

**VILLAGE OF MARIEMONT  
SPECIAL COUNCIL MEETING HELD IN COUNCIL CHAMBERS  
FEBRUARY 3, 2020**

Mayor Brown called the meeting to order at 6:41 p.m. with the Pledge of Allegiance. The following Council members answered present to roll call: Mr. Bartlett, Mrs. Graves, Dr. Lewis Ms. Palazzolo and Mrs. Rankin.

Mayor Brown said Council will be voting to fill the vacancy of his Council seat. He explained the process will be as follows:

- a. Each candidate will be given an opportunity to speak. They will be limited to six minutes. The speeches will be given in alphabetical order.
- b. Residents will be given an opportunity to endorse any of the candidates or to ask any question of the candidates. The discussion will be limited to the candidates only. Each resident can speak only once and is limited to three minutes.
- c. Once all of the residents have been given a chance to speak, Council will close ranks. This will be an opportunity for Council to talk among themselves about the candidates before voting.
- d. Once Council has finished their deliberations, there will be an opportunity for each Council member to nominate or second a candidate. Each Council member can only nominate one person, and can only second one person.
- e. If only 2 candidates are nominated, then Council will be asked to vote for 1 of the 2 candidates.
- f. If more than 2 candidates are nominated, the voting will be done one candidate at a time in the order that they were nominated and seconded.
- g. The first candidate to achieve a majority vote of the Council members present is appointed to the vacant position. If there is a tie (for example, if two vote in favor and two vote against a candidate), then per Ohio Revised Code, the Mayor gets to break the tie.
- h. If Council goes through all of the candidates nominated and seconded, and is not able to reach a majority vote on any of the candidates, then once 30 days have passed since the vacancy was created, per Ohio Revised Code the Mayor gets to decide who fills the vacancy, using the pool of people who submitted their names to fill the vacancy.
- i. If nobody submits their name, then after 30 days have passed since the vacancy was created, the Mayor will fill the vacancy with a resident from the Village.

Mr. Adam Blevins, 3853 Indianview Avenue was granted permission to address Council. He has been a resident of the Village since 2016 and prior to that he lived in Northern Kentucky and was stationed in the military. He has been involved in community service and part of giving back projects such as youth scouting all his adult life. He is looking at serving the community in a bigger way and put his name in the hat for a member of Council. He thanked all the Council members for the chance to sit down and talk about the role. He enjoyed learning more about what was going on with the mechanics of how the Village works. He is excited about the possibility of having a larger role and getting more involved. He has no personal or political agenda. He is very transparent. As a resident, he asked Council to choose the candidate they best think will fill the role needed at this time. Regardless of how it turns out he will look forward to seeing everyone in the community.

Mr. Michael Cain, 6737 Murray Avenue, was granted permission to address Council. He lives in the heart of our Historical District. He is running for Village Council to be a representative for the Historic District. He is 32 years old and he and his wife have lived in the Village for two years. Mariemont is absolutely a lovely community with great people living in it. He grew up in a small town north of

