

**Village of Mariemont
Regular Council Meeting
August 9, 2021**

Mayor Brown called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m. with the Pledge of Allegiance. Present were Dr. Lewis, Mrs. Rankin, Mr. Stelzer and Mr. York. Mr. Bartlett arrived at 7:08 p.m.

Mrs. Rankin moved, seconded by Dr. Lewis to accept the minutes as written for the Council Meeting July 12, 2021, Budget Hearing July 26, 2021, and Council Meeting July 26, 2021. On roll call; five ayes, no nays.

Communications:

*From Police Chief Hines: June/July Monthly Reports. Mr. York noted that Miami Road citations are up 175%. He suggested letting those concerned with the speed on Miami Road Hill that the increased police presence did help.

*From Assistant Fire Chief Copeland: July 2021 Monthly Report

*From Service Superintendent Scherpenberg: July 2021 Monthly Report. He indicated that leaf season will be here soon and the price for temporary help has gone up substantially to \$18.50 per hour. With COVID the concern is having a temporary unvaccinated worker working alongside our crew.

*From Tax Administrator Darrah: July 2021 Monthly Report

*From Assistant Fiscal Officer Wendler: July 2021 Fiscal Officer's Monthly Report

*From Councilmember Stelzer: Murray Path Project. He distributed to Council a summary of approval items needed by August 9, 2021. The estimated bids for water service have been gathered. Pinnacle Paving estimate (already approved by Council) included \$3,825 for the actual work to tap the water main line. Cincinnati Water Works has now advised that there is a \$3,926 permit fee for each of the three taps. Total cost \$11,788. To create a more efficient method of watering the landscaping, the following items were added to the scope of the project: 3,000' of 1" PVC Pipe, (20) 10" valve boxes and (10) quick coupler keys. Raymond Landscape prepared a bid of \$10,045 for this work that Council will need to approve. Resident volunteers are being recruited to water the plants on a periodic schedule. We will not know the actual cost for topsoil until the work is complete next month. At this time the Village cannot be certain of ODNR's reimbursement policy for certain expenditures. Based on reasonable assumptions, there is a good chance that the unreimbursed costs of the project will be covered by the Columbia Township contribution and/or private contributions. He is proposing a \$15,000 "backstop" contribution by the Village towards the Murray Path Project that will only be needed if the topsoil costs come in higher than expected and/or ODNR fails to reimburse for certain expenditures as expected. The Village's cash contribution to the project will be less than 7% of the total cost of the project. Council unanimously agreed to allocate: \$11,788 for the Water works permit fees; \$10,045 for additional work provided by Raymond Landscape and \$15,000 "backstop" contribution. On roll call; five ayes, no nays.

*From Council Member Randy York: Planned Town Crier Articles for Upcoming Publishing Season. He is working with the editor from the Town Crier to do feature articles on the Village employees and various volunteer groups. He would like it to include pictures and bios of the employees and what they do in their job capacity.

*From Council Member Joe Stelzer: Email Dated August 4, 2021 re: Building Office Monthly Report Proposed Layout. Mrs. Rankin said a meeting was held today to see where we are and how much there is to undertake. We are in a transitional phase right now. After discussion with XPEX, it is felt that where we are now in developing a process is good. To train a Building Zoning Officer, Mr. Van Stone has to be up to speed to do the training. Mayor Brown referred the matter to the Economic Planning & Zoning Committee to work out the details. He thanked Mr. Van Stone for his time and effort to take on this responsibility in a volunteer manner.

Mr. Stelzer said the process started long before and asked for a timeline of when it will be completed. He has asked for information in numerous emails. Mr. Van Stone said he has had total access to the department for two weeks and has not been included on the email exchange therefore he was not given an opportunity to respond. Mayor Brown said those are job details would be discussed at the Committee level. The job is more complex and involved than originally anticipated

when Council undertook reorganizing the Building Department. There is no reason to hurry this nor do he see the need to hurry it. A more clearly outline of the job description would be a task of the Committee. Dr. Lewis said she would like the Finance Committee to keep track of the savings to the Village. Mr. Stelzer said the Village is way behind in rental inspections. Council has not received a lot of communication about what is going on in the Building Department. He would like to see a monthly report with open permits, how much of a backlog is there etc. Mr. Van Stone said the Building Department was behind last year in inspections due to covid issues. He is volunteering 4 hours per day which is not enough. The zoning aspect of the job is not trivial.

