

**MINUTES OF THE COUNCIL  
VILLAGE OF MARIEMONT, OHIO  
COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE MEETING HELD IN COUNCIL CHAMBER  
AUGUST 22, 2017**

Vice-Mayor Marsland called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. The following Council members were present: Mr. Brown, Mr. Hlad, Mr. Marsland, Ms. Palazzolo, Ms. Schwartz, and Mr. Wolter. Also present was Mayor Policastro.

Mr. Marsland stated that there would be no discussion about bikes on the trail at this meeting.

Mr. Marsland introduced the first topic of the agenda, which was to discuss a timeline for reopening the original footprint of the Whiskey Creek Trail to foot traffic. He said that we have an historic precedent of having a trail down to the first crossing at Whiskey Creek. This a trail that has been there since the founding of Mariemont and, at a bare minimum, we should open it up to foot traffic as soon as possible, but just to the first creek crossing from the Boathouse.

Ms. Palazzolo said we should be sure to label the trail head at the beginning and mark the end of the trail very clearly. It might be nice to place an historic marker there indicating this is the end of the original bird-watching trail, created by Mary Emery.

Mr. Wolter agreed with that suggestion, but said we would need to check on the exact date.

Mr. Hlad asked if there were any historical sites in the area of the trail from the Boathouse to the first creek crossing. Mr. Marsland said the Pond Site is in that area, but it is just flat ground. We have the Dam Site, which is at the top of the trail head. There is also a stone feature.

Mayor Policastro said he and Dr. Tankersley had seen the stone feature while checking on the trail. It looks like it may have been a bridge of some sort. We need to secure it and save the stone. Mr. Marsland said the trail does not go over that site.

Mr. Wolter said he believes it is important to have inner markings, as well. He has noticed that national park trails are identified by color and they use triangles on signs attached to trees. It helps people stay on the trails and it does not detract from nature.

Ms. Palazzolo said those markings would help if people did veer off the trail. We can say that the trail is clearly marked and people should not deviate from it. She thinks we should also post rules for use of the trails at the trail head, both at the beginning and end.

Mr. Hlad asked if we would need to pass an ordinance to establish those rules. For instance, we might want to say that people are only authorized to be on the designated trail. Right now, can people technically walk anywhere? He has seen kids down in the creek bed and walking all over, including up the hillside. Because there are historical sites, do we want people hiking the trail to have free rein of the area or do we need to pass an ordinance to limit it to a specific trail and pass an ordinance stating those limits.

Mr. Marsland said there is a nice trail barrier for those who walk the trail. It was installed at the first creek crossing. We could move the closure of the trail to that point and put up a sign that says, "Trail Ends Here". It would be a good place to have a terminus for the original foot print of the trail. He asked if the Committee members were in agreement to open up the trail to foot traffic to that point.

Mr. Brown said we need to make it clear that when people reach that point, they need to turn around and walk back the same trail they came down. There is to be no crossing the creek and using the other trails.

Mayor Policastro said he would like to have signs made by our Service Department. We need the terminology or message that will go on the signs. He thinks all the areas should definitely have signs. He would like to see them be the brown, parklike sign that we can make. He said it would be a good idea to put one at the dam site. He committed that the site is currently full of graffiti and asked if Mr. Wolter still had any graffiti remover and would he be willing to take on the project of removing the graffiti from the dam site.

Mr. Wolter said he does have the graffiti remover and agrees that we need to get the dam site cleaned up.

Mr. Hlad said the sign at the trail head at the Boathouse should be a permanent sign. That sign will be the start of the trail no matter what and we want that language to be exactly what we want going forward. He agreed that we need to have the trail close at the first creek crossing for now. There should be a temporary sign at the creek crossing that says the trail is temporarily closed beyond this point. It should also say that people need to turn around and walk back on the same trail. Mayor Policastro said he would ask the Service Department to order one.

