

MARIEMONT PLANNING COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING HELD JUNE 19, 2013

The Mariemont Planning Commission met Wednesday June 19, 2013. Mayor and Chairman Policastro called the meeting to order at 5:30 p.m. with the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag. Present were Mrs. Garber, Mr. Miller, Mr. Savage and Mr. Vianello. Also in attendance was the Building Commissioner, Dennis Malone.

The first request was from Scott and Leesa Blanding, 6731 Fieldhouse Way, Mariemont, Ohio 45227, for a property variance to permit a 1.75 foot encroachment into the front yard of an enclosed entrance to the residence.

Findings of the Building Commissioner: The required front yard setback as stipulated in the Zoning Code is 25 feet. The front wall of the Blanding residence is set back 26.25 feet from the front lot line. An UNENCLOSED porch or stoop is allowed to encroach 5 feet into the front yard. The Blanding addition consists of an ENCLOSED vestibule which results in an actual encroachment of 1.75 feet into the required front yard setback.

Mr. Blanding said they have lived in the Village for three years. Their present house has a very narrow and tight entrance. It creates a very small area to enter the house. They have two small children and are expecting their third. His neighbors are supportive and he does not think it will disrupt the character of the neighborhood.

Ms. Donna Lou Davis, 6735 Fieldhouse Way, said a good renovation will only add value to her house.

Mayor Policastro said he talked with several neighbors who indicated they had no problem with it. Based on unnecessary hardship, Mayor Policastro moved, seconded by Mr. Miller to approve the property variance based on Section 151.025 (3)(b)(c). On roll call; five ayes, no nays.

The second request was from Mr. Richard Greiwe Development, 9355 Holy Hill, Cincinnati, Ohio 45243, for permission to modify the street lines to permit certain proposed improvements to the six-way intersection of Madisonville Road, Plainville Road and Murray Avenue.

Findings of the Building Commissioner: The Mariemont Code of Ordinances Section 55.03 stipulates that "...The Village Planning Commission is empowered to make from time to time plans for the location of the proposed lines of street or streets in any portion of Mariemont...". Mr. Greiwe requests that the Planning Commissioner decide on one of three options: A Roundabout, a 4-Way Stop or No Build.

Mr. Greiwe said he has been a partner with the Village since 2006. Since then he has completed Jordan Park, Emery Park and soon Nolen Park. When the last phase is complete 68 million dollars would be added to the real estate values to the Village. We also have enhanced the businesses, been good citizens by paying taxes and we have been good neighbors during construction processes. He is preparing for the last phase - Emery Row. Before he can do the detailed site plan that is required for Residence "D" he would like to accommodate the discussion that has been going on about road improvements. Road improvements are important for many reasons. With an expanded park land and bike path the value of that part of Mariemont will go up. A beautiful gateway matches the investment that has been put in the Village in the last five years. It will remove traffic back up problems being experienced in the morning in front of Emery Park and Nolen Park. He wants to improve the quality of life for the residents and stimulate economic development. Either the 4-way stop or the roundabout can solve these problems. Columbia Township completed a master plan for the Plainville Corridor in 2008. In that plan they laid

out how to do the streetscape to attract the roundabout at Bramble Avenue and the six way intersection. In 2011 Columbia Township put together a preliminary concept that was not well received. In April 2012 Mike Lemon, Columbia Township Administrator, came to the Village with Todd Portune and Ted Hubbard after more work had been done on the concept plan and presented a new plan which moved everything north. It addressed a lot of the initial issues and concerns outlined by Mayor Policastro. At that meeting the Planning Commission agreed to be part of the study team and appointed Chairman Carl Stich to be on the study team. In June 2012 Mayor Policastro sent out a letter to ODOT outlining the important issues to the Village. Those issues became part of the scope of work when the engineering firm KZF was hired to do the study. The study was delayed until school was in session so the school traffic could be studied. When the study was complete the results were submitted to ODOT. At that point ODOT gave KZF and Columbia Township permission to proceed and the Village qualified for ODOT funding. The study was completed in early 2013. He organized a meeting with the school board, Council members, property owners and merchants. After the meeting the Columbia Township Trustees repeatedly asked the Village to respond to the study. After no response from the Village, he requested the matter be heard before the Planning Commission. It is a great opportunity to improve the intersection and enhance the 9 million dollar investment he is about to make. The OKI grant expires next year, so the issue is time-sensitive. There are basically three options: a roundabout, a four-way stop, and "no build".

