



HSVPOA GM Hale Discusses Village Relationship With Government

Description

GM Hale desires to help the Village; Building a relationship with county governments; GAC focuses on the big picture

Note: I am still trying to catch up. This article is a report on a conversation at a GAC meeting from a few weeks ago. Even though it is a little dated, I felt it is important as it will give Villagers some more introductory insight into General Manager, Kelly Hale's, position on a few things. The GM is on the same page as the Governmental Affairs Committee in regards to working out a way to bring into the Village some of the tax money which currently goes to the surrounding areas. Even though Villagers pay substantial taxes, Hot Springs Village does not receive any of this tax money back.

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Hale is New Guy and is Pleased to Serve on GAC

Hale: "I am the new guy. I am not even going to pretend to act like I know what's going on. I have a lot to learn."

Hale: "You will learn that I am about as honest as the day is long and I speak what's on my mind. I tell people all the time, that I interact with, 'you may not like what I got to tell you. But I won't lie or cheat you.' I just try to incorporate those beliefs into what we do all the time."

Hale Speaks About Relationship with County Governments

Hale: "I believe our ability to have good relationships with the counties; we've got to be good public citizens. I worked for a large corporation for my entire career. I spent almost 37 years working for UPS. I came to work for them right out of high school. They groomed a lot of the behavior and learning business. I spent a lot of time working with local, state, federal authorities because when you work in a community, you have to learn to do business and get along. When you need help with zoning or when you interact with them, you need each other. It's a partnership, is the way I learned to work with

governments because businesses provide jobs and tax dollars for those communities and they give us the opportunity to work within their communities to support. It's a hand-in-hand relationship. [GM Hale said he is in agreement with the GAC's position in regards to working to bring in tax money into the Village.]

GM Hale Loves the Village and Wants to Help

Hale: "I've been coming down here for about five years. My mom's lived down here. That is the reason I relocated and moved when I retired. I've been looking from the outside in. So I would come down and travel the area. I am originally from Northeast Louisiana. I grew up in [Bastrop](#), Louisiana over there in Delhi and Oak Grove. I have family all over Arkansas. I've been coming down to this area for a long time. I love it down here. I love living in the Village."

Hale: "Although I may be the General Manager, I am a member of this community. I told the Board I would like to take this position to help out the Village because I still had some more tread on my tires and I need something to do until I get into that full golf-time mode. But, I've already spent a career – a very hard running career, like many of you have. But I want to help. I didn't need to work. I wanted to work. I just want to make sure everybody is with me on that."

GM's Stance on Property and Sales Taxes

Hale: "Just a few things. My thoughts on the conversation are this: We as a community are in our 52nd year now. We've been contributing to the Saline and Garland Counties for 52 years. We've got over 9,000 improved lots that pay property taxes annually, plus another 12,000, roughly, unimproved lots that pay taxes annually to the tune of about \$25 to \$30 million a year – ballpark. I don't know how close my number is, but I bet I am somewhere in that ballpark just based upon thumbnailing some of what I pay in."

Hale: "When you live in a county or a community you have certain expectations as a taxpayer contributing in. Where I was living before in Northern Indianapolis, I lived in a community that was more of a rural community. The city I lived in, you had to pay a city tax because it wasn't fair to the people that lived out in the rural area to pay more."

Hale: "In a comparable model when you take a look at what we have here for the Village, we take care of our own things. Normally a county or a state would give you fire, police, roads, sewer systems. We have all that, already. We are self sufficient. We already take care of all that. But yet we contribute all this money into the state and the counties, through not only property taxes, but through all the other taxes. Sales tax when we go into Hot Springs or Benton. Sales tax from – even money that is spent inside the fenceline."

Hale: "I believe someone was talking about money going to the jails. A lot of our citizens here, our members in the community, they are not committing crimes and contributing into that spend that is going on there."