*From Mike Lemon: Letter Dated August 4, 2021, re: Mariemont

*From Joy Pierson: Email Dated August 6, 2021, re: HUD Changes Needed for Cooperation Agreement and Resolution

Permission To Address Council:

Motion To Pay Bills:

Mrs. Rankin moved, seconded by Mr. York to pay the bills as approved by the Mayor, Fiscal Officer and Chairman of the Finance Committee. Mayor Brown referred to the Finance Committee the policy to approve expenses over \$5,000. In order to prevent future confusion, the document will be shared with Village employees. On roll call; six ayes, no nays.

Committee Reports:

Miscellaneous:

Village Offices will be closed in Observation of Labor Day, Monday September 6, 2021.

Mrs. Rankin said she, Service Superintendent Scherpenberg and Engineer Ertel went to look at the area where a tree had fallen, and taken part of the earth, in Whiskey Creek where the trail had eroded. To fix it is quite a task. Superintendent Scherpenberg said there is a Kentucky company that he wants to call to have them take a look at it and several other trees that are also down. We do need to get a permit from the Army Corps of Engineers. Engineer Ertel said there are some grants available for work such as this, but the first step is to get the permit from Army Corps of Engineers.

Mr. Stelzer said there are a lot of questions to be answered such as what is considered a Nature Preserve and what are the restrictions for path development in Nature Preserves and areas that are historically significant. If we utilize volunteers, it can not go the route that it did in the past administration and what part does the Parks Advisory Board have in this process. Does our insurance policy create any restrictions in this area? A legal survey needs to be completed of the area. Concerns that the dam could back up need to be addressed.

Mayor Brown referred to the Safety Committee the parking space located at Murray Avenue and Homewood Road by the fire hydrant which some feel creates a blind spot.

Mr. Bartlett said Council passed a Finance Report on April 16, 2021, regarding the Village Administrator search process. A job description was created, the position was advertised on the websites for Ohio Municipal League and Center of Local Governments. There were 14 applications resulting in 7 interviews. He and the Mayor are narrowing the field down to 2 or 3 candidates for the second round of interviews which will include the participation of Mr. York.

Mayor Brown said one of the skills that we want to emphasize is the ability to do financial reporting and trend analysis. The skill sets looked for was the ability to get grants and increase economic development. He did not see sufficient financial ability in what he was looking for in a candidate and suggested that the Village should be interviewing for a Fiscal Officer given the projected 2022 \$200,000 deficit and the inclination of both Mr. Borgerding and Mrs. Wendler that they would not be seeking reappointment after December 2022. He is concerned given the financial commitment we would be giving this person and questioned the value we would receive in return. He would like to more define what we are looking for in our financial reporting. He is not saying no to interviewing a Village Administrator but why not entertain the idea of looking at other options before gambling tax-payer dollars and questioned the urgency.

Mr. Bartlett disagreed citing several of the candidates interviewed had the qualifications to fulfil the need to do trend analysis. The urgency is by not hiring an Administrator the Village is further behind. In the upcoming interviews with Mr. York present, it can be an area to discuss in more depth. He asked what else a fiscal officer is going to do because a typical fiscal officer does a lot of the things that Mrs. Van Pelt does, such as the job description from Fairfax. She does these functions really well, but he would not know what work we would have her do if a Fiscal Officer is brought in. Mrs. Rankin asked when we do need a fiscal officer how will that be approached and is it budgeted for a certain year. Mr. Bartlett responded we would interview for one with the full job responsibilities, such as Fairfax that already has a job description. If we are waiting for Mrs. Van Pelt to retire to fill that role, we have had that conversation about salary before and he does not think we want to have that again. In his opinion, where help is needed on the fiscal end is the revenue side without having to turn to the residents. He does not believe raising taxes is the right thing to do. We need to find other sources, such as grants.