The "no build" results in a dysfunctional six-way intersection. The reason there are so few accidents at this intersection as it currently exists is drivers only go about two miles an hour to get through it. A roundabout normally results in fewer accidents than a four-way stop because people sometime run red lights or four-way stop signs. The roundabout is designed so drivers cannot go more than 20 miles per hour. The curves in the roundabout won't allow drivers to go any faster than that. Therefore, it compliments the surrounding school zones. Both the roundabout and the four-way intersection creates more green space for the Village. It also gives a clear path for a bike path. Communities all over the country are trying to get bike paths in. There is a whole network of bike paths that are being worked on by communities and they are spending a whole lot of money to do this and this is the Village's opportunity to extend the bike trail all the way to the Village, because right now you cannot get through that intersection safely on a bike. Both the roundabout and the four-way stop would allow for that. The consultant working on this issue has shown that the roundabout is actually safer for pedestrians because they are not exposed to traffic as long as a four-way intersection. They only have to look one way and then cross over to an island. Then they look the other way and continue across the intersection. The no-build option is unacceptable. There is no pedestrian access from the north, south, east or west.

Construction time would be about four months and traffic would be maintained during construction. The cost is estimated at about 1.7 to 2 million dollars. The maintenance costs would be born by the people that have the improvements in their boundaries, so if you have more parkland, that would be your responsibility. The roundabout would be in Columbia Township, so they would have to take care of it. There would be a slight impact on parking on Plainville Road with the four-way because you need a turn lane (?) in the four-way scenario. You don't need those turn lanes (?) in the roundabout. With the four-way option, you lose three or four parking spaces. With the roundabout, you don't lose any parking area.

There is no impact on the Historic District. The fire truck issue is a non-issue. There is no study that can identify if there would be more traffic cutting through the Historic District and Settle Road if this intersection is approved, because north Murray is going to stay the same. There is still going to be an obstacle getting through north Murray because now you have pushed all traffic onto north Murray for both options. You have simplified this six-way intersection by eliminating south Murray from the mix. That's the cul-de-sac people can use to get through to north Murray, as indicated on the diagram that was passed out here tonight. All the traffic that was using south Murray goes on north Murray and you have to go slow, just like you do on Settle Road.

The environmental concerns that were raised by the Village are ODOT's concern. They are required to clean them up.

The traffic counts for the different options show that the roundabout is the quickest way to get through the intersection because you don't have to stop. The four-way traffic signal is the second best. The third best is the four-way stop sign. In the current configuration, it takes about 45 seconds per vehicle to get through the intersection and that is why there is a back-up there in the morning.

Mr. Greiwe said that, in conclusion, he wanted to go on record as being in favor of the roundabout. He feels it is in character with the Village and Mary Emery's vision of an English Garden Village. However, he feels both options work. The roundabout would just be a more beautiful gateway to the Village. Both options would accomplish the same goals. He hopes the Village does not miss out on the opportunity to take advantage of some way to improve that part of the Village because of the investment he is about to make and will continue to make in that part of town.

Mayor Policastro asked those in attendance if they had any questions they wanted to ask Mr. Greiwe.

Ms. Jane Coffee, 4315 Joan Place, said she is familiar with roundabouts. She travels Murray Avenue often and finds it frustrating to get through that intersection. She hopes the Village is forward enough and flexible enough to adjust to this new adaptation of travel. She has seen it in other cities and once we learn our way, it would operate very smoothly.

Mr. Charles Short, 6998 Murray Avenue, said he is opposed to any redesign of the intersection on Murray Avenue at Plainville Road and prefers the no-build option. Let's look at the record. The current intersection has a very safe record over the years. Over the past six years, there have been only one accident per year and they were all fender-benders with no injuries. He feels safety should be the paramount issue when talking about this intersection. He is concerned about when the construction is done, you will be having additional traffic from the apartment building that has been proposed. There has been an estimate of having 125 automobiles existing onto Plainville Road. When you couple this with the school zone being nearby, it would create a perfect storm if the proposal is approved. You would have increased chances of accidents and accidents of some severity. He urged the Planning Commission to keep this in mind during their deliberations. He also wanted to point out that if this is put forward, there would be costly burdens to the Village of Mariemont. The concrete and asphalt of the roundabout would lead to a the need for a run-off system for all the water that would be flowing onto Murray, which is a low spot in the Village. This would be a problem with a roundabout. There would be a need for an additional crossing guard to insure the safety of the children going to and from the school. Also, caring for the additional landscaping would be a burden passed along to the Maintenance Department which is already stretched pretty thin to maintain the property in the Village as it is now. That is why he urges the Planning Commission to reject any redesign on the basis of safety and common sense. His preference would be the no-build option.

Elsie White, 6992 Grace Avenue, first moved into the community in 1951 with her parents. She moved back to the Village in 1972 and has owned her house on Grace since 1974. She feels she has many years in this community. She is also in favor of the no-build option. She uses Murray Avenue all the time when visiting her daughter, who lives in Fairfax. She has no trouble going through the current intersection and there is not that much of a back-up there, even during rush hour. It takes less than five minutes to get through the intersection, even at rush hour. She has lived on the east coast where they have roundabouts. They are a mess. First you have to get out into them. You have to get a person to let you in and then you have to maneuver out of them. Roundabouts go to the right. When someone gets to a roundabout and the street they want to go to is on the left, instead of going all the way around the

roundabout to get there, they will go against traffic and cut over to the left. You can witness this by observing the roundabouts at Beechmont Mall. She is very much against it. As for the new apartments that are going to be built down there, the people living there who work downtown are going to cut over to Wooster Pike, so it will put more traffic area. She is all for keeping it just the way it is.