Hale: "A lot of our people that live here, and I don't have the facts, but I am just going to use my own model, myself personally. They don't travel on a lot of the roads except maybe a couple, three, four times a month. They go to the doctor or go to town for groceries, like I do. But most of the wear and

tire on their tires is inside the fence line of the Village. I could be wrong, but comparatively living outside the Village, I am going to work and back home every day. I am going to school, back to home every day. So I am putting more wear and tear on the structure outside the Village. We aren't putting that wear and tear out there in the communities. We contribute a lot of money to the counties and to the school districts and I don't know what we've gotten back. I think that is the just of the conversation that people were talking about."

Hale: "Especially when I take a look at Highway 5, that runs between the East Gate and going into Hot Springs, it doesn't look like it has been repaired since the Village was built. Now I know that is not true. But they are pretty rough."

Hale: "I got into this conversation with someone, they were talking about, 'but look what all they are doing'. Yes, [Highway] 7 has been fixed. We put in the bypass, which is going to be great. They are making improvements on Highway 5. But those are just in the last five to ten years. And its good. They are doing it. My point being is, what are we getting back in return, I think is what a lot of you folks were talking about, if we're going to pay as much as everyone else, maybe Hot Springs needs a city tax to help fund some of these other things? But the people in the Village maybe be shown that we can get two to three percent less than what the county tax is on the property tax that is, just because we don't drain from the other system. Something to make the people here feel good about what we have. It is what it is. You live in a state; you live in a county; you're going to have to pay your fair share."

Hale: "I just think that with the people here in the Village with the business model we have, are probably paying more than our fair share as residents within the fenceline. That is just my opinion. It may not be the opinion of the POA, itself. But I believe that was the conversation I was listening to that many of you were commenting on."

Hale: "We have a lot here that we can talk about and I believe that we do have a a strong vote to get out there to educate people on, on how we support that. Our roads in our communities are very important. No two ways about it. But I do agree with a lot of the comments that were made on, what are we as Villagers getting back in return – to be able to show that what we are paying in is really being used in the right areas. Just my observations from being here for a very short time and listening to everybody here on the call."

Hale: "Greg [Jones], I'd like to thank you for the introduction and that's kind of where I am at with this. I am a business person. I believe that the Village needs to be ran as a business. We can't raise taxes. I've got assessments, but that's a different story. We have an aging Village here right now that I am doing some analysis on. I need all your help, with your experience, along with many of my other Members here that live in the community to help advise me and guide me on some things."

GM Hale Does Not Believe in Debt

Hale: “We’ve got a lot of work here. We’ve got to replace things – sewer systems, water treatment, culverts, water lines – things that our infrastructure needs as well. Really, that is where a lot of our focus is right now. But it’s a business and businesses don’t take on debt. I am big on not having debt. If you want to know how I am. I believe in, we need to take care of it because you never know what tomorrow is going to bring...

Jones Agrees With Hale

Greg Jones: (Note: Jones was Chair of the GAC at the date of this meeting.) Jones said he agrees with Hale. “You talk about sewer systems and water systems. Those are things the federal government is giving the state a lot of money to improve, with the infrastructure bills that have been passed in Congress. Like you said, ‘how do we get our fair share of that and feel like we are part of the solution, as well?’”

Role of the GAC

Jones explained that the GAC doesn’t interact with Staff or do the types of things that a lot of the HSVPOA Committees do. “We look at it from a much broader perspective. We try to be the interface to our state and local county government officials and we have many of those actually on our committee as de facto ex-officio members. They attend every month.”

Jones: “Sam Sacco, who is a Member on our committee as well, coordinates some of the legislative affairs. He is our Legislative Affairs person on the GAC. He has very constant communications with folks around what is going on with the legislature and what is happening when they are in session, things like that, as well.”

Jones: “We try the best we can to focus on those things that are of importance to us as a whole for the Village and not just looking at what I would call simpler kinds of tasks. We focus on bigger picture items, like the [Economic Impact \[Study\]](#) and how we can use that to sell our Village to the state and local government officials – get some of the money that I think we certainly deserve.”

CHERYL DOWDEN, Hot Springs Village People Gazette, March 14, 2022

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