

**MINUTES OF THE COUNCIL
VILLAGE OF MARIEMONT, OHIO
COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE MEETING HELD IN COUNCIL CHAMBER
AUGUST 25, 2011**

Mr. Black called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. The following Council members were present: Mr. Andrews, Mr. Black, Ms. McCarthy, Mr. Scheeser and Mr. Wolter.

Mr. Black introduced Mr. Mitch Graham, owner of BioWheels, to explain the Mariemont UCI (Union Cyclist International) Cyclocross Event Proposal. He has been putting on cycle races for 11 years and feels Mariemont would be an excellent choice for the prelude event which is being held in Louisville, Kentucky February 3, 2012. The race would showcase the beauty of the Village with its distinct layout and architecture including the hotel and the theatre. In addition, to its integration of parks into its business and residential areas the Village provides an ideal setting for a world-class cyclocross event. Cyclocross is a spectator-friendly form of bicycle racing. Using a two mile course riders tackle a challenging circuit utilizing technically demanding off-road sections mixed with fast paved sections. The sport is gigantic in Europe. There would be an elite women's race and an elite men's race along with warm-up sessions. He anticipates the tentative schedule for Saturday January 26, 2012 to be 5:00 p.m. to 10:00 p.m. with approximately 80 athletes. Course set-up would begin approximately two days prior and course tear down after the race.

Chief Hines said he will have to check with the Ohio Department of Transportation to get permission to shut Wooster Pike down for five hours. It is a State Route and permission would have to be granted by the State of Ohio for that period of time. Mr. Scheeser said it may be determined by a good detour. Mayor Policastro said the problem is the detour would go through the residential areas.

Mr. Wolter voiced concern if we have a warm winter the bike tires are going to really tear up the parks, especially along the hills in Dale Park. Mr. Scheeser said that is his concern as well. While he supports the idea he urged Council to make sure we have a solid bullet restoration plan in place. He believes we need to plan on \$10,000 worth of labor. Mr. Graham said there will be visible wear and tear after the race. He explained there are insurance policies that can be taken out in the event of a catastrophic rain event.

Mr. Andrews asked about the upside to the race which would be the economic impact it would have on the Village. Mr. Graham said certainly people would be coming into the Village that otherwise may not. It is good PR to get the Mariemont story heard. Hopefully it will attract media attention such as local televisions and Fox Sports. It will get a lot of press through national and international cycling publications.

Mr. Black asked if the race sponsors would cover property damage to the Village or is that a cost to be absorbed by the Village. Mr. Graham said the matter could be negotiable. It would depend on if the request is reasonable. An insurance policy through Neace Lukens would be a possibility.

Chief Hines said the proposed \$1200 for overtime paid to the police officers will not be enough. He anticipates the figure to be closer to \$2,000.

Mr. Andrews asked how the Village could add up the economic benefit. Mr. Graham suggested contacting Steve Shaw or Madeira City Manager Tom Moeller. It impacts the community long after race day.

Mr. Graham said he is bringing in three sponsors: United Dairy Farmers, Reece-Campbell Construction and Mike Schuster Architects. He encouraged Council to seek local sponsorship within the Village. Mr. Andrews said last year we repurposed a Committee to look at Economic Development and he thinks Council should not be looking at how much it may cost but instead focus on getting an assessment of what is the economic benefit that is valuable as a Village and at what point does it make sense to spend money. He believes this would leave a bigger economic impact on the businesses than the fireworks. Mayor Policastro said on the weekends the local restaurants are always full.

Mr. Wolter said with all the other issues we are dealing with in the Village to save money Council has to make sure that this event will not cost us money. It is difficult to put a dollar value on exposure. We also need to consider resident impact. Most residents will not want the disruption. Mr. Andrews said we are speculating and we need to ask some questions.

Mr. Wolter suggested holding the race in the lower 80 acres. Mr. Graham said that would make the start and end of the course difficult and it would lose a lot of the Mariemont exposure.

Mayor Policastro said he plans on putting a survey in his next Mayor's Bulletin and let's see what the people want. The residents he has spoken with do not want it by their house. He said the race cannot be run through the Beech Grove because it will kill the 100 year-old Beech trees. The above ground roots cannot take the pressure from the bikes. Mr. Graham said the race could run on the outside perimeter. Mayor Policastro said the course runs through the parking lot of the Mariemont Inn and according to the owner he cannot afford to allow that to happen with so many customers on a weekend.