Marilyn Illig, 3901 Plainville, said she has only lived in the Village for two years, when she decided to retire and move here from Nashville. She looked at several other communities and finally decided that Mariemont was where she wanted to live. She spent several hours touring the community and talking to residents, people from the school and business people. The reason she moved here is because it is such a safe walking community. She is very much in favor of business and bringing businesses to Mariemont. However, she wants the Planning Commission to keep in mind what it is like to be a walker. She cannot get across Wooster Pike because of the traffic. She just returned from a trip to Carmel, Indiana, and there are no roundabouts in the business district. They are only in the residential areas. When you get to a roundabout, the sidewalk ends and there is no way to get across the roundabout. She is not against progress, but she is against a roundabout. It would make it difficult for her to walk to the places she needs to go.

Jen O'Brien, 3862 Homewood, said the Village and the Safety Committee worked with her for two years on traffic calming issues on her street. Her biggest concern after reviewing the plan is that the south side of Murray is now one way westbound, but both options of the plan show it shifting to eastbound. The traffic calming plan has really helped her street. She is concerned the plan would undo the change that was made a year ago. Mr. Greiwe said that the south side of Murray would remain the same, going one-way westbound. It would not change. The north side of Murray would be two ways. The cul-de-sacs shown on the plan would be used only to access to the parking spots on the south side of Murray.

Planning Commission Member Jerry Vianello asked Mr. Greiwe to clarify that the south side of Murray Avenue would be an open street and the Village could make it go east or west from Oak Street all the way to Settle Road, but from Oak Street going east to Plainville, it would be a cul-de-sac to support the green area as shown on the plan diagram. Mr. Greiwe said that is correct. Mr. Vianello said that right now, our fire apparatus can move very quickly down Murray. If there was a problem in that cul-de-sac, he worries if the cut-through would be large enough for the fire trucks to get through. Mr. Greiwe said rubber guards in or use other methods to allow for emergency vehicles to get through. The purpose of this part of the plan was to provide a clear path for the bike path in the green space. Mr. Vianello said we have a new ladder truck that we might need to get into that area and the plan for the south side of Murray is a big concern for him. Again, it is an issue of safety.

Mr. Greiwe said once the Village decides on what they want, either a roundabout or a four-way intersection, then the consultants can address that issue. They are not going to design something that will not work for the issue. The current plan is based on the traffic-calming plan the Village put in place. The engineers cannot start the process until the Village decides if they want one plan or the other.

Larry McGonegle, 3946 Beech Street, stated that he is legally blind. Right now he has no trouble crossing that intersection. He would rather keep it the same. He was recently at Beechmont Mall and had to get help to cross the roundabouts. He found it scary to get across. He doesn't need help at Murray and Plainville and he would like to keep it the same as it is.

Councilman and Vice Mayor Joe Stelzer said that it was announced today that Mariemont is one of the 11 most endangered places in the country as determined by the National Trust for Historic Preservation. This is due mostly because of the proposed relocation of State Route 32 through the South 80. We had a media event about it this morning. It was an important announcement. He also wanted to make the Planning Commission aware that we are working on the concept of a Joint Economic