Mr. Wolter asked if putting a split rail fence section there would help. Mr. Brown said that the trail widens out there so we might need a couple of sections and the fence would need to be on the north side of the trail. Ms. Schwartz asked what areas the fence would prevent people from accessing. Mr. Marsland said there are three creek crossings. At the first creek crossing, the trail goes up the hillside and there is a split rail fence there very close to the creek. Ms. Schwartz asked if there were any other trails that split off the main trail at the point and Mr. Marsland said there are not. Mayor Policastro said even though the fence would be several yards away from the creek, he would contact the Army Corps of Engineers to make sure they approved the digging that would we would need to do to put the fence posts in.

Ms. Schwartz asked about the big wooden sign showing trails. It is posted up the hill from the Boathouse by the stairs near the Tot Lot. Mayor Policastro said it would probably become obsolete. Ms. Schwartz asked if we could just take it down since people might look at it and think that sign is for Mariemont trails. Mr. Wolter said he agrees it should be taken down.

Mr. Marsland asked if everyone was in agreement with establishing the first creek crossing as the terminus for the trail and reopening only the top part of the trail to foot traffic.

Mr. Marsland said the next topic to be discussed was a progress report on the identification and sequestration of sensitive archeological sites. He said a lot of people have been busy down there looking at the burial mounds, the grist mill site, and the kiln site. Dr. Tankersley has been very involved in that. He asked if Dr. Tankersley had marked off around those sites. Mayor Policastro said the sites had not been marked off yet. Dr. Tankersley said once we get the signs made, he would be there to help us put them in the right locations. Mr. Marsland said the sites are not that geographically broad. His concern is that if we do not surround them with something like a split rail fence, we will not be able to protect them long term. At some of the sites, like Spice Mound, we would just have to put a fence on the side of it. Mayor Policastro said the advice he got from the State Historic Preservation Office was to put the fence at the base of the mound and run it for as long as is necessary to deter people from climbing it. Mr. Marsland said it is the boundary that he is concerned with, but he does not know exactly where that boundary is. Mayor Policastro said we should probably meet Dr. Tankersley down there and have him help us define that boundary. Mr. Wolter asked what the estimate is for the length of the perimeter is around the Madisonville mound. Mayor Policastro said it would estimate it at about 200 feet. All agreed that it is not feasible to put a fence all the way around that site. Mr. Marsland asked if putting a fence around all the other sites, like the kiln site, what the Committee should be looking at. Mr. Wolter said it would probably work to just have the split rail fence in the high traffic areas and then end it, but have wooden stakes or some other type of marker to indicate the outline of the site. There could be a sign there letting them know it is a sensitive, historic site. Mr. Marsland said the fencing would only run along the trail in places where the trail is abutting a sensitive site. He does not think we need a fence that completely encloses the site. We just need something that would keep people from veering off the trail and onto the historic sites. Mr. Wolter said we should be able to accomplish that by having a well-written ordinance and good signage and that should keep people from going off the trail, much as it is in the national parks. Ms. Palazzolo said a barrier makes sense to her, but enclosing the sites seems extreme to her and would involve a lot of maintenance. She agrees it is important to have good signage. It might be a good idea to include a diagram of the site or the size of the site on the sign. Mr. Marsland said it seems that everyone is on the same page when it comes to what we are looking toward establishing in these areas. Ms. Schwartz asked if she is correct that the fencing would only be on one side of the trail and Mr. Marsland said that would be the case. Mr. Hlad asked if the Committee should use yellow tape or some other marking to mark off the boundaries so they could all get a visual on the location of the sensitive areas. Mr. Marsland and Mr. Brown both felt that would be a great way to get a true visual of the sites. Mayor Policastro said there are only two sacred sites under the tree canopy to mark. People can already see the Madisonville Site. Mr. Marsland said there are a lot of sites bunched up together and it is important to get a visual on those. Mayor Policastro suggested the Committee meet with Dr. Tankersley at the trail to get his help on marking the sites. Mr. Marsland agreed that would help them from making any mistakes. Ms. Schwartz asked if they could set up a meeting so they could all go together. It could be set up as a Committee Meeting so they could all go together. After discussion, it was decided they would try to set the meeting for Saturday, August 26, 2017, at 9:30 AM, if Dr. Tankersley was available.

