

**Village of Mariemont
Regular Council Meeting
June 28, 2021**

Mayor Brown called the meeting to order at 6:35 p.m. with the Pledge of Allegiance. Present were Mr. Bartlett, Mrs. Graves, Dr. Lewis, Mrs. Rankin and Mr. Stelzer.

Mrs. Rankin moved, seconded by Dr. Lewis to accept the minutes as written for the Council meeting June 14, 2021. On roll call; four ayes, no nays (Mrs. Graves abstained due to her absence).

Mr. William Kramer, Kramer & Associates, gave a brief progress report on the analysis of the Fire/EMS operations along with the Village's neighboring communities. Mr. Kramer said as a consultant he will be taking an objective 3rd party look at the current set-up. He will be seeking input from Council, all Fire Department personnel and a Citizen's Task Force Group to assist with the interactive exercise. It is important that people in the community have an opportunity to contribute their thoughts. He distributed materials that had his contact information and encouraged residents to contact him with questions, concerns etc.: Bill Kramer (513) 678-2279 <https://www.kramerfireconsulting.com>. He conducted a question-and-answer session with residents in attendance:

What is the timetable? Approximately 2-3 months. He will do it right, not do it fast. He does not accept payment until the client is satisfied.

What is the frequency that he will meet with the residents? It will be determined by the Citizen's Task force Group. He is flexible and is willing to meet weekly with residents.

What is your background? He is a long-time firefighter. He was a Director of Fire Science Education at the University of Cincinnati. He was an Assistant Fire Chief with the City of Cincinnati and Fire Chief at the Indianapolis International Airport and also Fire Chief with Deerfield Township. He has written textbooks used at the National Fire Academy.

When will all the information regarding why this is needed, what is the benefit to the Village, will it be incorporated that Mariemont is special in its own right due to the size and its historical status, and when will the numbers be available? There is something special about Mariemont that cannot be put into numbers. The community and the Fire Department are very special. The wealth of knowledge among the ranks of the Fire Department is unlike any other community. The quality of the Village's personnel is amazing. The fact that the Village has been able to maintain part-time fire fighters around the clock is also amazing. Someday that may have to change to full-time personnel. There is a lot to look at including how busy the department is day and night.

Residents have a relationship with the Fire Department that includes a personal touch – that may be lost with a bigger department. Currently we have near immediate response. Those are the type of non-monetary factors that will be looked at in addition to the facts and figures.

This was voted on 10-11 years ago – what is the substantial difference that Council is trying to pass this through especially without a citizen vote. The resident asked to see the specific supporting data. Mr. Bartlett answered that it was to join the fire district. What is being discussed now is contracting for services. The past two Assistant Fire Chiefs have stated that our current model is not sustainable long term. We are looking at potential options. It is projected by our Village Fiscal Officer that the Village will run out of money by the end of 2023. Council has reduced costs by \$200,000 and raised revenue by \$130,000. Changes have been made in the Tax Department and Building Department. Chief Hines said what the Assistant Fire Chiefs said was they did not know how long the current model is sustainable, not that it will not work. The experience level and longevity of our present Fire Department is unheard of. Most are full-time employees elsewhere. Mr. Kramer said one of the questions is how we can sustain this model indefinitely in the future because it is such a gem and works so well.

Are there any full-time firefighters? No – the Assistant Fire Chief is part-time though he logs in a lot of hours. He has a full-time job elsewhere.

It is very concerning all of the employees are part-time. How does the Village sustain reliability if there is an incident, and the full-time firefighters are called back to their higher employment priority? The firefighters are not all from the same department and if there is a call back to their full-time job there are procedures in place to fill in shift openings. It is not a huge concern at this time.

Is an all-volunteer fire department being looked at? Pure all-volunteer departments are near non-existent due to state training mandates and the time commitment.

Are there capital needs issues or other concerns contributing to this besides the part-time model and the overall financial condition of the Village? All of the financials will be looked into. Mariemont has done a great job getting ahead of curve in terms of capital expenditures. No major expenses will be needed until 2026-2027. We will need to determine the cost to repair the living/sleeping quarters due to the high moisture and flooding risks in the basement.

Is it more important to have pumper truck fighting fires and better equipment or moisture in the firehouse? Most overspend on equipment and underspend on staffing. There needs to be a balance between the two.

If we do this change and it does not work out, what is the cost to Mariemont? We will have enough facts and figures that it should not be something the Village will need to face.

Will the analysis take into consideration the financials of the other entities? It has been heard that Little Miami Fire District has serious financial problems. Will the Village buy into those financial problems by signing a contract? Mariemont is the client, and the interest is for the Village. The talks have included officials from Little Miami Fire District and the Village of Fairfax. All the pros/cons of merging and becoming a part of the district will be considered. The initial data seems to point to some sort of shared services rather than joining a district. The difference between mutual aid and shared services was defined. Mutual aid is the ability to call for help and other communities can call the Village. Shared services include joint purchasing etc.

What is the decision-making process going forward? Mayor Brown said when the consultant report is complete, and the report is complete from the Resident Task Force it would be heard before Council. The decision would be made then how to proceed. There will be many other opportunities for discussion. He wants proper interaction with all residents in this decision. It is a huge decision that will affect the Village one way or another. Mr. Bartlett said the proposal is being looked at, but no decision yet has been made. Dr. Lewis said personally as a representative of the residents she would not feel comfortable without bring this decision to a ballot issue.