Development with Columbia Township. He felt the Commission should be aware of those two things before making a decision about the proposed changes to the intersection. Mr. Stelzer thanked Mr. Greiwe for his work over the past several years in Mariemont. He transformed some real estate that was occupied by renters into real estate that is occupied by owners. The pride of ownership works in a lot of different ways. As for the proposed changes to the intersection, he sees a lot of parallels to the State Route 32 project. Both projects seem to be driven by the desire to spend precious taxpayer dollars without an adequate study or consideration of the options. Both projects never seem to provide full and candid information to elected officials and/or to residents to adequately allow them to evaluate the various options for the intersections. It seems there is a select, close group that looks at it and then we see what the result of that process is, but we don't get to see what other possibilities might be there for the direction of roads and things like that. He sees it as Columbia Township wanting to be in control of this process, but Mariemont and its residents do have a voice in this process and there should be a full evaluation of any changes to this intersection. He is confused why we are discussing a roundabout today as an option. In the past several months, he has had many conversations with a Columbia Township Trustee about a potential Joint Economic Development District. During these conversations, he has been told many times that the roundabout option is off the table. Recent quotes in the Eastern Hills Journal attributed to the Columbia Township Administrator indicate the roundabout is still being considered. He was not sure if the Trustee was speaking for himself or for all the Trustees. He received a letter from the Columbia Township Board of Trustees President indicating that the Trustee was keeping the Columbia Township Board well informed of these discussions since February 21st. He can only presume the trustee he had spoken with was providing the opinion of the entire Board of Trustees and the Administrator's comments were off. So he is confused if the roundabout is on the table or off the table or if Columbia Township has changed their mind. That is why he is confused that the roundabout is being brought up before the Planning Commission at this time. We were told multiple times that the changes to this intersection would lead to economic development by the building of apartments by the intersection. He asked Mr. Greiwe if that is off the table now or is that still to be done. He has asked multiple questions about whether those apartments are going to be built and what the economic impact would be on our Historic District rentals. He was provided a listing from Mr. Greiwe that compared rents for the old historic properties versus what might be paid by the new apartments. It's not really a full economic development impact analysis and we probably should see that to know are these projects connected or are they not. He asked about the compact roundabout that was shown in Mr. Greiwe's presentation. He was told that a compact roundabout is 100 feet in diameter. The reason he was given for the design team wanting the smaller roundabout is to decrease speed through the roundabout because of the school zone. However, it is a pretty small roundabout for the amount of traffic that would be running through there. He was told some of these smaller roundabouts already exist in other locations, but he would like to see them in action with an intersection that handles about the same volume of traffic that would go through the proposed one on Plainville at Murray. Changes to any intersection without due diligence will result in disaster. We have seen this before when we tried to change the left-turn light at Pocahontas and Wooster. That was recommended by ODOT, but it only took two days to see that change caused the traffic to back up. It was changed back and the traffic flow worked again. Sometimes the things recommended by the experts don't work. He doesn't feel the Village should be the 'guinea pig' for some traffic engineer's theory to improve traffic flow. Any proposals for intersection changes should probably also include the study of potential changes to nearby intersections. You may fix the problem at one intersection and create one at the nearby intersection. He is not aware this study has been done yet, but probably should be. We need to make sure we are not going to create a problem at Wooster and Madisonville or on Plainville at Wooster. We may be creating more traffic at those intersections. It is unfortunate that Columbia Township does not seem engaged in a full, open, and frank conversation of options for this intersection or any other collaborative projects at this point. Mr. Stelzer said that during his conversations with the Columbia Township Trustee, he was told that Mariemont should just take a leap of faith and act without adequate due diligence. Mariemont was created as a result of significant analysis and planning that created a very unique community. We have a duty to continue this admired history and just not jump at free money that might not be so free in the long run. He said it is his understanding there are three options on the table right now

in front of the Planning Commission, which are a roundabout, a four-way intersection, or a no-build option. He would ask that an additional option be considered in the future if Columbia Township commits to engage in full, open, and frank conversation, and a genuine, good-faith negotiation of all types of collaborative agreements between the two communities.

Mr. Greiwe said he had been present at all the meetings between Columbia Township, Village residents and Council members. Mr. John Wiley, the KZF Engineer who studied the four options for the intersection was made available to you and any other committee that was formed to dig deeper on all these issues. It was a constant battle because the Mayor and other people don't want to see the roundabout. He said the point of his being here today was to discuss a four-way intersection so he can build condos that have a higher perceived value. It is in a site that isn't very nice with the traffic back-ups. A park and the bike path would help that. He no longer has any intent to build the apartments. That is off the table. He has no plans in contract. That went away a long time ago. He wants to invest nine million dollars in Mariemont to make sure the condos are successful. They are going to be high-end condos north of Emery Park Condos.

Mr. Stelzer asked if there were any plans to revive the apartments at this point and Mr. Greiwe said there is not. Mr. Stelzer asked if Columbia Township would be willing to commit to that at this point. Mr. Greiwe said the road development would make the area more attractive. Columbia Township has already done extensive landscaping and put the utilities underground. They are going to improve themselves as best they can.

Terry Long said she is a resident of the new condos on Madisonville Road. She cannot get out of her driveway in the morning because of the traffic. Those that think there is not a traffic problem on Madisonville Road are mistaken. Part of it is because of the congestion at the six-way intersection. She also has a residence in South Carolina and there are roundabouts everywhere there. Once you get used to using them, they are very easy to navigate. Whether it's a four-way stop or a roundabout, something needs to be done. Aesthetically, it looks terrible. Something needs to be done at that intersection. She walks there and rides her bike there and it is dangerous with a six-way stop. You have to be extra cautious. She also feels a lot of decisions are being made without letting citizens know what is going on. It seems the decision has already been made not to do anything. This is a wonderful community. The people are welcoming and the bike path is going to be wonderful for the community, but we do need to do something about that intersection.

