virtue of his/her office as president. Board members serve 2-year staggered terms. Board members are elected on the first Tuesday in April and take office on the third Tuesday in April. Village trustees are able to make motions, take actions at meetings, oversee the functions of village government and work to make the best decisions for the entire village (not just a few residents with specific issues). Section 2019-03-5 of our local ordinances further describes the duties of the village board.

**Appointed Village Officials.** By local ordinance, appointed village officials include the clerk-treasurer and building inspector.

**Committees.** Committee members are established each year at the annual organizational meeting held after the 3<sup>rd</sup> Tuesday in April. The village president designates the members of each committee and commission and they are approved by the village board. The village clerk attends all meetings to take minutes, if needed. The Village of Nelsonville has established the following committees and commissions:

Zoning Board of Appeals	5 Citizen Members, 2 alternates
Planning Commission	1 Board Member 5 Citizen Members
Board of Review	Village president Village clerk 2 Board Members
Groundwater Protection Comm	1 Board Member 4 Citizen Members
Parks Commission	1 Board Member 4 Citizen Members (when possible)
Fire District Representative	1 Board or Citizen Member

## VILLAGE BOARD POLICIES

### 1. MEETINGS – REGULAR & SPECIAL

Regular village board meetings are held the 2nd Tuesday of each month at 6:30 pm. The village board president may call special meetings at his/her discretion. If such a meeting is called, the board will be notified and an agenda and packet will follow. Regular board meeting agendas and packets are available prior to each board meeting and are posted as according to state statute.

**All board members receive the same information for each board meeting. It is the responsibility of each board member to review the board meeting packet prior to each meeting.**

### 2. PRESIDING OFFICER

The village president shall preside at the village board meetings. The village president shall preserve order and decorum and decide all questions of order, subject to appeal to the village board.

### 3. AGENDAS/ORDER OF BUSINESS

The village president follows the agenda to his/her discretion. All printed agenda items must be addressed or tabled. No other items of business can be brought forward for discussion or action without being on the agenda.

If a board member has an issue that he/she would like on the agenda, discussion should be had with the clerk or the president to determine if it is appropriate to place on the agenda. If addressed with the clerk, he/she will consult with the president if the item should be added to the agenda. A meeting with the proper committee may precede full board discussion.

The order of business is followed by using Roberts Rules of Order.

### 4. OPEN MEETING LAWS AND PUBLIC RECORDS

All village meetings are subject to Wisconsin's Open Meeting Law. Meetings between any quorum of any Board, Committee, or Commission, must have their agenda properly posted to avoid violating the open meeting law. The village clerk posts all agendas needed.

**CAUTION** – These are violations of the open meeting laws:

**Walking Quorum:** This is a situation where one member talks to another member about village business. Then one of those members talks to a third member etc. This would be construed as a meeting – although not in person.

**Negative Quorum:** A negative quorum exists when members have discussed an item of business and reached a consensus (prior to a meeting) that they will vote against a particular measure, and that they have enough power together to prevent that measure from passing.

Virtually all records associated with village business are public record, including e-mail. Any interested person wishing to review such records can do so during normal working hours at the village clerk's office with a request in writing. Minutes of all village meetings are maintained at the clerk's office. All official acts, including ordinances and resolutions, are kept on file at the clerk's office.

### 5. CLOSED SESSIONS

Occasionally, there is a need to have a closed session during a board/committee meeting. The state has strict rules regarding closed sessions and only a few items are allowed to be discussed without the public being involved or included (see Chap. 19 of WI State Statute).

**Confidentiality is extremely important during and after closed sessions and should be strictly adhered to. Items discussed in closed session should not be shared with other persons outside the realm of the Board Room. All closed session documents should remain within the municipal building and should be disposed of in a proper manner.**

### 6. ETHICS

It is important that board members practice ethical actions. Each trustee shall take care to avoid any circumstances that may cause them to have conflict in carrying out the duties of the village

board; additionally, trustees shall avoid those situations in which there appears to be a conflict of interest.

A “conflict of interest” exists when there is a direct or indirect personal interest, generally of a financial nature, which is inconsistent with the proper performance of one’s official duties that would tend to impair one’s independence of judgment or action in the performance of official duties. When in doubt, **do what’s best for the village.**

No trustee shall use his or her position to obtain preferential treatment or obtain financial gain for him or herself or immediate family or for any business with which they are associated.

No trustee shall disclose or use inside information concerning the village to promote a private financial gain.

No trustee shall vote on any legislation in which he or she has a personal financial interest.

Public officials and employees are agents of public purpose and hold office for the benefit of the public. They are bound to uphold the Constitution of the United States and the Constitution of the State of Wisconsin, and to carry out impartially the laws of the nation, state and municipality, to observe in their official acts the highest standards of morality and to discharge faithfully the duties of their office regardless of personal considerations, recognizing that the public interest must be their prime concern.

## **GENERAL INFORMATION**

### **MAIL, AGENDAS, MEMOS, NOTICES, ETC.**

Communications with the village board members will be through e-mail or phone calls. Any correspondence received at the municipal building for board members will be delivered in a timely manner or delivered at the time of the next meeting.

Agendas and packets will be delivered through website publication.

### **MUNICIPAL CODE OF ORDINANCES**

The Municipal Code is a codification of all ordinances adopted by the Village of Nelsonville and is a guidebook to the rules and regulations of the village. The municipal code is on the village website at [www.villageofnelsonville.com](http://www.villageofnelsonville.com). A hard copy of all ordinances is kept in the clerk’s office. Village trustees should familiarize themselves with this resource.