The next topic to discuss were the plans for remediation of damaged areas around the sites. Mayor Policastro said the Service Department had planted prairie seed the day before, so most of the remediation was done, except for Mr. Vianello's team going it to cover the seed with leaves and brush. Mr. Hlad said he did not think the work should have been done prior to the Committee meeting to discuss it. Mr. Wolter asked who had given the OK to do what was done. Mayor Policastro said he was taking direction from the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO). Mr. Hlad stated planting the seed was most likely the right thing to be done, but he would like to have had the opportunity to discuss it in advance. He would like to adhere to a process where all of Council can be informed and be able to give input before any action is taken. Mr. Wolter agreed, stating that Council has as much say-so in these matters as the Mayor. Mayor Policastro said the plan to plant seed over the sensitive areas was first introduced by Dr. Tankersley weeks ago and the SHPO had supported that plan. Jerry Vianello, 6570 Wooster Pike, said he has done a lot of volunteer work on the trails. He thinks the first concern should be safety. He referred to a statement Mr. Hlad had made earlier of the importance of having people walking only on the trail and not climbing the slopes. He had witnessed two kids climbing the hillside where there is loose dirt. They were three quarters of the way up the slope. He said the Committee should decide what they are going to do to keep people on the trail for the purpose of safety. He asked if he needs to hold up before he does any more volunteer work until he is given the OK to start and he wants to know who is supposed to be the person to give him that OK. Mayor Policastro said he spoke with Diana Welling and Barb Powers in Columbus. They said what we are doing is correct and that Dr. Tankersley was a very good source. It seems we are just about done with what we need to do. Mr. Hlad reiterated that he did not disagree with the plan proposed by Dr. Tankersley. He just wished that Council members could have talked about it first. He thinks it is in the best interest of the Mayor, of Council, and of the Village if things are discussed fully before any action is taken. Mr. Wolter said that would allow Council members to work in sync with the Mayor. Mr. Vianello suggested that Mr. Hlad contact the state to get clarification for himself that the revegetation plan is the best plan for remediation of the trails.

Clem Luken, 6610 Mariemont Avenue, posed a question on the matter of remediation. He said there is also the matter of the parallel component of removing the honeysuckle. There were groups of volunteers who came in and removed honeysuckle from many areas. Is there a possibility that, in the remediation process, that if you remediate with honeysuckle, those groups would come back and remove that honeysuckle and the Village would have to do through this remediation process again? Mr. Marsland said we are not remediating with honeysuckle. Mr. Luken said if we are allowing the trails to return to nature, there would likely be honeysuckle and other invasive species involved. Is there any need for planting something in addition to the prairie seed? He said he was asking because it seems that if that is something that needs to be done, you would not want to do it in two separate steps. You would want to do it all at once. Mayor Policastro explained that we are trying to allow nature to take the trail back. He said we have never taken honeysuckle off Spice Mound. We have only removed it along the trail so people could walk the trail. Mr. Vianello said the honeysuckle that was cut there was cut by people making the trail. That will be left as brush and we will use the brush to help cover the seed to protect it and allow the seed to germinate and grow. Mayor Policastro said we would also need to rake leaves over the seed to serve as mulch to complete the remediation.

After discussion, it was decided that planting the seed on the areas of the sensitive sites was the best way to restore the areas to nature and protect them from being walked on and damaged. Council would discuss what else needed to be done and how and when to proceed.

Mr. Brown asked what the timeline was for reopening the original part of the trail. Mr. Marsland said he would like to see a vote on it at the next Council meeting so they could vote then just on opening that section of the trail.

On the issue of temporary signage to be placed at the trailhead(s), Mr. Marsland said Mayor had suggested having the Service Department make another sign and place it at the trail head. Mr. Wolter said we should consider putting temporary signs on the split rail fences to let people know they are not to go beyond the fence. Ms. Schwartz said once the trail is returned to nature and disappears, having people go beyond the fence should not be a problem. The Committee agreed that Mr. Wolter's suggestion for temporary signs would work until then the trail had a chance to grow over.

The meeting adjourned at 8:03 p.m.

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Dan Policastro, Mayor

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Anthony J. Borgerding, Fiscal Officer