

**MINUTES OF THE COUNCIL
VILLAGE OF MARIEMONT, OHIO
COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE MEETING HELD IN COUNCIL CHAMBER
FEBRUARY 7, 2011**

Vice-Mayor Black called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. The following Council members were present: Mr. Andrews, Mr. Black, Mr. Miller, Mr. Scheeser, Ms. Sullivan and Mr. Wolter.

Vice-Mayor Black said the purpose of the meeting is to provide Mariemont Preservation Foundation (MPF) an opportunity to present their Vision Plan 2021. He recognized the two years of work that went into this plan. This is the first of many steps and re-iterated that no formal decisions will be made at this meeting.

Mr. David Zack, (MPF), thanked Council for the opportunity to present the Vision Plan. In 2008, a collection process was begun with Mariemont citizens to gather suggestions, comments, needs and other ideas that might be incorporated into a "Road Map" or "Basket of Ideas" to help guide future development and operations within the Village. It should be understood that the "Basket of Ideas," called Vision 2021, for this discussion, is the collection of raw material, ideas to be explored and developed further. Vision 2021 does not propose solutions to solve needs, nor does it expect that every priority will be pursued by the Village Council. During a two-year period, 2008-2010, a small MPF committee identified and recorded themes and ideas from public meetings, interviews with individuals, questionnaires, Village organizations, school classes, Village officials past and present, merchants, business people, and property developers. The input was generated from hundreds of individuals and meetings and is all documented and recorded. Themes or topics were determined at these meetings. A total of 21 categories were identified for consideration. Citizen comments then determined priorities based on the themes. In some cases, the recommended priorities involved several themes. The Status Report titled "Vision 2021" lists the 21 themes and the top 21 priorities drafted by citizens. The initial efforts were endorsed by Resolution of Mariemont Council in February 2009. Reports to Council were presented at various times, and a printed Status Report, "Vision 2021: A Blueprint for Mariemont's Next Century," was presented at the Council meeting, October 11, 2010. It is hoped that a final publication can be printed in early 2011 that records citizen input and will provide more elaboration on ideas that might be pursued according to the priorities noted. It is hoped that Vision 2021 will be a living document for use as a "Basket of Ideas" and reference to help guide future planning activities and programs that are the purview of Village Council and administration.

Mr. Millard Rogers, (MPF), said during the years of collecting information, it became clear that several steps might be taken to assist the implementation of Vision 2021: First, a final Vision 2021 report will be printed in 2011 that records more extensively the citizen input. This publication will provide more elaboration of ideas that might be pursued according to the priorities noted. It is hoped that it will be a "living document," continuing to serve as a reference to help guide future planning activities and programs that are the purview of Village Council and administration. Second, it is recommended that an ordinance-appointment of a Vision Commission or committee be made to assist the Council in implementing Vision 2021 and coordinating its efforts. The Vision Commission would report to Council. Third, grants would be sought by MPF to provide under the Village's administration a paid facilitator or professional staff member to assist the Vision Commission and Council for at least the first years of launch. The Mariemont Preservation Foundation will pursue grants for this purpose if Council and Mayor support the need for this assistance. The position could lead to a regular staff position with the Village.

Mr. Scheeser asked if any help is needed with gathering more information for step number one. Mr. Rogers said they already have enough data and citizen input to proceed. He believes Council will want to see the complete list. MPF will fund the expense for the publication. It will not contain any outcome of the Vision Committee, etc., but the final findings of the data collected. The Vision Commission should represent as broadly as possible the demographics of the Village itself.

Mr. Wolter said often ideas can come from the participants in the process that did not come from the Village. He asked if there was any thought as to how it would be incorporated into the plan. Mr. Rogers said it is a living document and if more should be added to it - more power to it.

Mr. Andrews said we need to get politics out of this from the beginning and get an agreement on what is our common purpose, who is going to participate, how the group will make decisions and what will the interfacing be with Council or Committees of Council.

Mr. Black said it should start with Council's Planning & Zoning/Economic Development Committee and all information should be fed through the Vision Commission. Mr. Rogers said the hope is that this will be a proactive plan and document and not a reactive plan.

