

**MINUTES OF THE COUNCIL
VILLAGE OF MARIEMONT, OHIO
COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE MEETING HELD IN COUNCIL CHAMBER
SEPTEMBER 26, 2011**

Mr. Black called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m. The following Council members were present: Mr. Andrews, Mr. Black, Ms. McCarthy, Mr. Miller, Mr. Scheeser and Mr. Wolter.

Mr. Black introduced Mr. Mitch Graham, owner of BioWheels, to explain the Mariemont UCI (Union Cyclist International) Cyclocross Event Proposal. He has been putting on cycle races for 11 years and feels Mariemont would be an excellent choice for the prelude event which is being held in Louisville, Kentucky February 3, 2013. The race would showcase the beauty of the Village with its distinct layout and architecture including the hotel and the theatre. In addition, to its integration of parks into its business and residential areas the Village provides an ideal setting for a world-class cyclocross event. Cyclocross is a spectator-friendly form of bicycle racing. Using a two mile course riders tackle a challenging circuit utilizing technically demanding off-road sections mixed with fast paved sections. The sport is gigantic in Europe. There would be an elite women's race and an elite men's race along with warm-up sessions. He anticipates the tentative schedule for Saturday January 26, 2013 to be 5:00 p.m. to 10:00 p.m with approximately 100 athletes.

He developed a course map and most of the reservations about the race came from the off-road parts of the course. He understands the concern about the potential damage to the Beech Trees and said those areas could be routed around as this is the tentative first draft of the course. He has two landscaping companies that have volunteered to donate their materials and labor to fix any damage that is caused by the race. One of the landscapers has a hydro-seeder which is perfect for this type of manicuring. In addition, a \$1,000 donation from the event will be made to the Village of Mariemont that can be used for any charity or organization as the Village sees fit. He has solid sponsorship backing and they like the idea of bringing the race more to the people.

Mr. Black said the main concern was the route through the Beech Grove, church, cemetery etc. He was hoping at this juncture there would have been a finalized map. The surrounding areas around the cemetery have had years of volunteer work put in to clear the area and replant. The other concern is with the heritage Beech Trees in the Beech Grove. At the last meeting it was asked if we could detour a lot of the off-road events to areas not so central to the Village. He asked if Mr. Graham gave any consideration to using the lower 80 acres. Mr. Graham said he really wanted to keep it closer to the center of the Village perhaps using the medians. Mr. Black said the Village is one square mile and the concern is putting a two mile course route through the middle of the Village. There is a lot of excitement about the idea but concern with the proposed route.

Ms. McCarthy said she likes the idea and has heard residents both for and against the idea. She is disappointed with both Council and the Mayor for not having a survey done so they had more input. It has nothing to do with those here who want to voice their opinions but there are many who do not come to public events to voice their opinion. She believes a survey would have been great to have. She was disappointed that it was not in the Mayor's Bulletin but added that Council needs to bear responsibility too. We need to learn to get things out in a timelier manner.

Mr. Andrews said he echoes Ms. McCarthy's thoughts. Over the past two years he remembers several examples of where Council had to make decisions based on opinions in the room. Feedback in the room is great but we do not have a good mechanism to get feedback on anything unless it is put on the ballot. These types of events come to the Village so infrequently and we still do not have a mechanism to size up the economic values of these types of opportunities. We basically left the last Committee of the Whole meeting saying if it cost \$1.00 we would not do it. We have no way to size up the other side of the equation. His concern is we do not deal with these types of opportunities well. We are reactive. We have such an opportunity in the Village to attract events that can play a part in economic help with the Village especially with what we are facing in the next couple of years.

Mr. Black asked Mr. Andrews what he would recommend to make changes instead of repeating going down the same path. Mr. Andrews said it is a good question and the reason Council unanimously repurposed a Committee to get better at this. In a year's time that Committee has not met on anything but West Street parking. We have not attempted to be good at this.