Linda Lazure of Madison Place said she has been living in the area for 19 years. She jogs, she bikes, and she walks her dogs. She was struck by a car in that intersection on March 29th. She had the right-of-way. She was crossing in the crosswalk and was hit by a car turning left. She knows what that intersection is like because she goes through there often. She is angry. She was hit in the leg and had to have surgery and was on crutches for six weeks. She is still not able to jog. Something needs to be done there. She has witnessed kids trying to get through there on bikes and have to wait and wait for someone to stop for someone to let them out. It is very confusing. She doesn't understand the resistance to the roundabout.

Louise Schomberg, 3885 Oak Street, said she, too, is concerned about the safety of the roundabout or a four-way. She doesn't see how any of our emergency equipment is going to get through that intersection with a big island in the middle and little triangular islands on the streets themselves. She has watched the fire trucks come down Plainville and try to turn on Murray and they have to pull up and back and up and back to get turned onto that road. The roundabout would make it more difficult for them to make that short turn with an island in front of them and on the side. As far as pedestrians, she has been there a lot and seen people waiting and allowing people to cross. She feels people are very careful in that intersection and she has seen no problems at all. As far as traffic is concerned, Wooster is just as bad. The change to one lane in Fairfax has certainly slowed that down also.

Dennis Wolter, 3804 West Street, said he has been a resident of the Village for 27 years. He identified himself as the Councilman for District 1 and Chairman of the Safety Committee. When this issue first came up, he was Vice Mayor. He was curious when it was first brought before Council that there was no formal proposal made by anyone from Columbia Township. An enthusiastic Council member wanted to support it, but we were not given any information about the size of it, the cost, or anything. It was never assigned to a committee of Council. We were being pushed to have a Committee of the Whole meeting, but you cannot have a Committee of the Whole meeting without knowing what the facts of the issue are. We have had a similar experience dealing with the Joint Economic Development District (JEDD). It wasn't until today that we received a letter in return for our request for a proposal for the JEDD. Another resident went with Mr. Wolter and, using the photograph of the proposed roundabout, scaled what the diameter of that would be. At that time, it would have been 130 feet. Now it has been reduced for 100 feet. As he understands it, the State standard for a roundabout is 130 feet. A roundabout was built in the State of Ohio that measured 100 feet and they had to take it out and replace it with one that is 130 feet, so that large trucks and fire trucks could get through. He likes the idea of coming to a stop. He thinks that is safer, especially for handicapped people and children. He also does not understand the financing structure and asked if there is some tie-in between the roundabout and federal money to support a project. The main concern he has is how they are going to mitigate the environmental issues some of the property there, such as those sites where a dry cleaner and gas stations used to be. If all the federal government does is cap it by putting a parking lot over it, that doesn't solve the problem. We are located above glacier run off. Under the top soil is sand and gravel with meandering water passages that go through the Village to the river. The water will still flow under that parking lot. That is not the correct way to mitigate that. We use our South 80 more than ever now. Folks use that river all summer long. We have one of the highest cancer rates of any place in the country. It's issues like this from industrial pollutants that are part of the problem. He said he doesn't see any point in fixing a problem we don't have. It is safer to come to a stop than to get around an always moving, always turning roundabout. Something else to consider is that if the road is wet or icy, a car could lose control and go up on the sidewalk where there are pedestrians. Some cities are taking roundabouts out because the accidents rates are higher.

Council member Mary Ann Schwartz stated she walks through that intersection almost everyday and feels it is very safe. She thinks we should keep it just the way it is.

Dave Davis, 6735 Fieldhouse Way, said he has lived here since 1957. He has listened to all the statements and still does not see the benefit to the Village. He said he appreciated what Mr. Greiwe did by putting in the condos. They have been a great addition and he hopes Mr. Greiwe will build more. He wasn't aware there were any traffic problems in the morning. He asked where the back-ups occur. Mr. Greiwe said cars have to stop at the stop sign and the traffic backs up all the way to the school. These cars are coming from Newtown and turn onto Plainville or Madisonville Road to get to the Red Bank Expressway. Mr. Davis said he thought the roundabout would be confusing. He doesn't see how that would enhance life in Mariemont.

Dan Spinnenweber of Spinnenweber Builders said he has been in the real estate business in Mariemont for 53 years. He has been to many such meetings and he has listened to all the comments tonight. It seems to him the hardest thing Mariemont has to accept is change. That is a leftover intersection from the railroad days. It is a confusing six-street intersection. He has heard all the talk about the roundabout. He wants to know what is wrong with a four-way stop. It seems the most practical, logical, and reasonable approach to the problem. Why not make it a four-way stop like a normal intersection and not the monster we have there with the three streets. It would be easy to make the adjustments to the streets and make a four-way stop. His office overlooks the school area. He sees the back-up every morning and every night. You have the opportunity to clean it up and solve a problem that was created in the 1920's when the railway was there. He has not heard any discussion about the four-

way stop. It would clean up that end of the Village and allow Mr. Greiwe to build more buildings that would buffer that end of the Village. It seems the simplest and cleanest solution to it.