Mayor Policastro asked if funding would be available for a facilitator in the near future because three of the items listed, Dale Park School, Square problems and Historic District have needs and will be coming up soon. Mr. Rogers said it is the hope that MPF can provide grant funds to the Village which would support hiring someone for at least the first two years. Mayor Policastro said several years ago the Village brought in Hamilton County Development Company (HCDC) and they did a great job facilitating the Residence "D" Program.

Mr. Miller said the Vision Commission should be a well represented group of our community including stake holders such as MPF, Mr. Greiwe and Mr. Spinnenweber. It should also include those that have a background and are insightful as to what we need. The facilitator should hold the Commission to task. The Village is fortunate to have MPF and thanked them for the information they have put together over the past two years. This is a list of what could be but nothing is cast in stone but it is a great place to start.

Mr. Wolter said the study that was done by MPF in 2000 on the Historic District was well done and is still very important today. It identifies the nuts and bolts. We have a lot of good things already happening. A plan this well organized will bring entities together that were standoffish towards one another. There is no long term plan for the Village. We need to have more of a process in place to do this that would eliminate all the subterfuge and help get these things done openly and efficiently in the Village.

Mr. Miller asked if it would hinder grant money in the future if we already have a facilitator on the Village payroll. Mr. Rogers said he does not know the answer. MPF being a 501 3C organization can receive grants from other organizations who will only give to a 501 3C organization. The plan is to transfer the funds for the facilitator to the Village so they would be paid under the Village's payroll. They have been in contact with the Emery Memorial but he does not feel that they will be in a position to help the Village for a couple of years. Our need is immediate.

Mr. Wolter said if the grants do not materialize he sees great talent here in the Village that could help in the interim so we can move forward with this plan. He listens more to someone who has skin in the game than someone who makes a living telling other people how to spend their money on ideas. He believes those who have boots on the ground such as Mr. Greiwe and Mr. Spinnenweber have visions for the Village which is important. He believes the Village has good resources to find someone within our community to volunteer their time to help us do this. He wants this to move forward and not stall because we cannot get grant money.

Ms. Sullivan said she feels you gain something by third party objectivity. You want someone who is objective who can analyze the situation and give good feedback. You want someone who has dealt with these issues before so they can give a good sense of direction.

Mayor Policastro said over the years when we used Hamilton County Development Company they helped us save the Cincinnati Gear building, Keebler, and were instrumental with Residence "D". Caroline Duffy who is helping with Safe Routes to School suggested we approach them as well. They have been very helpful over the years. When it goes to Committee he suggested that we have HCDC come give us much needed information. Years ago facilitator's bids were very expensive but HCDC was very reasonable. Once he puts the Vision Commission together he is going to ask Charlie Thomas to be the Chairman to steer us in the right direction. He is finalizing the list for the Vision Commission. Mr. Andrews asked what voice Council gave to the Mayor to put the Commission together. He asked what communication, what ideas, what input and what questions will the Vision Commission ask. Mayor Policastro said it will be up to the Planning & Zoning/Economic Development Committee. Mr. Andrews said Council needs to come to agreement on how decisions are going to be made and what the time lines looks like. Input needs to be from everyone - Council may not like who is on the Mayor's list. He asked if Council is going to have that discussion. Mr. Black said that may be one of the first steps in the Planning & Zoning/Economic Development Committee meeting. Mr. Scheeser said he would like to diagram the process for a non-economic development type priority - what does the flow chart look like for the different priorities. Mr. Andrews said we all have different opinions and can infuse politics into this. We need to come to a good agreement on key things. He agrees to get it into a Committee and so a small group can start to outline some things and can come back with a recommendation so Council can be a part of it. Mr. Wolter said Mr. Andrews' caution statement is a good caution statement. He believes we need to get going in a Committee and remember what Mr. Andrews has said and steer away from that becoming a problem.