Dayton, Ohio called Troy. He graduated in 2006 from Troy High School and went on to study at Miami University in Oxford, Ohio. He graduated from Miami University in 2010 with a BA in Anthropology and a Minor in Geology. After graduation, he moved back to Troy for a few years before meeting his wife and they moved Tipp City, Ohio. While in Tipp City, he worked as a Financial Counselor for Wilson Memorial Hospital in Sidney, Ohio helping the self-pay patients find financial assistance to alleviate bad debt for the hospital. During his tenure, he was able to solve the crippling debt crisis plaguing the hospital. Following that, they moved to Oakley in Cincinnati and lived there for 3 years. During this time, he worked as a National Sales Account Executive for Integrity Express Logistics in Blue Ash. Problem solving was at the forefront of his day to day existence during his tenure. Two years ago they moved to Mariemont. He has not lived in the community as long as some others that he has met in his time here, but just like every other person in this community, they chose to live here and they love it. Currently, he is the Assistant Special Events Manager for Great Parks of Hamilton County. He loves his job and loves providing events and activities for the public to enjoy. One of his goals in running for election for Village Council is to bring his talent and experience in event planning to the Village of Mariemont. He was compelled to run for election due to the strong belief he has in this community. He has spent his life solving problems by listening and engaging with people to come to the best possible outcomes. His desire to work with others makes him a perfect fit for the position. His goal is to accurately represent the citizens of the community. If elected, he vows transparency to the public. In the communities he has lived in previously, the one thing that tied them all together was the feeling of fellowship, as a result of sharing common interests, attitudes and goals. He wants Mariemont to have a greater sense of this, and he knows that we can achieve this through greater outreach and involvement within the community. One question Mrs. Graves has asked him was "What would you like to accomplish this term on Council"? He said he would like to engage in dialogue with surrounding communities on ways to help better manage and serve our own community. After conversations with Mr. Bartlett he learned our spending habits and how it is not in the best interest of everybody here. We are spending in 1-3 months what other communities are spending in 12-14 months. He would greatly like to see that change. We need to figure out a way to communicate with our neighboring communities and repair some of the damage caused by previously staying isolated and insulated from these interactions in the past. We have not been very open about communicating with the other communities and it may be due to being a bit snobby and he does not think that represents the community as a whole. Why does he want to run for Council? He wants to represent the neighborhood and community he lives in and make sure that we have accurate representation of all districts and demographics on Council. Currently, we do not have anyone that is his age and he would like to see that change. He believes in local government and the ideas of what a democracy truly represents and he wants to be a driving factor in making that happen here in the local community.

Ms. Leah Geldbaugh, 6942 Murray Avenue, was granted permission to address Council. She said she works for US Bank doing appraisal reviews. She was recently promoted to handle dispute resolutions on appraisals. With that job, she is used to talking with a lot of people. She has been with the bank for 8 years. Prior to that she was in interior design and used to working with people and working out problems. The reason she decided to run for Council is because for the last several years she has been volunteering with other outlets. She started the Farmer's Market a few years ago which went really well until she got sick. She reached out to one of her vendors last year and started it up again. It is a good event to get the community together and it was a profitable year for everyone. It generated \$2,000 for the Village. She is also a member of the Parks Advisory Board. She has been working with the Mayor to take the money generated from the Farmer's Market and hopefully put it towards the needs of the Parks Board. She would love to start more programs like the Farmer's Market to bring the community together. She would like to be a liaison for those who want to volunteer but do not know how they could. She would love to get them connected with the community. She would also love to get people new to the Village to realize why this community came about and Mary Emery's vision that all residents benefit from being here.

Mr. Joe Stelzer, 6609 Pleasant Street, was granted permission to address Council. He thanked Council for the opportunity to speak today. He has lived in the Village for over 25 years...13 years on Pocahontas Avenue and the last 12 years on Pleasant Street. He outlined the following:

### **Why does He want to Join Council?**

- He believes that Mariemont is facing numerous challenges.
  - Many in the community are concerned about high property taxes and flight of empty nesters away from Mariemont. Many leave as they are entering into their highest earning years and the Village survives off of earnings tax.
  - There are real questions right now if Mariemont has adequate financial resources to provide Mariemont with the ability to properly address its basic costs and provide reasonable amenities for its citizens.
  - The condition of our streets, sewers and other infrastructure probably need a thorough review to determine the current condition and identify needed resources. He heard recently about damaged sewers around the Village that need to be addressed.
  - Mariemont really needs to develop a defined Master and/or Tree plan to help plan for the future.
  - The empty storefronts and underutilized commercial buildings are impacting our tax collections.
- He believes his past experiences (both business & government) will be a valuable as issues are examined and solutions identified and adopted.
- Skills that he gained from successfully recruiting, organizing and leading groups of Mariemont citizens in the past will be helpful if Mariemont decides to utilize this same approach in the future.
- He has long-term relationships with political leaders at the local, state and national levels as well as local business leaders that will be valuable to Mariemont in collecting information and building consensus on future possible partnerships. He referenced a meeting with the Mayor of Newtown to see how the part-time Administrator position was working out. There has been talk in the Village of an Administrator and he got it straight from the horse's mouth that it did not work out very well.

