

On December 3, 2025, the Village of Black Creek held a budget hearing for the 2026 budget. During the public comment period several people spoke of their desires from the Village Board. I want to apologize for not controlling the meeting properly. My biggest mistake was not telling people they could only speak once. Secondly a non-resident took the opportunity to speak. Thus, I had to allow other non-residents to speak. I apologize.

While most of the residents that attend Village meetings understand proper meeting etiquette, some believe they can speak at any time simply because they are taxpayers. Most monthly business meetings for the Village board have a public comment period. For committee meetings, it is up to the committee chair if there is a public comment period. Folks can only address an agenda item during the public comment period. The public comment period is not to be a question-and-answer period. The chair of the meeting can recognize folks to address the trustees. Other than that, the public should be respectful and allow the village trustees to conduct business. If attendees are allowed to ask multiple questions, meetings often go off track and become excessively long due to unrelated topics.

A common comment on December 3<sup>rd</sup> was that residents do not get answers to questions. I do not know specifically what questions have not been answered, so it is hard to draft a reply. As mentioned earlier, the village board can only address items on the agenda of a meeting. If a person has a question about something not on the agenda, the chair could add the item to another meeting agenda. Otherwise, it is encouraged for residents to contact village board members with their questions.

At the meeting people asked about growth in the village. The village is working on some growth opportunities. The details cannot be discussed until there is a commitment to the development. When and if that occurs, the board will have a meeting, and the public will know the details.

Folks were wondering what the future holds for the Village of Black Creek, if we are struggling financially. This is a common problem for small communities with a lack of growth. State tax levy laws do not allow the village to raise taxes beyond a set formula without a referendum. As many people know, inflation has been an issue for several years. Increased cost of products and services has impacted the budget greatly. Our tax levy does not allow for many of the projects we could do to maintain and improve the village infrastructure. The village must pick what we can do carefully every budget period.

Recently the village has been impacted by significant public works and utility projects. Most of these projects were done in concert with State DOT projects. Back-to-back projects will have an impact on the village for several years. The village budget, and especially the utility budget, has been impacted greatly by the debt from these projects.

Lastly, I wanted to address the conduct of folks at meetings and social media. For the most part residents conduct themselves well at our meetings. There have been occasions where an individual has disrupted meetings or defied the meeting chairs instructions. This is not necessarily a "Black Creek" issue. This is a common occurrence nationwide. While we all have free speech rights, there needs to be an acceptable level of civility at meetings. It is very difficult for a chair of a meeting to manage people who do not want to be managed. Rude and disruptive behavior is not acceptable. Meeting attendees cannot shout down or threaten trustees at a meeting. While trustees do have a duty to listen, they are human beings and your neighbors. We have family and friends that do not want us to be disrespected. We do this job because we care about the Village of Black Creek.

In recent years' social media has been a source of contention for me, trustees, and sadly our valued employees. Again, we have free speech rights. While I have generally become immune to unfair criticism of myself, our valued employees should not be a source of criticism regularly. Our staff take pride in their work.

I will occasionally post Village President updates on the Village of Black Creek website. I ask that readers engage respectfully, even if they disagree. Most residents seem to appreciate these efforts, though criticism is expected. For questions or concerns, please email or call me. Wishing everyone happy holidays and a fruitful New Year.

Andy Gleason