Ms. Sullivan asked for clarification if the Planning & Zoning/Economic Development Committee is going to pick the Vision Committee. Mr. Miller said the Vision Committee that is picked will report to the Planning & Zoning/Economic Development Committee. Mr. Andrews said he believes the Ordinance states that a formal Commission can only be approved and voted in by Council. Mayor Policastro said the Vision Commission is picked by the Mayor with the approval of Council. Right now the list stands at 12 people who he believes are well qualified for the task. Mr. Miller suggested that Council give the Mayor any recommendations they may have for individuals to serve on the Vision Committee.

Ms. Jan Gittinger, 3817 Petoskey #13, asked if anyone had looked into the Vista Volunteer Program to locate a facilitator. The majority of the people who work in the Vista Volunteer Program are well educated individuals with a Masters or better degree or retired professionals who do volunteer work. Some are well educated students who volunteer for a year or two in exchange for a reduction of their student loans. It is a source that does not get tapped often. They are not allowed into the program unless they are professionally trained. She said she would forward to MPF the contact information so they can look further into it.

Mr. Jerry Vianello, 6570 Wooster Pike, complimented MPF for all the work they did on the Vision Plan. He believes there are some great ideas. He is excited to see some anticipated change that is long overdue. He asked if the Village has an easement to the access of the 80 acres. Building Commissioner Malone said he did not know. Mr. Vianello asked if there was any possibility of going to the 80 acres by the Steam Plant. Mayor Policastro said it would be impossible. Mr. Vianello said the easement would be a concern of his in developing that land. It is a floodplain area. Mr. Scheeser said there are a couple of different ways to get to the area and we could definitely get creative. He believes recreationally there is a lot that could be done in that area.

Ms. Laura Cruickshank, 3825 Petoskey #23, said these are wonderful ideas and complimented MPF on the amount of work it took. She asked what was being voted on this evening. Mr. Black said they will not be voting this evening. It was simply a presentation by MPF of their findings and the matter will be referred to the Planning & Zoning/Economic Development Committee.

Ms. Marianne Schmidt, Oak Street, asked what are going to be the priorities of the plan. She has lived in the Old Town Square for 27 years and basically nothing has been done in that area. She asked if the Historic District is the number one priority. Mayor Policastro said in his opinion it should be. Mr. Andrews said this is what the next six months is really about is to answer that question. Mr. Scheeser said the Planning & Zoning/Economic Development Group is going to craft the list of people for the Vision Commission and the ground rules for the Vision Commission. The Vision Commission will meet and come up with a priority ranking. Mr. Andrews said we have to be so careful at this point to get through the process and find objectives as to how we are going to get to the final plan without trying to inject all of our personal opinions. Ms. Sullivan said if you look at the Vision Plan the number one listing for priorities is the Historic District. Ms. Schmidt emphasized that the Historic District is the heart of the Village and if it goes down anymore we will lose the heart of our Village. Mr. Andrews said everyone would agree with that. Mayor Policastro said in talking with Caroline Duffy we need to set up a 3CDC like downtown because a lot of people who own the buildings do not have the money to fix them up. The money could be directed to MPF that would get the money to the private enterprise to have the work completed.

Mr. Rick Greiwe said it is fortunate that the community has been able to build as far as it has without really having a master plan that outlines where the development opportunities are and how much it is going to cost to pursue those opportunities and what the tax revenues would be. You cannot float along and hope that it will be like that forever. This plan will help the Village stay competitive. It is important to get a facilitator that can work with the Vision Commission to get the details to develop a plan that can be followed. Use the retailers that want to help to make sure that all categories are represented. It can be done with volunteers but you need a facilitator to guide them through the process. HCDC could help do some of the facilitating processes.

Mayor Policastro said it is not in the Vision Plan but it is important to maintain what we have. We are in danger of losing the theatre. It is important to sit down with Mr. Spinnenweber and Mr. Greiwe to figure out what we can do to make our businesses more profitable because a lot of them are hurting. The sooner the Planning & Zoning/Economic Development Committee can get started interviewing facilitators the better.

The meeting adjourned at 8:03 p.m.

Dan Policastro, Mayor

Anthony J. Borgerding, Clerk