

White River Township Community Questions:

1. What is the agenda for White River Citizens United – who are you – what is your political affiliation?

Our agenda is clearly stated in our organizational mission statement:

We are dedicated to engaging with State, County, and City planning and governance bodies to:

Advocate for comprehensive land-use planning to manage growth

Assist governmental units in the preparation and enforcement of land-use plans

Lobby for necessary infrastructure to be in place in advance of further commercial and residential growth in the township

Represent the interests of township residents in preserving and enhancing their quality of life

Protect and enhance property values, advance public safety, and the creation of recreational space

We have no political affiliation and have never endorsed any candidates for political office.

2. How much will the various options cost? (Short-term and long-term)

Cost can be in dollars, time, and resources. Please refer to the last slide of the Crowe Horwath presentation given on September 22nd. This provides a relative comparison to the various options.

3. Will my taxes increase – if so, then how much?

We believe that any form of incorporation has the potential to increase property taxes. For purposes of our analysis, we have assumed a tax rate similar to that of Greenwood due to the economies of scale that would result from the creation of a town approximately the same size. Bargersville's current tax rate is higher than Greenwood's, but we believe that this would be reduced if the population of the town were to grow significantly. There are a number of dynamics that make forecasting property tax rates difficult. One major factor is the new property tax reform that was recently passed by the State that will result in a 1% cap on property taxes in 2010. Please review the WRCU presentation from September 22nd. This information will be updated once we get certified tax rates for 2007 – payable in 2008.

4. How long will the various options take?

Please refer to Crow Horwath presentation from September 22nd.

5. What will be different – what will I get for my higher taxes if we do some form of incorporation?

There are both benefits and concerns associated with incorporation. Some of those include the following: Benefits - Residents gain local control of issues / A town council can enact and enforce ordinances / Public services may be improved / A town has the ability to garner revenues / Economic development opportunities may be enhanced / Community identity can be maintained. Concerns - With authority comes responsibility / County government may actually cut back on services / Residents will pay higher taxes / The municipality must respond to state and federal mandates

6. Who will make the decision about incorporation?

Depending on the option, if there is a merge, then the White River Township Board and the legislative bodies of the appropriate municipality(s) make the initial decision, and anything that they approve then goes to a public vote.

For an annexation, it is determined by the legislative body of the city / town doing the annexation.

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For self incorporation, a steering committee would need to be formed. Approvals would need to be obtained by the County Commissioners and from the legislative bodies of all Class 2 or Class 3 cities within 3 miles. Please see Crowe Horwath presentation for more details.

7. How are the schools impacted?

School districts are completely separate and are not impacted by incorporation.

8. Will there be any changes to my fire protection?

Fire districts are completely separate and are not impacted by incorporation.

9. Will I still pay County and Township property taxes?

Yes, you will continue to pay County and Township taxes. However, those tax rates may be decreased since the County will not incur the expense of providing certain services.

10. What can the County or the Township do today to improve my roads, provide local parks, or trails?

The current administration of the Johnson County Highway Department has rated all the county grid and subdivision roads, and is now beginning to address these issues to the best of their ability with a very limited budget.

The county has no policy on building trails aside from trails contained in county owned parks-Johnson County Park and Independence Park. To the best of our knowledge, the township government has not formed a township parks/trails dept. to construct trails or form a trails master plan for the township. Without a township parks dept. it is very difficult to apply for federal or state funding. The last WRT grant was for the Safe Routes to School, a federal funding program and INDOT dispenses the funds. The county government or a municipality had to be the applicant. Township governments have to fund their own parks, trails with their budget and donations.

11. What happens if things just stay the way they are?

Maintaining status quo really amounts to a form of selective annexation for our current situation. There is a very high risk of selective annexations that over time will make some residential areas isolated and without any means to effect changes they may want. Since they will have no governance voice getting police, highway and other services will become increasingly difficult.

12. How do I get greater representation in local government?

County representation will not change. To achieve greater local representation in land use, planning and zoning, highways, police protection, etc, some form of incorporation will be required.

13. What is the County Executive?

The County Commissioners are the executive and the legislative bodies for the County

14. What % of population in WRT is already annexed?

From the WRCU presentation of Sept. 22 (Johnson County Incorporated Area Map) it is possible to estimate the area of Greenwood that lies in WRT to be about 1/5th. Thus, one could approximate that 1/5th of the Greenwood population and assessed value lies in WRT.

15. What % of assessed value in WRT is already annexed?

See the answer to #14 above

16. If an area is already annexed, can it be annexed into a new entity?

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It is not possible for a newly formed Town to “take back” any areas that have been previously annexed by another municipality. While it may be possible for a City or Town to de-annex an area, from a practical point of view, this is probably not possible.

