

**Village of Mariemont
Council Meeting
June 12, 2023**

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

Mr. Bartlett moved, seconded by Mrs. Rankin to excuse the absence of Ms. Geldbaugh. On roll call; five ayes, no nays.

Mrs. Rankin moved, seconded by Mr. York, to accept the Council Meeting minutes from May 25, 2023, as written. On roll call; four ayes, no nays (Dr. Lewis abstained due to her absence from the meeting).

Mrs. Rankin moved, seconded by Mr. York to accept the Council Meeting minutes from May 30, 2023, as written. On roll call; four ayes, no nays (Mrs. Brownknight abstained due to her absence from the meeting).

Communications:

*From Police Chief Hines: May 2023 Monthly Report

*From Assistant Fire Chief Copeland: May 2023 Monthly Report

*From Service Superintendent Scherpenberg: May 2023 Monthly Report

*From Tax Administrator Barlow: May 2023 Monthly Report

*From Building Official Holloway: May 2023 Monthly Report. He commented that the new townhomes by the Steam Plant have begun foundation work for 2 units. The plans are under review. Total of 19 townhomes are planned with a cost over one million dollars.

Mr. York noted that there was a geo-thermal installation application. Mr. Holloway said we need to update our Code of Ordinances. He will research other municipalities codes and also consult with Engineer Ertel. Mayor Brown referred the matter to the Rules and Law Committee.

Mr. Holloway said they have a working draft regarding sandwich signs. Feedback was received from the businesses. He is working with the Rules and Law Committee. A standardized sign is preferred.

Mr. Holloway said another notice was sent to landlords regarding rental inspections. He has not yet heard any response from the notice sent.

*From Solicitor McTigue: Letters Dated May 4, 2023, and May 9, 2023, re: Ethics Commission Opinion

*From Christopher Woeste: Lead Advisory Attorney for State of Ohio Ethics Commission; Letter Dated May 11, 2023, re: State of Ohio Ethics Commission Opinion Response to Solicitor McTigue.

Solicitor McTigue said he will take the heat for what we have done with our independent contractor for the Tennis Courts. The agreement is legitimate and lawful. His understanding is Council will revisit the situation over the next year and decide what is the best way to handle it. For now, he believes the Village is doing it properly. Mayor Brown said he is to meet with the contractor this week to finalize the contract. He said there is another letter from the Ethics Commission that he was not able to get into the packet, but he will email a copy to Council. The content of the letter is a continuation of the first letter received from the Ethics Commission.

Permission to Address Council:

Ms. Mandy Beecroft, new Branch Manager, at the Mariemont Branch Library introduced herself and said she was looking forward to learning more about the Village of Mariemont and to also find out what the library can do to help the community as well.

Administrator Barlow said he has heard rumblings of why former Fiscal Officer Richard Ford resigned. He read Mr. Ford's resignation letter dated May 17, 2023:

Mayor and Village Council,

I am resigning as the fiscal officer of the Village of Mariemont. There have been some recent comments that I feel attack me and my integrity, which to me is extremely important. I didn't sleep much for a three-day period as a result of the comments that were made, which led to my decision to resign. I just can't work in an environment where I feel personally attacked or threatened.

I met with Mayor Brown and Administrator Barlow today to discuss a transition plan and have agreed to stay on until May 31 to help finish some things I've been working on and to prepare the upcoming tax budget, but I don't feel comfortable coming onsite any longer. After May 31, I expressed my willingness to help Mr. Barlow, Mrs. Van Pelt, or Ms. Uhrig with UAN and financial type questions as needed on a voluntary basis until a new fiscal officer is appointed.

This decision was not made lightly and has been very discouraging to say the least. I really love Mariemont and was looking forward to many more years there and have put in a lot of extra time onsite to help the village, which makes this decision so difficult. Thank you for allowing me to be a part of your very special village over the past year!

Richard Ford

Administrator Barlow said he hopes all realize this is a huge loss to the Village. It is a shame Mr. Ford felt he had to leave under these circumstances simply because he was doing his job fulfilling his obligations as Fiscal Officer. He is here because his predecessor felt there was a hostile and toxic work environment. In addition, two other employees also left for the same reason. He thought it was gone, but apparently it may be coming back. We cannot have that kind of environment. As Village Administrator he will nip it in the bud. If it requires investigation from an outside source, so be it. He will not allow or work in a hostile/toxic work environment. There are two sides – you are either part of the problem or part of the solution. His hope is that everyone wants to be part of the solution.

Mayor Brown said Mr. Ford has been in contact with Mrs. Rankin and has offered his assistance to help her as the temporary Interim Fiscal Officer.

Motion to Pay the Bills:

Mrs. Rankin moved, seconded by Mr. Bartlett, to pay the bills as submitted. Mr. Bartlett asked if the street light replacement (Pleasant Street and Denny Place) will be covered by motorist's insurance. Superintendent Scherpenberg said yes. On roll call: five ayes, no nays.

