

Michael Yetter Oral History Transcription

Interviewee: Michael Yetter

Interviewers: Jenifer Baker (Deputy Archivist), Tori Roberts (Archives Technician)

Date of Interview: 27 June 2019

List of Initials: JB = Jenifer Baker, TR = Tori Roberts, MY = Michael Yetter

Transcriber: Ted Hitchens (Records Specialist)

[Begin transcript 00:00:01]

JB: So today is June 27th. My name is Jenifer Baker. I am the Deputy Archivist with Warren County Records Center and Archives. I am here with Tori Roberts who is our archives assistant.

TR: Sure...

JB: Um, we are in our conference room so you might hear some background noise from our elevator. Today we are interviewing Mike Yetter, so I'll give him a chance to introduce himself.

MY: I'm Michael Yetter, Warren County zoning inspector.

JB: Okay. First we're going to get some background information and then we will move onto questions specific about Warren County.

MY: Okay.

JB: Okay. So when and where were you born?

MY: I was born in Dayton, Ohio and lived in Lebanon all my life.

JB: Do you remember when you moved to—? Or, have you—?

MY: I've always lived in Lebanon.

JB: Okay. That's-- That's good... Okay, so um, you grew up in Lebanon. When did you – um – what schools did you go to when you were here?

MY: I went to Lebanon High School, started out in the old school on Pleasant Street and moved from there to Louisa Wright in '63 I believe. Was one of the first classes out of the fifth grade- out of the sixth grade at Louisa Wright and then graduated from the new high school – Lebanon's high school on Miller Road – in '71. We were the second class out of that school.

JB: Okay. And then um, can you give us just a little bit of background? Did you have any post-high school education?

MY: No, just high school graduate.

JB: Okay. And then what jobs have you had prior to working for Warren County?

MY: What jobs have I had since I was been working at Warren County?

JB: Yeah.

MY: Well, I have rental properties that I had, you know, during the time that I've been employed here. I haven't done any extra jobs; I've solely worked for Warren County since 2003.

JB: Okay ... so 2003 ... And then, have you always worked in the zoning department?

MY: Since I've been with the county, yes.

JB: Okay. And then, have these departments always been in the administration building?

MY: They've always been here since I started in 2003.

JB: Do you have any background on the zoning department of where it might have been located prior?

MY: Prior to that, it was located at the Silver Street location in the administration building. They were part of the building department – the Warren County Building Department – so we're just a branch of them. And I actually did building inspections when I started working here too, so I did both. I did zoning and building inspections.

JB: Okay. And then, so what was the county like when you started versus now?

MY: Well things were pretty busy when I first started. We were going through the building boom and I spent the majority of my time when I first started I spent on building inspections and just violations inspections with the zoning department. In 2008, Barry Sullivan – that was the supervisor for the Zoning Department at the time – passed away. And that was- that was the time I took over the zoning inspector's role solely, so I didn't do any building inspections after that.

JB: And just little background for people who aren't familiar with what type of inspections that your department is in charge of – because honestly, I'm not one-hundred percent. Um, so what type of inspections- was it private properties or commercial properties or county properties that you—?

MY: We did inspections on everything that had to do with zoning and enforce junk violations, anything that would be considered blighted properties to help maintain the property values in the five townships that we do zoning for. The other six townships do their own zoning and they also do the same type of work that we do. But we issue zoning permits; we maintain a violation log that averages anywhere between 70 to 120 cases a year throughout the five townships and then we also review subdivisions through the platting process. There are several different functions. We take people through processes if they want to rezone their property; if they want to do a conditional use on their property. All non-residential projects go to the Board of County Commissioners for review and approval. And then we have variances – if someone needs to obtain a variance for a waiver, you might say, for a setback or something dimensional on a property that they can't meet due to certain conditions.

JB: Okay, that helps a lot – clear up the confusion. What townships are you doing the building and zoning?

MY: We do Franklin, Turtlecreek, Union, Washington, and Harlan Townships.

JB: Okay. And then the other ones are in charge of their own?

MY: And then the other ones do their own, yes.

JB: Okay. And then what are some of your daily tasks and duties, like your normal work day?

MY: Answering the phone, helping people get through the process, helping people make applications, approving zoning permits for new construction, subdivision reviews – pretty much the same things that we do and we do those pretty much daily.

JB: Yeah we were up there yesterday and they told us the phone rings frequently, so we- an oral history would not work up there, so... (MY: No). Um, so what are some of the highlights of your time with the county?

MY: Well we- we did a zoning code and map amendment that was a five-year project that was completed in January of 2012. That was quite an undertaking – rewriting the entire zoning code – and we were able to complete that task finally and get approved for it. The final approval went through the Warren County Commissioners that amended it and accepted the maps for the zoning changes that we had put in place. That was probably the biggest thing. The next thing was Union Village – was a very large project that we did. It was the biggest project that we had done after San Mar Gale and San Mar Gale ended up being rezoned back to just residential property and never came to fruition. Union Village is moving forward. We have the first phase of Union Village in for review right now and we're about ready to do the final approval on it so it can be platted and they can start construction.

JB: And for people who don't know what Union Village is, can you give us a little bit of background?

MY: Union Village is a branch of Otterbein Homes. It is on the east side of 741 (*state route*). Will be- it was approved for 4,500 units – housing units along with commercial office and residential spaces.

JB: And that's part of the retirement home, correct? Or is this part going to be it's own—?

MY: The Union Village project itself is multigenerational, but Otterbein does still maintain their senior living on the west side of 741. And they will accord some of their senior living on the east side as well as the project moves forward.

JB: Okay. And then, are there any memorable projects that you've helped with over the years?

MY: Uh, there's been a lot of projects (*group laughter*). San Mar Gale was quite a big undertaking. We reviewed three different plans for that particular site. That was referendum and went to vote which had failed, so the original project got approved by the county commissioners that was- that was moving forward—

JB: Can you give us a little bit of background on what that project was?

MY: That project was for 2,150 home sites out in Turtlecreek Township on the east side of Lebanon and it was 3,365 acres for this project, so it was quite a large project. And it went through approval – it got approval – but one of the conditions of approval was they had to secure their sewage service systems within two years after the approval. The economy when downhill after 2006 after it was approved and they were unable to secure their sanitary sewer contract, so the property ended up being rezoned back to its original use for residential.

JB: Was your department involved in the building of the new casino?

MY: Yes we were.

JB: Anything interesting about that?

MY: That was- that- that project came on the heels of the zoning text rewrite and the map amendment. That was- that was actually property that the state owned; it was part of the prison property that the state was willing to sell off 120 acres and the project took quite some time and quite some planning to get into place, and but we were able to secure that and get approvals for that during the time that I was with the county.

JB: Do you remember what years that took place by chance?

MY: I believe that was 2012 and construction was completed in 2013 I believe.

JB: Okay. And then, did anything significant happen within the county government during your time as an employee? Maybe not specific to your department, or specific to your department?

MY: Well, of course I've seen several new commissioners come on board. We work a lot with the commissioners for a lot of our approvals, so I've known all the commissioners well for the past sixteen years. When I came in and started with the commissioners it was Pat South, Mike Kilburn, and Larry Christenberry. And of course they've changed over the years but we've always worked closely with the commissioners.

JB: Okay. And is there anything else that you would like to share with us regarding your time here at Warren County?

MY: Not that I can think of. It's been a great place to work. I've enjoyed the last sixteen years and met a lot of people.

JB: Okay, well that concludes our interview with Michael Yetter. Thank you so much for coming today.

MY: You're welcome.

JB: And good luck after your retirement.

MY: Thank you.

[End transcript 00:10:59]