Mayor Brown said he and Mrs. Rankin met with a representative from our insurance liability carrier, the Ohio Plan, who offers services in economic development and resource management etc.

Mr. York said Council is no where near alignment and each member of Council is going to have to give and compromise. We can disagree, yet still be aligned, but right now Council is not. He does not want to sit on a balance deficit. He asked if this position could deliver in 18 months – he does not know but would hope it could. His feeling is most of Council would be more comfortable if we were more modest in the level of compensation being offered. Mr. Bartlett said one candidate offered to have their salary tied to performance. Mr. York stressed that Council needs to communicate with each member. If we cannot find alignment then we need to move away from it.

Dr. Lewis pointed out that Council has made big cuts to Village services. She personally as a resident, and as a representative of the residents, does not feel comfortable cutting more services, with the potential loss of a huge service that has not yet been fully vetted, and then adding a high price tag layer of bureaucracy administration driving the Village from break even into the red. In her mind, she has trouble justifying it. Mr. Bartlett said he has shown many examples of how a Village Administrator would pay for themselves. They are also instrumental in cost reduction. She is not sure that sufficient time was allowed to look at other options.

Mr. Stelzer recommended and Council agreed to proceed with the second round of interviewing (Mayor Brown, Mr. Bartlett and Mr. York) for the Village Administrator and left it open to the Mayor if he wanted to go on a parallel path looking for a fiscal officer or identify/task which employees/Ohio Plan would complete the desired results of Council such as defining projects for grants etc. Mrs. Rankin said she could set up a presentation with the representative of the Hylant Group.

Fiscal Officer Borgerding said he has been working on the analysis of real estate and income tax in other communities and hopes to present it at the next Council meeting.

Resolutions:

“To Accept Bid of Raymond Landscape to Grade, Seed and Landscape the Murray Path and To Authorize Contract” had a first reading. It was determined that funds were appropriated and therefore a resolution was not required. Council unanimously agreed to spend the \$65,000 for the landscaping.

“To Renew Current Contract for the Following Kinds of Insurance: Real and Personal Property, Comprehensive General Liability, Business Automobile, and Other Coverages; to Pay Premiums; and To Declare Emergency” had a first reading. Mrs. Rankin moved, seconded by Mr. York to suspend the rules to allow for the second and third readings. On roll call; six 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; six ayes, no nays. Mr. Rankin moved, seconded by Mr. Bartlett to invoke the emergency clause. On roll call; six ayes, no nays. Resolution No. R-27-21 was adopted.

“To Confirm the Appointment for Robert Van Stone as Interim Village Zoning Officer 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 reading. On roll call; six ayes, no nays. The Resolution had a second and third reading. Mrs. Rankin moved, seconded by Dr. Lewis to adopt the Resolution. On roll call; six ayes, no nays. Mrs. Rankin moved, seconded by Mr. York

to invoke the emergency clause. On roll call; six ayes, no nays. Resolution No. R-28-21 was adopted. It was noted that Mr. Van Stone was volunteering his time and is not being paid for his services.

“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 Mr. Bartlett to suspend the rules to allow for the second and third readings. On roll call; six ayes, no nays. The Resolution had a second and third reading. Mrs. Rankin moved, seconded by Mr. York to adopt the Resolution. On roll call; six ayes, no nays. Mrs. Rankin moved, seconded by Mrs. Graves to invoke the emergency clause. On roll call; six ayes, no nays. Resolution No. R-29-21 was adopted.

Ordinances:

Mr. Stelzer asked that the next meeting Council observe social distancing due to the increase of COVID.

The meeting adjourned at 8:17 p.m.

William A. Brown, Mayor

Anthony J. Borgerding, Fiscal Officer