### **CONSTITUENT’S CONCERNS**

Occasionally, residents may approach the village trustees with complaints or concerns re: employees, level of service provided, new ideas etc. Please direct any constituent’s concerns/problems to the village president or the village clerk.

### **WAGES FOR ELECTED OFFICIALS**

The current wage for village president is \$1500/annually and the current wage for village trustee is \$1000/annually. Board members are paid biannually.

## **AGENDA ITEM DEADLINE**

All regular board meeting agenda items should be submitted to the village president by 12:00 noon on the Monday prior to the board meeting (preferably earlier as we like to post the agenda well in advance of the meeting). The agenda is available on the village website. Committee meeting agendas will be created and distributed as soon as they are available.

## **“CITIZEN CONCERNS” LINE ITEM ON AGENDA**

This is the opportunity for citizens to address village board members. The board cannot act on any item raised. If an item of concern is raised, the board may add it to the following month’s agenda for further discussion and action.

## **AGENDA POSTINGS**

State statute and local ordinance dictates that all meeting agendas be posted in three locations. The agendas are physically posted in the display cases at the post office and village hall, and placed on the bulletin board at Judah Studios at least 24 hours prior to a meeting. The agenda will also be posted to the village website.

## **APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

Board minutes are considered “action minutes,” only detailing the action items of the board. The clerk takes minutes at every meeting and the minutes are approved at the next subsequent meeting. The minutes are considered “draft minutes” until formally approved at a board meeting. The **approved** minutes are public record and can be shared with anyone asking. They are filed in the clerk’s office and published on the village’s website.

## **BUDGETING, TAX BILLS, ASSESSMENTS**

The village board adopts an annual balanced budget each year. The village tax levy is determined after the annual budget has been approved. The village levy is then combined with levies supplied by the Tomorrow River School District, MATC, Portage County, and the State of Wisconsin, to generate the annual tax bill.

Budget preparation is a year-round event. Each area’s “wish list” is reviewed and discussed with the appropriate personnel. Adjustments are made as necessary, and when completed, the budget is presented for final approval. A public hearing is held to receive citizen input. Once the public hearing has been held, the village board approves the annual budget and sets the current year tax levy.

The village contracts with Jeremy Kurtzweil, Assessor for assessment services. The assessor values both new and remodeled residential and commercial/industrial properties in the village. Residents have an opportunity to contest their property assessments annually at the Board of Review. The Board of Review is held in May and can be adjourned until a later date, if necessary. Once the Board of Review has been held, the assessment role is adopted and maintained in the clerk’s office. The assessment roll is used to allocate real estate taxes within the village.

## **INSURANCE**

The village works with Spectrum Insurance Group to find the best insurance policies to meet the village’s needs. Property insurance coverage for the village is provided by MPIC (Municipal Property Insurance Company). Coverage for workers’ compensation is provided through United Heartland Insurance Company.

## **BUILDING INSPECTOR/ZONING ADMINISTRATOR**

The village's zoning administrator is Jay Gordon. He is responsible for issuing building permits for the village, answering questions of callers about the conditions that need to be met for permits to be issued, and other zoning-related items.

## **ELECTIONS**

Administration of annual elections is the responsibility of the clerk. In even numbered years there is a potential for four (4) elections, February, April, August and November; in odd numbered years there is a potential for two (2) elections, February and April.

## **ANNUAL AUDIT**

The village is not required to conduct an annual audit by state statute. Since the cost is prohibitive for a village of this size, the clerk-treasurer instead presents an accounting of all bank statements and expenses at the board meeting. Board members are encouraged to review these documents in detail regularly to satisfy the need for internal controls.

## **VILLAGE ATTORNEY**

The village does not contract with an attorney for legal assistance. The village directs legal questions to the attorneys at the League of Wisconsin Municipalities and the Wisconsin Towns Association.

## **PERSONNEL**

The village currently has only one staff position: clerk/treasurer. Additionally, the village hires as needed someone to mow the parks and shovel the walks around village hall.

## **CODE OF ETHICS FOR BOARD MEMBERS**

- I will be motivated primarily by an earnest desire to serve my municipality and the people of my community in the best way possible.
- I will attend all board meetings. I agree to notify the village board president or village clerk of any necessary absences.
- I will recognize the expenditure of municipal funds is a public trust, and I will strive to see that all such funds shall be expended efficiently, economically and for the best interest of the municipality.
- I will not use the municipality or any part of a municipal program for my own personal advantage or for the advantage of my friends and family.
- I will do everything possible to maintain the integrity, confidence and dignity of the office of a board member.
- I will listen to what other members of the village board and other individuals or groups may have to say before making final decisions.
- I will strive to avoid rancor and bitterness, to observe proper decorum and behavior, to encourage full and open discussions in all matters with my fellow members of the board, to treat them with respect and consideration and not withhold or conceal from them any information or matter in which they should be concerned.

- I will make no derogatory remarks, in or out of board meetings, about members of the board or their opinions, but I reserve the right to make honest and respectful criticism.
- I will recognize that authority rests with the board in legal session and not with individual members of the board.
- I will abide by majority decisions of the board once they are made and will accept and support them as long as I remain a member of the board.
- I will not discuss confidential business of the board in my home, on the street, or at my place of employment; the place for such discussions being the board meeting or committee meeting thereof.
- I will strive to keep informed on all local, state and national developments of municipal significance.
- I will consider it unethical to pursue any procedure calculated to embarrass a fellow board member, a member of the municipal staff, or another local government body.