**Some of His Work and Volunteer Experience**

- He has worked for 40 years at American Financial Group in a variety of roles:
  - Lead the Internal Audit Department
  - Working on numerous Special Projects
  - He has reported directly to the Chief Financial Officer (Three Different Individuals) for past 35 years.
  - But he reports to numerous other people in the company including the CEO's depending on the project.
- He served 18 months on Council. Finance Committee Chairperson during entire term and Vice Mayor for twelve months.
  - Led a group of fourteen Mariemont citizens in its efforts to effectively educate numerous political leaders at federal state and local level to understand the impact of a State Route 32 relocation on Mariemont. We touched a lot of government officials and did so through the "Friends, Family and Business Acquaintances" which partnered with other communities and business to increase the impact of our efforts. He was told the value of the efforts ("some might call it lobbying") was more than \$1 million. Some of the other communities impacted by the State Route 32 relocation were absolutely amazed by the impact of our efforts.
- Mariemont Youth Track and Mariemont Recreation Association
  - Coach, Coordinator and Board Member.
  - Mariemont Youth Track Meet Coordinator
- Murray Path Project
  - Total contributions as of yesterday were \$33,000.
  - He is happy to announce that the President of the Columbia Township Trustees has given his full support to a \$75,000 contribution to the Project. Columbia Township is working on a resolution to be presented for approval by all Trustees this month. This raises the total to \$108,000.
  - He is confident we will reach our \$150,000 fundraising goal.

**Why Did/Does He Volunteer on Stuff around Mariemont**

- Grew up in a house that most would consider poor.

- He saw his mother and father volunteer for everything. Boy Scouts, Girls Scouts, School and Church functions.
- Most people are not aware that his father passed away when he was fifteen and he really appreciated the fact that his Track coaches were always there. Coaching kids and providing them with the opportunity to participate in sports was his way of paying back the efforts made by his coaches in a variety of sports.
- He gets additional paybacks like seeing many different families using the South 80 Trails that he and others worked hard to build.
- Bottom line is that he enjoys doing it.

### **My Core Beliefs**

- Mariemont should not be directed by one individual.
- Better decisions are made as a group.
- Decisions should be reached based on fair, open & transparent process.
- All opinions should be heard and considered.
- The Village of Mariemont has a lot of talented citizens that need to be included in the decision process.
- We can disagree on issues but that does not mean you have to be disagreeable.

### **Endorsement Letters**

- Last night he shared with Council over 40 endorsement letters.
- Most of the letters are from Mariemont citizens that he has worked with over the past 25 years on various volunteer efforts. Also included were endorsement letters from the Mayors of Terrace Park, Newtown and Fairfax as well as the President of the Board of Trustees for Columbia Township. Rick Greiwe also provided a letter.

To summarize, he believes he has a unique combination of skills that will prove valuable to Mariemont as it addresses the future challenges.

Mr. Eric Marsland, 3600 Center Street, was granted permission to address Council. He is here to offer his support for Adam Blevins in his bid to secure the Council seat vacated by Mayor Brown. He first met Mr. Blevins 4 years ago as a fellow Scouter Dad. Since that time they have worked together as Co-Den Leaders for their sons' Cub Scout Pack. He has also worked with Mr. Blevins in his capacity as Pack Activities Chair and Assistant Cubmaster. He has always known him to be a man of great integrity and honor. He often serves as the objective voice of reason on our committee meetings. He has always had a drive to "do the right thing". Beyond his service to the community, Mr. Blevins is a Veteran of the US Armed Services and he thanked him for his service. He has exceptional project management skills that he has honed in his 20+ year career in the IT field. These skills would be a boom to our community when dealing with the complex issues facing our Village. It is therefore without any hesitation or reservation that he supports Adam Blevins for the newly vacated seat on Mariemont Village Council.