17. Class 2 or Class 3 city? Do we need permission from Indianapolis or other municipalities to be self-incorporated?
Commissioners must obtain consent by ordinance from the legislative body of Indianapolis and Greenwood.
18. Is the property owner one vote and what about developers? If they have an undeveloped subdivision with several hundred platted lots, do they receive a vote for each lot?
From a general election or referendum perspective, one person has one vote. With respect to property owners in an annexation situation, there is one vote per plot.
19. In the case of the self-incorporation, who is involved in the approval process?
The County Commissioners vote to approve a petition for self incorporation. In that the County Commissioners are the executive branch of the government for the entire county, they would consider the benefit of the entire county in their decision.
20. Property taxes in 2010 on an average home in WRT would increase by \$329 if WRT incorporates. What are the assumptions?
Assumptions: 1) A city tax rate of 0.623, 2) A county tax rate of 1.66 which considers the Center Grove School general fund is paid by the state, and other tax districts per the 2007/2008 uncertified tax rates, 3) 1% property tax
21. How does the potential economic development of I-69 affect any of these options?
The Director of the Johnson County Economic Development Corporation is addressing this question as a result of a WRCU inquiry. When this information is available, it will be posted on our web site. It is expected that this corridor should contain the same economic benefits to our community as the I-65 corridor provides to Greenwood today.
22. Is the .623 - \$329 / year Greenwood tax rate X 2 what a person of a \$340,000 home will pay?
Because of the 1% cap in the new property tax laws, and the effects of homestead and mortgage exemptions, the cost of incorporation is not a linear calculation. Our estimate is that the increase for a \$340,000 home would be approximately \$116 / year.
23. Do we know the comparison on the \$329 if WRT incorporates or merges with GW or BV?
This estimate is based on uncertified tax rates – 2007 payable in 2008. The Greenwood rate was used since it is the lowest of any of the surrounding communities and is approximately the same size as White River Township.
24. What is the start up costs to self-incorporate?
Self incorporation start up costs would depend on services offered and how much was done by volunteer resources. The process is detailed both in the White River Citizens United presentation and the Crowe Horwath presentation. One way to finance expenditures before tax revenue is available is bond financing and with out previous bonding it would be difficult and the cost higher.
25. Are there barriers in the merger or self-incorporation to stop any more annexation to Bargersville or Greenwood?
If both were involved in the merger process, it is reasonable to assume that those municipalities saw the benefits to be achieved by that process and that annexation was not needed.
26. Cash income streams to finance the self incorporation will be one year behind due to the tax collection process.

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A newly incorporated town will not receive any property tax revenues until June and December of the year following the year of incorporation if the incorporation ordinance was passed in a January or February. If passed in any other month, distributions may not occur until the year after the following year.

27. Can we contract with the sheriff and highway to provide services temporarily?

Yes, it is possible to structure inter-local agreements between the new incorporated town and Johnson County to continue to provide services. The level of service and the costs would need to be determined.

28. What are the differences between the town of Bargersville and the City of Greenwood?

All incorporated bodies are initially towns. Towns have a town council and the president of the town council is normally the administrative executive. A city has a mayor and a city council for their executive and legislative branches.

29. Is the merger act more like a peaceful annexation?

Yes. Services and timing are negotiated in a merger before final approval by the general public in a referendum vote. They are approved by the legislative bodies of all areas included as well.

30. If Greenwood and Bargersville annex, can we do anything?

Yes, but it is a difficult process of remonstrance. Please refer to Crow Horwath presentation from September 22nd.

31. Does a new city have to provide sewers in 3 years to all its residents?

That is true for an annexation situation. For a merge agreement, the timing on those services is negotiable.

32. If our township wants to self-incorporate, could Greenwood or Bargersville stop us?

Greenwood has the legal right to stop anything within three miles of its incorporated boundary. Because Bargersville is a town and not a city, it does not apply.

33. Do we get representation with voluntary annexation?

Depending on the size of the annexation, re-districting of the town or city councils could be required. In addition, the annexed party would then be able to vote for their local representatives in the next general election.

34. What can we do about St. Rd. 135's safety record?

WRCU has campaigned vigorously with Johnson County, Greenwood, and Indiana Dept. of Transportation for compliance with accepted standards on highway configuration. It is a complicated interaction between developers, and city and state standards and jurisdictions that impede a "quick fix". It is anticipated that with incorporation will come the political voice and influence to alter some of those impediments.

35. How does I-69 relate to the do nothing choice? If Greenwood and Bargersville want to develop the I-69 corridor, will the center of the township be left behind?

If we accept the status quo, that is a very likely outcome. This is the conclusion reached by the Indiana University study directed by Professor Paul Friga.

36. What is our guarantee our tax revenue will not go east of Greenwood if we merge with Greenwood? And, if we merge with Bargersville will our tax revenue stay in our township?

There would be a re-districting of the City Council to include representation for the annexed area. State statute provides that the incremental tax funds generated by the annexed area may be used for services in the annexed area for a period of 3 years. By that time there would have been at least one election cycle and representation would be achieved which would be able to influence the equitable distribution of tax revenues.

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37. If we did a merger with Greenwood, which would take us from a class 3 city to a class 2 city, what impact would that have on the taxes?

Per conversation with the Indiana Association of Cities and Towns, Greenwood could become a Class 2 city today. The requirements to be a class 2 city are a population of greater than 35,000 and to pass an ordinance. While the primary change between a class 2 and a class 3 is structural, there are some special tax treatments for class 2 cities that are not available to class 3 (the same is also true for class 1 cities compared to the other two). These have to do with unique situations like riverfront developments, number of available liquor permits, etc. At this time, we are not able to determine any specifics that would reduce the tax payer impact.