Ms. Louise Schomburg said in addition to her concerns for the Beech Grove she is also very concerned about some of the route going through areas where the Village has erosion issues. In areas such as the hill by the

cemetery we are watching the erosion problems. Several areas have small trees planted to help with the problem. The hillside on Chestnut Street is another concern. The damage to the hillsides will be more than just throwing some grass seed down. A landscaper is not going to be able to correct all the damage that will be done.

The owner of the Dilly Deli said he thought it would be a good event for the Village and local businesses during the event and even several days before and after. The impact would be hard to measure but it would be a positive impact with positive exposure.

Due to the timeline Mr. Graham would need to go forward with the race it was determined to meet again in four weeks to further discuss concerns including: traffic/detours along Wooster Pike, insurance policies to safeguard the turf restoration, course design, sponsorship and resident feedback and impact. Mr. Andrews suggested doing an online survey for the residents in addition to a paper copy.

Mr. Black said the second agenda item was an Early Retirement Incentive Program suggested by Tax Administrator Judd. Mrs. Judd said she is eligible to retire through OPERS but she is trying to increase her pension. The idea came to her from Councilman Scheeser's blog. She asked for a \$40,000 incentive buyout which would increase her final average salary.

Mr. Andrews asked if something like this is legal. It seems to him that is gaining to the system while impacting the taxpayers to boost Mrs. Judd's pension. Solicitor McTigue said due to being in court all week he apologized for not having the time to look further into this matter. He talked with the Administrator for Union Township and the process is something you have to make sure all t's are crossed and i's dotted. An Early Retirement Incentive Program would need to be made available to everyone. He said he would have to do more research of the ORC but in order to do something like this we would have to change our Ordinance to eliminate the Tax Administrator and subsequently hire a part time consultant to be the Village Tax Administrator. The job would need to go out for bid as it is proposed currently. Council cannot guarantee Mrs. Judd if she took an early retirement incentive that the Village would hire her back as a consultant.

Mrs. Judd said her intention is to work as a contractor/consultant for two years. She believes the next two years may be difficult for the Village in terms of the Village needing funding. If she is healthy she will continue to go on. She would be able to work with the proposed legislation from the State of Ohio to take over all the collections.

Mr. Andrews said one of the assumptions he perceives from the proposal is that we can operate the Tax Department with fewer hours and fewer people. Mrs. Judd said no. She will be working full time but the Village would be billed for part-time hours. She said she would not get out of the office very often only working three days a week. It would also give her two years to train and groom the Staff Assistant for the Tax Administrator position. She is in the process of showing her how to audit businesses. Mr. Black asked if after the two years the department would then be one full-time person and one part-time person. Mrs. Judd said if Council wanted to go part-time it would take two part-time positions and one full-time position. Ms. McCarthy said it would be a good time to look at automating trash collections and other areas that would cut down on administrative tasks.

Mrs. Van Pelt said she would contact OPERS because she does not believe the buyout money would be considered pensionable income.

Mr. Wolter said there are a lot of things that could come up after the Village makes the lump sum payment such as illness. Mr. Andrews said he could not imagine telling that story to a resident. Residents would want to know why we paid \$40,000 when we could simply restructure the department to one full-time and two part-time positions. Mr. Wolter said it is hard to find a full-time person with the commitment and the knowledge Mrs. Judd has. Mr. Andrews said as much as he likes Mrs. Judd there are people out there that are unemployed that do this kind of work and that may be the perception of the residents. He reminded Council that we recently did this with the Fire Department and said we can do this in other ways and still meet the need and also save money. Mrs. Judd said if this does not go through she is simply going to continue to work. Mr. Wolter said we need to be careful with this right now because there are people who are hurting for jobs and this option is not available to them. There is a perception with public employees that they have gold plated benefits that are funded by taxpayer dollars. Even if it makes sense and it is legal it might just be a black hole that causes a lot of turmoil that the benefit is not going to net out as a positive.

Mr. Black said this is an offer that we are not ready to make a decision on yet. He asked the Solicitor to do further research and suggested meeting again in 30 days to discuss the matter further. Council thanked Mrs. Judd for bringing the creative idea to the table.

The meeting adjourned at 8:25 p.m.

Dan Policastro, Mayor

Anthony J. Borgerding, Clerk