Mayor Policastro said he believes we have done a good job - we bent over backwards helping with the Jim Miller Run, Memorial Day Weekend 5K Run, and Kiwanis Arts & Fair Show. He also just got an e-mail from Donia Swisher wanting to start a 100 mile run starting in Mariemont next year and he will work to bring that to fruition. Whatever we do has to meet with what we have. The Beech Grove area was declared a reforestation area ten years ago. We cannot allow anything to happen there. We are a small Village and to have an event for six hours he feels will upset a lot of people. In addition, it will require trucks to be detoured into the residential area. He has received numerous phone calls and letters in opposition of this event. He would like to see this happen but in the lower 80 acres with perhaps the race ending in the Square. To put our 100 year old trees in jeopardy is something he cannot let happen. Three or four years ago Louise Schomburg and her volunteers planted trees which we now can see are growing. We do not want to see them die. He got many compliments on the park area once it was cleaned up by those driving through the Village. The proposed race area is too precious to Mariemont to even take a chance that it might get destroyed. He also pointed out that the Village has one of the last and best Beech Groves in the State of Ohio.

Mr. Miller said he was a little concerned that Mr. Graham did not come up with an alternate route. The off-road race will be a challenge particularly in areas such as the Beech Grove and around the church. He does not know where else to go but the lower 80 acres. Mr. Graham said the distance between the Village and the lower 80 acres is too far to put into a circuit repeat race.

Mr. Scheeser said he agrees with almost everything he has heard and he applauded Mr. Black for bringing the matter before Council for discussion and due diligence. He said he has heard both yea and nay on the idea. Some people are really bullish about the idea even though interestingly Council has only seen publication of the negative. Traffic, crowds and detours we can figure out and manage except the route. He understands the need for the route but he has concerns for the danger to the Dale Park area, church and the Beech Grove and therefore has cooled to the idea.

Mr. Wolter said he wanted to respond to the comments that we do not publicize and survey these well enough. He does not know of any municipality that surveys all of its residents to make every decision. We rely on their own interest in their government and their sense of responsibility to the community to come and voice their opinion or e-mail. He believes it would be impossible to survey everyone and even then you would be operating by popular vote. He does however believe we could do a better job in publicizing it but people do have a responsibility to take interest in the Village and help Council with decisions. He walked the route and was able to identify five places where once an indent is created in the surface it will result in both a re-seeding issue and an erosion problem. Mother Nature will determine what the temperature is going to be that day and who knows if we are going to make small rivers out of these ruts. His real concern is the physical damage we are going to do to the surface of the ground and the plant damage. We do a lot to bring people into the Village such as Flying Pig Marathon and Kiwanis Arts Fair and he does not think we have been negligent in pursuing events.

Police Chief Hines said he spoke with an ODOT representative who said she could not see it happening but he did talk with her supervisor who said he would need the finalized route along with a written request to close Wooster Pike and then a decision. He estimated that the overtime for the Police Department would be approximately \$2500.

Mr. Joe Stoner, 6924 Miami Bluff, encouraged those who have not looked up cyclocross racing on U-Tube to please do so as it is very alarming. It is a very aggressive sport which creates a big mess. The Mariemont Civic Association had an Arborist come and talk and said this would be a disaster for the Beech Trees. There would be damage done even by the spectators. For the short term commercial interest of a few why would we jeopardize our natural historic Village? As far as the process goes, people call into Congress just like they did here. He asked if Jean Schmidt sends out surveys - and if she did they are not representative. What is representative are the phone calls and e-mails Council already has. Council was hired to make these decisions and should be held to that duty and responsibility.

Ms. Darla Michael, 6812 Hammerstone, asked if there was a community survey to hold the Warrior Run? Mr. Andrews said he did not know and asked when it started. Ms. Michael asked if every time the Village holds a race or event is there a survey? Mr. Andrews said Council has not been part of those decisions for the last two years. Ms. Michael asked what are the barriers with the survey Council keeps bringing up. Ms. McCarthy said her point on the survey was at the last Committee of the Whole meeting it was agreed that a survey would be done and to this point there was not one done. Ms. Michael asked why if it was so important to individual Council members they did not initiate a survey themselves. Mr. Andrews said it should have been done. Mr. Scheeser said it was discussed to include in the Mayor's Bulletin but Council does not control that content. Everyone should take some responsibility for it not happening. He believes surveys are good when it comes to big radical changes. He would not compare this event to the Warrior Run.

Mr. Millard Rogers, 3942 Miami Road, said Council received the Resolution from the Mariemont Preservation Foundation opposing the proposed race. There would be destructive incursions that would be made in E. Boyd Jordan Park which is truly a virgin forest. To permit as the route shows repeated runs back and forth would be extremely damaging. He is also concerned with having the Village's National Historic Landmark status removed if we damage the environment to the extent that it negatively impacts on the elements that were in the 75 page nomination form that was approved by the Department of the Interior. He also believes it will create an unneeded burden on the Police Department to monitor and handle the traffic for this event. He encouraged Council to go online and Wikipedia Cyclocross and get the eight page history and go to one of the video links and view the pictures of what this type of race does to the landscape.