Mr. Dennis Wolter, 3804 East Street, was granted permission to address Council. He has lived in the Village since the early 1980's and served on Council for 10 years. He is impressed that so many threw their hat into the ring. It shows great community spirit. He is supportive of Joe Stelzer and believes he will hit the ground running and will bring many great challenge solving skills that the Village needs. He has seen his organizational and communicational skills as a fellow Council member for almost two years. The way he has reached out to other communities and their leaders and residents speaks well because Mariemont is not an island in the middle of the sea of government regulation. He believes he is the right man for the job at this time. He encouraged the other candidates that there will be another opportunity in two years to serve. He encouraged members of Council to consider Mr. Stelzer as he is well deserving.

Ms. Lisa Wharton, 3867 Homewood Road, was granted permission to address Council. She stated that she is in support of Joe Stelzer as a new Council member. She wants a Council person to be proactively dedicated to the big, long-term perspective of our Village's health and vitality. She wants them to be experienced in reviewing complex data, noticing what is missing or needs further attention, and able to go get reliable information from which to plan and govern. She wants them to be clear about their own interests and

perspectives, able to invite other ideas and priorities, and committed to assessing the relative needs and desires of all stakeholders with fairness and transparency. And as a capstone: a record of following through with well-considered and concrete action that results in improved conditions for his constituency. Mr. Stelzer has demonstrated these skills and qualities in his professional life and in his community work. She has personally experienced him to be a clear and reliable communicator, thorough and effective. They have not always agreed, but he has always been transparent and had good reasons for his perspectives. He has delivered what he committed to do. She would very much like to see those qualities at work for our Village.

Mr. Bob Van Stone, 4050 Lytle Woods, was granted permission to address Council. The purpose of his comments is to compare the character and qualifications of two of the candidates for Mariemont Village Council. On June 27, 2019, Joe Stelzer made a presentation to the Planning Commission concerning the Murray Avenue bike path between Settle and Plainville Roads. During that presentation, he stated that there were no plans to extend the bike path further to the east past Plainville Road. Now fast forward to the Health and Recreation Committee meeting held on December 9, 2019, less than 6 months after the Planning Commission meeting. At this meeting, Mr. Stelzer was adamant that the renaming of the Rembold – Hiawatha median might in some way impair the extension of the bike path past Plainville Road. Well, which is it? No plan or a plan to extend the bike path. These actions show both a lack of total candor and a lack of transparency. He does not think that these are the traits that we want in a Village Council member. On the other hand, Adam Blevins does not show or indicate any of these characteristics. He is not going to repeat his outstanding attributes that Eric Marsland has described. As an Eagle Scout, he trusts that a Mariemont Scout leader will provide the honest qualifications we need on Council. He wants to remind Council that no matter who you select this evening, that person will be required to take an oath of office to “honestly and impartially discharge the duties” of a Mariemont Council Member. Please select the candidate which has best demonstrated those attributes.

Ms. Lynn Long, 7022 Hiawatha Avenue, was granted permission to address Council. She said she was not here to support any one candidate but hopes that Council please consider geographic representation in their vote. Currently, all but one Council member live between Miami Bluff and Mariemont Avenue. This is a particularly “narrow” slice of the Village. She would hope Council will seriously consider someone who could advocate for the point of view of citizens who live on the north side of Wooster Pike and in the Historic District during Council meetings. Since the bike path has been brought up if Council thinks about stake holders on the bike path, residents would be the most important on the list. The idea of running a bike path through two of the most dangerous six and seven way intersections in the Village should concern every parent. She hopes people who live in the Village, and Council, would recognize that most of the green space that has survived in the face of development needs to be protected.

Mr. Rex Bevis, 4011 Miami Road, was granted permission to address Council. He said this is exactly what he thought would happen when the Village abandoned any semblance of District representation. He is currently addressing a Council made up almost exclusively of residents living on a few select streets adjacent to one another on the south side of Wooster Pike. Only Mrs. Graves lives on the north side of Wooster Pike. He really does not feel like he has much representation living where he lives on Miami Road (by Mercy St. Theresa). Especially when issues that exist only on the north side are being decided by people not impacted one bit by their decisions...such as a bike path. Regarding Council’s decision tonight, he hopes that each will give strong consideration to selecting a Council Representative who live north of Wooster Pike and can provide fresh and unbiased look at projects which primarily, maybe exclusively, affect north side residents, such as the bike path. Selecting a new Council member who is really focused strongly on the bike path does not provide a channel for open discussion. He thanked Council for all of the time and work that they put into being on Village Council.