Jennifer Holliday said she is a visually impaired pedestrian of the Village. She travels with her seeing-eye dog. A couple of years ago, Metro cut Bus 59/Mariemont and now her only option to get to and from work is to take Bus 11/Madisonville. Her only option for crossing Murray is the intersection of Murray at Plainville, because there are parts of the route that do not have sidewalks. The drivers are very respectful of her when she is crossing the intersection.

Bob Blum, 6601 Mariemont Avenue, a resident of 35 years, said he raised two kids here, bringing them through that intersection walking and on bikes, and never had an issue. A lot of responsibility comes with the drivers and the pedestrians. You have to look and be aware. If you're walking, you will be the one who is hurt, so you have to look. He has experienced roundabouts. His reaction to them as a driver is that he has to wait sometimes to get on a roundabout, but as soon as he starts to exit, he steps on the gas. He slowed down for the roundabout, but once he is out of it, he is ready. If there are sidewalks there, drivers are not looking for you. A four-way stop is an interesting option, but he has never experienced a problem with the six-way intersection. If we are having problems with back-ups, maybe we should look at where those back-ups are coming from. For instance, if you want to turn left off of Plainville, you have to cross two lanes of traffic and you sit there a while. That means everyone behind you is stopped and backed up. His main concern is safety and he hasn't seen a problem there.

Police / Fire Chief Rick Hines said that it is a very safe intersection. Anyone who wants to look at the records is welcome to do so. That intersection averages less than one accident per year. That is pretty safe, especially for the amount of traffic that goes through there everyday. He was sorry to hear about the woman who was stuck in that intersection, but as far as he knows that is the only accident there where there was an injury in the 25 years he has been on the Mariemont Police Department. The concern he has with the roundabout is that when people hear a siren, it's human nature to stop. If they are in the roundabout and come to a stop, they will delay the response time because there is nowhere for the emergency vehicle to go. They cannot get around them. It's a very safe intersection just the way it is.

Assistant Fire Chief Tim Feichtner said he has been with the Village for 14 years. He has experienced a lot of accidents in the Village, but very few of them have been in that intersection. He contacted the fire chief in Dublin, Ohio, because they have roundabouts there. One of the things they found when they originally went with compact roundabouts is they don't work for fire apparatus. They had to completely revamp their design and they have two-lane roundabouts that are larger. They are still not ideal, but they are able to deal with them. Asst. Chief Feichtner said rather than going with the proposed roundabout, he would recommend leaving the intersection the way it is now. We have multiple concerns with bringing water supply into that area. It's the Historic District and there is a lot of old, dry lumber in those homes. If one of them catches fire, no matter how quickly we get out the door, we are still going to be behind the eight ball. A lot of times we would need to bring multiple supply lines from multiple directions so we don't dry up a main and cause a failure that would result in not having enough water to fight the fire. With a roundabout, we would have to bring some of those supply lines across the roundabout and that would shut the roundabout down. Then traffic would have nowhere to go. With the six-way stop, traffic could be diverted to keep it moving. His other concern is with Murray. Our new truck is two feet longer and has a tandem axle, which doesn't steer as easily as a single axle. If there are any changes to Murray, we are going to have problems. It is already a difficult turn and, even though people are taught to pull to the right for emergency vehicles, they don't do that. They just stop. Trying to stop a 70,000 truck even when you are only going 20 miles per hour is not an easy task. When we come to an intersection, we are trained to make eye contact with every driver before we proceed through the intersection. Asst. Chief said he would need to get more information before he could say if he would recommend the four-way intersection. He does not like the idea of the cul-de-sac on Murray because it would limit their access.

Karen Koetzle, 3865 Beech Street, said she has lived in the Village for 26 years. She is totally against the roundabout. She has walked through the intersection and driven through it for years and has never had a problem. We have to face the fact that there is just more traffic now so it is going to back up. The roundabout is going to speed up the traffic that will just back up at Wooster Pike. We live in a Village that is an historic Village. We don't like change because this is why we moved here. It's an historic Village on the National Registry. Mary Emery's dream was to have a diverse Village, which means people of all races, and of all economic levels. What she sees is somebody taking away all the lower priced rental units for senior citizens and putting in everything that is over priced that only certain people can afford. The intersection needs to be kept the same. Every place in the Village is having a problem with traffic. She said she votes to leave it alone.

Brad Bowers said he has owned rental property in the Village since 1982. The way he sees it is it is an imperfect intersection. In older communities, that's just the way it is. It sounds like the roundabout is off the table. The four-way intersection would require a 1.7 million dollar investment. We should remember that the devil you know is sometimes better than the devil you might get. What if we spend all this money and it's no better. It might be worse. He likes change when the change is good. He thanked Council for making Murray one way. He owns several properties there. He has helped. He asked Mr. Greiwe if the plans presented tonight are the final plans. He said that Asst. Fire Chief Feichtner had said neither of these plans would work because of the access, so where do we go from here.