Committee Reports:

Mr. York moved, seconded by Mrs. Rankin to accept the recommendation of the Special Sub Committee for Economic Development which met on Monday, May 15, 2023, at 2:15. Chairperson Marcy Lewis, Council members Kelly Rankin, Randy York, Leah Geldbaugh, Mayor Bill Brown, Village Administrator Chuck Barlow, resident Tina Getter (who is a member of the Mayor's Resident Economic Development Group), and Emil Liszniansky, principal of Envision were all present at the meeting. The purpose of the meeting was to meet personally with Envision Principal, Emil Liszniansky, and allow committee members an opportunity to discuss Envision's proposal in greater detail. Over the course of the last several months and as a result of the recommendations of the Ohio Plan's Comprehensive Strategic Action Plan, various entities were evaluated to assess their fit for providing the Village with professional assistance in its Economic Development efforts. The Mayor, along with various council members, Administrator Barlow, and members of the Mayor's Resident Economic Development Group met with Envision (initial meeting 12/12/22), Alloy and Redi Cincinnati (2/8/23) and The Neyer Group (3/21/23). In addition, a proposal was solicited from Blume Community Partners (received 4/10/23). While each organization has many strengths, at the conclusion of the May 15, 2023, meeting the committee voted unanimously to accept Envision's proposal. Envision embodies many unique strengths that make it ideally suited to helping Mariemont in its Economic Development process. Specifically, Envision had worked successfully with Madeira, Village of Poland and City of Aurora (Poland and Aurora each have historic districts). Envision has worked with their clients at a local, state and national level to further their funding requests and policy initiatives. Envision also has extensive knowledge of federal discretionary grant programs and the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law. They will specifically work within the existing industrial area as well as aid in evaluating the highest and best use of other potential sites within the Village. In addition, Envision has strong relationships with other economic development organizations, including but not limited to Development Strategies Group LLC (who submitted a proposal to Mariemont last fall). Envision has also made it clear that their proposal is flexible, and fluid as various findings emerge (but will not exceed the contracted bid). It should be noted that over the past few months, Envision has been available to discuss both their proposal and additional concerns of the Village. For example, Emil reviewed the pool grant request that was made last year and made specific recommendations for this year's submission. In conclusion, the Sub Committee For Economic Development unanimously voted to accept Envision's proposal. The depth of their knowledge, familiarity with various Economic Development tools and experience with acquiring funding make it the ideal organization to help Mariemont to create and maximize its Economic Development Strategy.

Dr. Lewis provided members of Council with a copy of the proposal. Solicitor McTigue will prepare a Resolution to enter into contract with emergency. Mayor Brown said he is excited about bringing this company on board. They are flexible and we will be able to specifically tailor the Village's requests and needs. He believes they are well connected and will be helpful with grant writing. On roll call; five ayes, no nays.

Miscellaneous:

- Village Fireworks will be held Monday July 3, 2023, beginning at dusk
- Village Offices will be closed in Observance of Independence Day Tuesday July 4, 2023
- The State Audit will be Tuesday June 13th and Wednesday June 14th
- Mayor Brown referred to the Finance Committee the renewal of the liability insurance
- The Budget Hearing will be held at 5:30 p.m. on Monday July 10, 2023, with the Regular Council Meeting to begin immediately upon its conclusion

Resolutions:

- "To Appoint Kelly I. Rankin as Temporary Village Fiscal Officer; and To Declare Emergency" had a first reading. Dr. Lewis moved, seconded by Mr. Bartlett 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. Solicitor McTigue did research to make sure that there was no conflict of interest. Mr. Bartlett moved, seconded by Mrs. Brown knight

to adopt the Resolution. On roll call; five ayes, no nays. Mrs. Brownknight moved, seconded by Mr. York to adopt the Resolution. On roll call; five ayes, no nays. Resolution No. R-26-23 was adopted.

Ordinances:

- “To repeal Ordinance No. O-8-23 Pertaining to Maximum pay Rates for All Grades of Recreation Employees and to Enact New Legislation Pertaining to Maximum Pay Rates for All Grades of Recreation Employees; and To Declare Emergency” had a first reading. Mr. Bartlett moved, seconded by Mrs. Rankin to suspend the rules to allow for the second and third reading. On roll call; five ayes, no nays. The Ordinance had a second and third reading. Mrs. Rankin moved, seconded by Mr. Bartlett to adopt the Ordinance. 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. Ordinance No. O-12-23 was adopted.

Task List and Committee Assignments:

Mayor Brown said he will be the lead on the Concourse Trellis. It was agreed to have the quotes by August 2023. The wisteria is old, overgrown and dying. All the wisteria will need to be removed. The wood framing that comprises the actual trellis will need to be removed and replaced. Much of the stonework will need to be recemented. It will be a big project. He and Mr. York are to develop a plan with the thought the work could be segmented. Mr. Bartlett asked if there was a possibility to get grant money from the Ohio Historical Preservation. Mr. York said yes, but a budget and a plan is needed with public input. The original plan calls for wisteria, but it is not blooming because the tree canopy has become too mature. Mayor Brown said some of the trees are not in good condition and should be removed to allow for more sunlight.

Mr. York said the work on grants should be noted as ongoing.

Mr. York recognized Mayor Brown, Ms. Geldbaugh, Mr. Barlow, Superintendent Scherpenberg and Mike Lockhart for working with the residents over concerns of the change in the pool hours. A solution was readily agreeable for everyone, and it will make a huge impact.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:14 p.m.

William A. Brown, Mayor

Kelly I. Rankin, Fiscal Officer