Ms. Louise Schomburg, 3885 Oak Street, was granted permission to address Council. She said she was in support of Leah Geldbaugh. Ms. Geldbaugh has been on the Parks Advisory Board for a couple of years and has really become involved in lots of projects. She takes responsibility for the parks areas that she has been assigned which is the General Short Trolley Turn Around Park. She is always interested in helping anyway she can. She certainly has an interest in the community and the people who live here. She is impressed with her going out and starting all these other projects. She gave her credit for the time she devotes while having a full- time job and a young child. She said she had not met Mr. Cain but was also impressed with some of the things he said tonight and his interest in getting involved with different projects. She said along Mr. Bevis’s comments, both of these

candidates are north of Wooster Pike. She would love to get in touch with Mr. Cain and talk with him about the Parks Advisory Committee.

Mayor Brown said he cannot let the opportunity go by without thanking her for all she does for the Village.

Ms. Carolyn Tuttle, 6806 Mt. Vernon Avenue, was granted permission to address Council. Approximately five years ago, she had the opportunity to meet Leah Geldbaugh. She had the vision and desire to bring healthy food options to the people of Mariemont. She channeled her vision through the proper authorities and the first Farmer's Market was birthed. For the next two years she evaluated the concerns for parking, day and time of operations, number of vendors and the support from the community. Due to personal health issues and no other person to continue the project, she decided it best to shut down the operation. Leah revisited her mission to restart the Farmer's Market in the spring of 2019. She again contacted the Village, school personnel, vendors and friends for input. She evaluated their concerns and made adjustments. Leah is currently receptive to seeking evaluations from vendors and customers to improve the Farmer's Market for 2020. She believes her professional background provided her to use expertise and analysis to put forth a successful plan for her mission – healthy food options for Mariemont and surrounding communities which could also benefit our local businesses. She is asking for Council's consideration to vote for Leah Geldbaugh as your next Council member. She believes she will serve the Village Council with integrity, fairness and put forth a collaborative attitude.

Mr. David Kubicki, President of Trustees Columbia Township, was granted permission to address Council. He is looking forward to collaborating with the Village in the future and sees great opportunities to work together. He does not always get along with his Council members but they have creative tension and find ways to work out issues. He believes the Village has the opportunity to pick a dynamite team member with Joe Stelzer to help the communities. He has had his differences in the past with Mr. Stelzer but they see eye to eye and he believes he has the ability to be connected and work hard. He is positive the Village will be glad he is on their team.

Mr. Tom Feie, 3857 Settle Road, was granted permission to address Council. There have been a lot of improvements on Settle Road. They have worked with the Village over the years on the drainage issues and building the alcove. He has known Mr. Stelzer for a long time and the both worked on the Mariemont Recreation Association. This community is made up of volunteers and without them we would not get anything done. He believes Mr. Stelzer has long term vision. Mr. Stelzer has been involved in so many more things than just the bike path. He believes the multi-use path will be beneficial to many, including residents of Fairfax walking children to the Elementary School. Hamilton County does not elect officials depending on where they live. Politics are everywhere in business, industry and government. The Village needs someone who can understand it and work through it.

Ms. Suzanne Bischoff, 4004 Lytle Woods Place, was granted permission to address Council. She supports Mr. Bevis and Ms. Long in their belief that we need more representation on the north side of Wooster Pike. There is no one listening to them or representing their area. They are different than the south side of Wooster Pike. They have traffic and an immense problem at the intersection proposed for the bike path. It is not a viable place for young children to be crossing the intersection. They need a Council representative to represent their small area. She wants Council to think clearly about this decision. She understands that Mr. Stelzer has an immense amount of experience and fortitude but we need equal representation and someone who is willing to listen to us. The bike path is a big deal to those who will have to look at it every day.

Mrs. Graves thanked all that that put their names in the hat and she enjoyed meeting with everyone. When there is an issue she goes and looks at it and has conversations with those involved including the Police Chief and Engineer. She believes this Council does do their best to represent everyone in the Village.