Mr. Greiwe said the plans were not final plans. These plans are just concepts. If the Planning Commission decides they want to do a four-way or a roundabout, then the consultant would meet with the police, the fire, Columbia Township, and the Village, and would design it to meet everyone's specifications. This is just an early start. The Village needs to finish the work to adjust it for the fire department issues, and the safety issues, and the people who are concerned about crossing.

Mr. Bowers said it looks like a lot of time and a lot of expense has been put into this and it's still an imperfect plan.

Bob Osman, 3942 Miami Road, said we have heard arguments that the intersection is safe. We have also heard arguments that we have serious back-up problems on Madisonville Road, yet no concern has been expressed about getting emergency vehicles up Madisonville Road between 7:00 and 9:00 in the morning. We have traffic backed up to West Street and we have a crossing guard that backs up traffic all the way to the square. He hasn't heard any concern about emergency vehicles getting through the square and up Madisonville Road. There is a safety issue there and if a four-way stop is going to improve the existing six-way stop and get traffic moving through and up Madisonville Road to Plainville, then he implores the Planning Commission to look at that, because that is your responsibility.

Mayor asked Asst. Fire Chief Feichtner if that is a problem. Asst. Chief Feichtner said they have always been able to get through, but go through with caution because of the school children there.

Mr. Greiwe was asked if the roundabout or four-way stop does not go through, would he still build the apartment building in Madison Place. Mr. Greiwe said he has no plans to do anything in Madison Place right now. He is here tonight because he wants to build a nine million dollar condo development in Mariemont right next to Emery Park Condos. His plans would create more park space and make way for the bike path. The four-way intersection would enhance the value of the next condo site.

Jackie Weinland, 6940 Nolen Circle, said there is really nothing the Village can do about the traffic problem. We sit in the middle of the route. Traffic is going to come and traffic is going to go. Back streets like Nolen Circle are cut-through streets. She came to the Mayor a few years ago and asked

to have some stop signs put on Nolen Circle. Traffic is still a problem on that back street. The cut through is not just through Madisonville Road or Plainville Road. It is on every back street in the Village. We have a lot of cars and no place to put them. The Planning Commission needs to address this in some other form. The Safety Committee has done as much as they can by installing stop signs, installing speed bumps, and changing the direction of streets. She does not think the roundabout is the answer. Maybe we need something similar to a four-way stop.

Mr. Vianello made a point of clarification. It is no longer a six-way stop intersection. It is a five-way stop intersection. He noticed people stopped and looked at each other before proceeding. He likes the fact that they stop. He wanted the community to know he is happy to be on the Planning Commission. He is concerned about safety and he is also concerned about the economic impact and why we would spend tax dollars that we don't have to spend at this point.

Mr. Miller thought Mr. Spinnenweber made a good point. That intersection has evolved from the planning of 50 years ago. The condos weren't there. The traffic in the city has probably expanded by 300 or 400%. There are a lot more cars on the road now. He thinks everyone agrees tonight that the roundabout is not a good idea. He thinks everyone came here tonight thinking the meeting was only about the roundabout, but obviously it is not. There is another choice. He agrees with everyone about the issues of safety and coming to a stop. He does not see why a four-way stop would be any more dangerous than a six-way stop, especially if it is the first time they have encountered a six-way stop and they might be confused and think it is just a four-way stop. He said that Mariemont taxes are high. We don't have a lot of commercial or retail space to keep our taxes low. As the Economic Development Chairman, one of the things that is his job is to make sure that we want developers to come in with the right plan and the right architecture to do anything we can to bring our tax revenue up and keep our taxes down. Mr. Greiwe has done an excellent job of that along with Mr. Spinnenweber. He thinks they don't get enough credit for what they have done. He thinks the four-way intersection makes sense. We still have to come to a stop, but according to the study, it will get traffic through a little more quickly than the six-way stop does. Some additional green space there and additional flowers it would make a more enjoyable gateway to the Village.