Mr. Mark Campbell, 3724 Indianview Avenue, said he wanted to voice his support of the event. It is a niche sport with an enormous following with riders dedicated to their riding abilities and the preservation of their sport. As an outdoor enthusiast he appreciates the skill and dedication these skilled athletes bring to their sport. The fact that Mariemont has the opportunity to host an international event is unique and exciting. The potential advantages outweigh the disadvantages. With cyclocross races happening in Europe year after year if courses were so damaged they would not want them back if the damage was permanent. He understands the apprehension from MPF, Garden Club, and Parks Advisory Board etc. He believes it is a unique opportunity for the Village and suggested contacting other municipalities that have held similar events in the past. He would like BioWheels to share their insight based on other local events and what was done to address similar issues. The re-seeding has been readily volunteered by organizers and sponsors. A race was held in 2010 in Fairfield that generated \$200,000 for the City of Fairfield with 70% of the participants traveling over 100 miles to compete and 80% of them staying one or more nights in the region along with 500 spectators. This could be a tremendous opportunity for the Village. This is the first time he has attended a Council meeting and personally a survey would have suited him better. Mr. Graham commented that the referenced race was held in October when the weather was nice.

Ms. Louise Schomburg, 3885 Oak Street, said at the last meeting she was very concerned about the damage to the hillsides. She asked Council to consider the hard work, labor, effort and time put in by many volunteers to bring back the area now that is part of Dale Park. This has the possibility of permanent damage to some areas. She also has concerns with the Statuary and how close proximity the race would occur and fears more damage to the statues. Part of the plan for Mariemont was to have open land, green space and the woods. If you take that away the Village becomes just like any other community. Most of where the bike race will take place is historic which should weigh heavily on the decision that is made. She also believes it is somewhat of a sacrilege to ride over stone markers of those in the cemetery. She said as far as questionnaires when you have committees and groups, such as MPF and Parks Advisory Board that are speaking for the community and reporting back to the Mayor and Council it should be viewed as a representation of resident opinion. The whole issue besides being an economic wonder for the Village has gotten very politically pushed. She is disappointed to see a lot of hammering back and forth on a political issue instead of what is good for the entire community.

Mr. Black said as Committee Chairman he will take responsibility. His intent whether it be discussing the roundabout, bike races etc. is to bring all issues before the Committee so everyone had a say at the table. He has heard that the Village is hard to work with and he wants to dispel that idea. We just have strict guidelines that we operate under because we are so concerned about our one square mile.

Mr. Andrews said he struggles as a Council member when communications received in the Council packets and what they hear in the Council Chambers is not consistent with what he hears within his district and the Village. He believes that is why at the last meeting Council discussed ways to gage feedback ideas such as this. This race has the potential to have a bigger economic impact than the Warrior Run. His comments on pushing on becoming better at that is so we can find the best opportunities that do lend themselves to our environment and economic development because we do have difficult years ahead.

Mr. Matt Ayer, 3908 Pocahontas Avenue, said he viewed the race videos and thought it looked like something that would be a lot of fun and it would be really cool to have in the Village. It would bring people in from all over the region. He agrees that the route itself has some issues. He checked with an expert and agrees that you do not want to go over the surface roots of the Beech Trees. He also contacted Mr. Martin Koepke, a landscape architect, who agreed to walk and tweak the course with Mr. Graham to address concerns. He might not be able to resolve all of the issues but he feels it is a fantastic offer. He urged Council to remain open-minded because it is a once in a life-time event that would bring a lot of attention and economic benefit to the Village.

Mr. Syd Sabo, 3857 Indianview Avenue, said he has lived here for 60 years and January 26th has never been a good day. The days before and following always have the coldest days and snow on record. He said not to count on him being there because it is too darn cold. It is ridiculous to him to risk a lot of hard work for a race that might not come off because of the weather.

The President of Jordan Park Condominium Association said we are talking about is 1000 trips on every inch of the run by aggressive bike riders. As far as economic development in his opinion who is going to come out ahead is Fairfax and Plainville because that is where the fast foods, grocery store, pharmacy and filling stations are.

On roll call; six nays, no ayes.

The meeting adjourned at 7:27 p.m.

Dan Policastro, Mayor

Anthony J. Borgerding, Clerk