Ms. Palazzolo said it takes a lot of guts to come out of your comfort zone and enter Village Council. It is not easy to do something that you know half of the people in the room are not going to like. She thanked everyone for willingly stepping up.

Mr. Bartlett said it is unfortunate that Council can only pick one person. There are elections in a few years and he encouraged all to stay involved. This Council wants to reach out and really engage more of the community. There is so much talent in the community.

Dr. Lewis said she is glad that Council had four really good choices. Her personal objective in running was to be fair and to represent everyone in the Village, not just one particular interest group. For that reason, the district argument is compelling to her. Going forward they could consider looking at larger districts. She did encourage everyone to go forward and if she could help she would be happy to sit down with anyone. Everyone has a unique skill set and Council would be lucky to benefit from any one of the four candidates.

Mrs. Rankin said she wanted to acknowledge the comments regarding representation north of Wooster Pike. She understands the districts are not an official thing anymore however she does think we need to acknowledge the demographics of the Village of Mariemont. There is a whole different ball game on each side of Wooster Pike. She does think Council needs to respect that opinion and take that into account.

Mayor Brown said he agrees and feels when you live in your neighborhood you know your neighborhood. You know your neighbors and the different issues where you live and experiencing it day to day.

Mr. Bartlett said district representation is a good idea but with the challenges facing the Village at this point in time it is important to pick the person we think will bring the best skills to fill the vacancy. The person who will take the position will be the Chairman of the Health and Recreation Committee. Currently there are six items to be tackled. The big projects are working on the Murray Avenue Path, Whiskey Creek Trail, Dale Park and Hillside Conservation. These are projects that Mr. Stelzer is heavily involved with. He helped bring the money together to build the Whiskey Creek Path. He believes it is also important for those in the Village to know that things economically are not as rosy as they have been portrayed. Personally, he believes we have missed the boat a little bit in terms of attracting better jobs. If you think about what is going on in the Village versus what is going on in our neighboring Villages relative to cash on hand...Terrace Park has gone, since 2013, from 1.4 million dollars to 1.7 million dollars which is a \$300,000 increase. Columbia Township has gone from 3.1 million dollars to 5.6 million dollars which is a 2.5 million dollars increase. Fairfax has gone from 2.2 million dollars to 7.8 million which is an increase of 5.6 million dollars. Mariemont has gone from a little over 2 million dollars down to 1.15 million dollars. We have drained our cash balance by \$860,000. The income tax is 63% of the income we use to support the Village. There has been a lot of great development in terms of houses and condominiums but we have not done much to bring business into the Village to help increase our tax base. He thinks it is important to reach out and partner with neighboring communities. He has met with the Mayor and Administrator for Fairfax, Terrace Park's Mayor and Finance Chairman and Newtown's Mayor and Finance Chairman and also with Columbia Township. It is important to try to work together to look for win/win situations. For too long we have been in a bit of a bubble and one of the reasons we have fallen behind in the curve in terms of our cash balance. It is important to establish those relationships and he believes Mr. Stelzer has achieved that. He has worked with Columbia Township to help secure a \$75,000 donation which will benefit both communities. He has a lot of support letters from local officials. He does understand the representation from different sides of Wooster Pike but wanted to note that Mr. Stelzer did live more of his time in the Village on the north side of Wooster Pike than the south side of Wooster Pike.

Mrs. Rankin moved, seconded by Dr. Lewis to nominate Mr. Blevins.

Mr. Bartlett moved, seconded by Ms. Palazzolo to nominate Mr. Stelzer.

On roll call; Mr. Bartlett voted for Mr. Stelzer, Mrs. Graves voted for Mr. Stelzer, Dr. Lewis voted for Mr. Blevins, Ms. Palazzolo voted for Mr. Stelzer and Mrs. Rankins voted for Mr. Blevins.

Mr. Stelzer was sworn in as the Council member to fill the vacancy of Bill Brown.

The meeting adjourned at 7:38 p.m.

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William A. Brown, Mayor

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Anthony J. Borgerding, Fiscal Officer