Communications:

*From Police Chief Hines: May 2021 Monthly Report

*From Assistant Fiscal Officer Wendler: 2021 Expenses to Date/2021 Revenue to Date

Permission To Address Council:

Ms. Nancy Everhart Safran, Chestnut Street, was granted permission to address Council. She is concerned about chain link fences. Fences are being taken down in the Historic District which is turning into a parking lot. The garbage is unsightly as the fences would hide debris. She is an avid gardener and enjoys her backyard but now there is a lack of privacy. Those along Maple and Chestnut are opposed to what is happening with chain link fences. People no longer can just let their pets out, but now have to walk them. It is a quality of living issue and asked Council to grandfather the existing chain link fences.

Mr. Mike Smythe, 3607 Flintpoint Way, was granted permission to address Council. Council has done a great job at the pool. The aesthetics are outstanding. The Murray Path looks fantastic. He asked the status of the Village Administrator and has the interviewing yet taken place. Mr. Bartlett said no interviews have been yet conducted. We received 13 applications and have 5 interviews set up for the week of July 12, 2021.

Motion To Pay Bills:

Mr. Bartlett moved, seconded by Mrs. Rankin to pay the bills as approved by the Mayor, Fiscal Officer and Chairman of the Finance Committee. Mrs. Graves asked about the HSA contribution. Mrs. Van Pelt explained that it was for the School Resource Officer whose position was made full-time. On roll call; five ayes, no nays.

Committee Reports:

Miscellaneous:

4th of July Fireworks will be held on Sunday July 4, 2021, at Dusk. Mayor Brown said the Outstanding Citizen for 2021 will be announced prior to the start of the fireworks.

Village Office will be closed in observation of Independence Day Monday July 5, 2021.

The Village Flag Walk will be held July 3, 2021.

Village Offices will be closed for UAN Training Tuesday July 6, 2021, through Friday July 9, 2021. Training will take place in Council Chambers/Cultural Center and will be unavailable during work hours.

Mayor Brown referred to the Finance Committee renewal of Village Liability Insurance.

Mayor Brown said he has talked with Engineer Ertel, and we are ready to go out to bid for the Murray Path Landscape. Mr. Stelzer said the plan was distributed on a wide scale several weeks ago. Some tree changes were made, and changes were made to accommodate the existing parking pads. There was concern that the area was not draining properly. Each drain has a fabric screen across the top to prevent silt buildup and blockage in the sewer lines during construction. The screens will be removed once the area has been fully graded and seeded. Water will then flow unimpeded into the drains. Funds will come from the Clean Ohio Grant for the construction costs and the private donations, including \$75,000 from Columbia Township, for landscaping costs.

Council unanimously agreed to go forward with the proposed bid plan.

Resolutions:

“Renewal of 3.0 Mill Tax Levy in Excess of 10 Mill Limitation for Capital Improvements for the Tax Years of 2021, 2022, 2023, 2024, 2025” had a third reading. Mr. Bartlett moved, seconded by Mrs. Rankin to adopt the Resolution. On roll call; five ayes, no nays. Resolution R-22-21 was adopted.

“Resolution Authorizing the Mayor to Enter Into an Agreement of Cooperation with Hamilton County, Ohio Pursuant to Provisions of the Housing and Community Development Act of 1974, As Amended; And To Declare Emergency” had a first reading. Mrs. Rankin moved, seconded by Mrs. Graves to suspend the rules to allow for the second and third readings. On roll call; five ayes, no nays. The Resolution had a second and third reading. Mrs. Rankin moved, seconded by Mr. Bartlett. On roll call; five ayes, no nays. Mr. Bartlett moved, seconded by Mrs. Rankin to invoke the emergency clause. On roll call; five ayes, no nays. Resolution No. R-23-21 was adopted.

“To Assemble a Temporary Fire/EMS Task Force to Help Increase Revenue and/or Decrease Expenses of the Mariemont Fire/EMS and To Declare Emergency” had a first reading. Mrs. Rankin moved, seconded by Dr. Lewis to suspend the rules to allow for the second and third readings. On roll call; five ayes, no nays. The Resolution had a second and third reading. Mr. Rankin moved, seconded by Mr. Bartlett to adopt the Resolution. On roll call; five ayes, no nays. Mr. Bartlett moved, seconded by Mrs. Rankin to invoke the emergency clause. On roll call; five ayes, no nays. Resolution No. R-24-21 was adopted.

“To Appoint Members to an Audit Committee and To Declare Emergency” had a first reading. Dr. Lewis moved, seconded by Mrs. Graves. On roll call; five ayes, no nays. The Resolution had a second and third reading. Mrs. Rankin moved, seconded by Mr. Bartlett to adopt the Resolution. On roll call; five ayes, no nays. Mrs. Rankin moved, seconded by Mr. Bartlett to invoke the emergency clause. On roll call; five ayes, no nays. Resolution No. R-25-21 was adopted.

Ordinances:

“Ordinance Amending Section 151.04 of the Mariemont Code of Ordinances Regarding Fence Construction” had a second reading. Mr. Stelzer said residents can still apply for a variance with the Planning Commission. The question is the criteria for dilapidated fences. Mr. Bartlett stated that Ms. Beatty had put together the document which was shared with Council.

Chief Hines said a resident called to say they saw suspicious people by the Boathouse. As it turns out, they ran from our officers and officers found tools that are used for break-ins. They were apprehended and charged with attempted breaking and entering and possession of criminal tools. He urged everyone to report any suspicious activity in the Village.

Council discussed the process for naming residents to the EMS/Fire Task Force. Mayor Brown said he shared with Council the list of names of residents who were interested. It was agreed that 7 members would be selected with each Council member nominating one member, the Mayor will name one member and collectively Council will name one member. Mrs. Graves said we should look for diversity for the board and asked that the list be grouped by address. It was discussed to do the same as the Tree Commission where you have voting members and non-voting members. The list contains residents with many skill sets. The selection will be made at the next Council meeting.

The meeting adjourned at 7:52 p.m.

William A. Brown, Mayor

Anthony J. Borgerding, Fiscal Officer