The question was asked if there was any cost to the Village to build the four-way stop. Mayor Policastro said it is his understanding that the money would come from federal dollars. He said he has been working with the landlords of the Historic District. He has been told now that the 115 apartment units will not be built, but he does not believe that. Once we give the OK to build this four-way, even if Mr. Greiwe doesn't build it, someone will. That would play havoc on our landlords. They have to rent those places in the Historic area. They have to improve them. If not, the Historic District goes to pot. What that means is that no taxes come out of there. Our Historic District is precious. Without that, as former Mayor Don Shanks said, we're just another pretty little town. We're no longer Mariemont if we lose our Historic District, so he is going to protect that area anyway he can. He doesn't care if it's four lanes or six lanes, we are going to do what it takes to keep this Village as historic as possible. He hasn't heard anyone saying anything about trying to help the people who run that historic area. He has a love/hate relationship with these property owners because he makes them improve these places. We get along sometimes and sometimes we don't. If that thing is built, he thinks we're in trouble. Another problem he sees and he agrees with Mrs. Garber that if we build the four-way, Murray would cut over into Madisonville Road and would dump more cars onto Madisonville Road. We have been saying we have a big problem there. So what would this do? It would dump more cars onto Madisonville Road. That is a school zone. He does not want to put more cars there. A four-way sounds great, but if we are going to use federal money to build the four-way, then we turn this intersection over to ODOT. To him, that would be totally irresponsible. Have you seen what we are going through with ODOT right now? Those guys say one thing and they do the other. Once you turn it over to them, they are going to do whatever they want to do. They do it and you're stuck with it. He has listened to all this. He is for a no-build at this point. If Mr. Greiwe wants to, he can come back and give us an engineer designed drawing

and not a conceptual drawing. We don't even know what this is and we don't know if this is what's going to happen or not. To ask us to OK this and say that he will then come back with a drawing. He wants the facts first. Then maybe we can OK it.

Mr. Vianello said the four-way sounds good, but does that mean that south Murray gets changed. Mrs. Garber said it will be a cul-de-sac.

Mrs. Garber stated that she has lived in Mariemont her whole life. For her, the biggest issue is safety. She has spent a lot of time at the tennis courts. There is a playground located right there, as well. The roundabout does not seem as safe to her as the current intersection. With a stop sign, you start out going through the intersection from zero miles an hour. With the roundabout, you would be going at least 20 miles per hour. When entering the roundabout, you would have a tendency to speed up to get into the flow of traffic and you would have a tendency to speed up to get out of the roundabout. That means you would be speeding up in a very children-concentrated sensitive area. That makes absolutely no sense to her. The four-way stop poses problems, too. For one thing, it would cause the traffic to back up even more. A good example is what has happened in Fairfax since they made the changes there and how traffic gets tied up. There was a lane that was always open to turn right onto Watterson. It didn't matter if the person ahead of you was going straight. You got in the right lane and you kept going. Now you have to sit through all the lights. Right now, if people are traveling westbound on Murray, they can just go to Plainville Road and turn right. If the four-way stop is put in, those cars would be dumped onto Madisonville Road and then they would have to stop at Plainville before turning. Dumping all those extra cars onto Madisonville Road is just going to make things back up more. Terry Long said she has a hard time getting out of her place from Emery Park onto Madisonville Road. She does not see how a four-way stop would alleviate the situation. It would only make it worse. It would cause traffic to back up to West Street where we have an elementary school. Mrs. Garber also said that it is important for emergency vehicles to get where they need to go the quickest way possible. She would not want them to have to go past her house, go down a block, turn around, and then come back to get to her. That is what would happen in the Historic District with the cul-de-sac that would go in if we go with the four-way stop. Every single person in the Village should be able to get essential services to them as quickly as possible. If the police and fire departments are saying the roundabout and four-way stop would make it difficult for them, then it is the duty of the Planning Commission to listen to them. We cannot tell them to do their jobs and then tie their hands behind their backs. From a safety standpoint, the four-way stop would be a nightmare.

Mr. Savage said that he thinks someday there will be a four-way stop there, but for him to vote for it, he would have to have the Fire Department and the Police Department support it.

Mr. Greiwe thanked everyone for their participation and consideration. He knew the roundabout was off the table months ago, because he knew the Mayor was against it. At the end of the day, you have opportunity to embrace the four-way and get into it completely. Then OKI, ODOT, Columbia Township, and the Village will form a task force and you will design this thing together. You don't want to go into if your heart's not in it. That is what has happened the past year. We got sidetracked by the roundabout, which was way too ambitious. Now if you want to make this work for the Fire Department, make it work for the blind citizens, make it work for the bicyclists, the dogs, and the joggers, you can do that. If want to do that, then you should go with the four-way, but if you don't want to do it in your heart of hearts, then Columbia Township doesn't need anymore hassles. He has been trying to get this thing settled so he can go forward with the condo project. You get three things for free. You get all the land that Madisonville Road is on. Madison Place doesn't get it. It will increase your park size so your tennis courts are more desirable. You get a clear path for a bike path to fulfill your obligation to extend the Murray Trail. These things plus cleaning up that intersection are the benefits you would get. So you either need to decide to be a part of the team for a four-way or not.

Mayor Policastro called for the vote. On roll call, Mayor Policastro, Mrs. Garber, and Mr. Vianello voted for the no-build option; Mr. Savage and Mr. Miller voted for the four-way option. With a vote of three to two, it was decided to go with the no-build option.

The meeting adjourned at 7:33 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Mrs. Val Garber
Secretary