

**MINUTES OF THE COUNCIL
VILLAGE OF MARIEMONT, OHIO
EMERGENCY MEETING HELD IN COUNCIL CHAMBER
JUNE 6, 2012**

Mayor Policastro called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. with the Pledge of Allegiance to the flag. The following Council members answered present to roll call: Mr. Andrews, Mr. Black, Ms. McCarthy, Mr. Miller, Mr. Scheeser and Mr. Wolter.

Mayor Policastro introduced Traffic Engineer Caroline Duffy, Barr & Prevost, who helped us get \$80,000 which we will get next year through the Safe Routes to School grant. In addition, there is the possibility of additional funding through the Fairfax project grant. Phase I was Murray Avenue becoming one-way east to west which is working very well. Phase II will be the traffic light at Wooster and Belmont which is needed for several reasons. The children need a crosswalk to go to school at the Junior High in Fairfax. We also have sight impaired residents who have petitioned that we do something. In the future, it will be up to the residents if they want to possibly make Settle Road a cul-de-sac by extending the island. No decision will be made at this meeting but he will refer the matter to the Safety Committee or Committee of the Whole at the June 11, 2012 Council meeting.

Ms. Duffy explained the work that she has been doing with the Fairfax Project and the Safe Routes to School Project. We secured \$80,000 in grant money last year and received notification that we have been awarded \$380,000 additional funding to improve the walking and bicycling riding between the two schools. The proposal she submitted includes a traffic signal warrant, which is a standard process if a light is being replaced or if a new light is being installed. The signal warrant analysis is a procedure which collects existing traffic data. It includes counting cars and turning movement counts. She has met with the school transportation department to discuss the new bus routes that will be implemented. The traffic numbers will be added to the existing traffic numbers to determine if whether or not the signal is warranted. If the signal is not warranted because of lack of numbers chances are the signal is not going to be installed. Phase II of the project would be the signal design. The right-of-way acquisition is due to be completed the end of August 2012. The study should take three weeks while the design should take at least four weeks. Therefore time is of the essence. The Village of Fairfax is on board with the project.

Mr. Mark Amann, 6515 Wooster Pike, said his property is located next to the Tavern and presently it is occupied by his son's family. He has safety concerns which include egress and ingress out of the property and the position of the stop line for the traffic signal. He also questioned if there would be any improvements to the curb and sidewalk.

Ms. Emily Amann, 6515 Wooster Pike, said the huge orange barrels are outside her driveway which makes turning near impossible. Ms. Duffy said she will contact the construction manager to make arrangements to have them removed because they are outside the scope of work. Any complaints they have received have been taken care of immediately. She also suggested if there are problems in the future to contact the Village of Fairfax or herself directly. She said they do not know where the stop line will be yet because they have not gotten that far in the study. That would be discussed at a future public hearing. The reason the sidewalks were not improved was because of extensive opposition to ODOT from a Mariemont resident which is documented.

Mr. Ken White, 3829 Settle Road, questioned about the section of Wooster Pike along Harvard Acres without sidewalks. Ms. Duffy said that property is in Mariemont and will be funded through the Safe Routes to School grant next year. Mr. White said he would be concerned with having a sidewalk so close to the street.

Mr. Jerry Vianello, 6570 Wooster Pike, said currently if traffic is going towards town you have to wait for a good neighbor to let you out and left hand turns are near impossible. What many people are starting to do is going down to Hawthorne and cutting over to Watterson which may skew the traffic numbers. In addition, school is out so patterns will be different. Ms. Duffy said she is aware of that and the school patterns that were there will no longer be the same. Mr. Vianello suggested taking this under advisement because people have already begun to modify their behavior. She said they would factor in that data. Children do need a crosswalk with a light.

Mr. Amann asked why the decision to put a traffic light at Belmont and not some other location. Ms. Duffy said because of the traffic numbers and everyone complaining about the difficulty getting out of the street. The traffic signal will be actuated, just like the two in Fairfax, and will definitely help with the congestion. They will be sensitive to the number and flow of traffic. The light will remain green unless there is side road traffic or someone pushes the button.

Mr. John Meade, 3851 Homewood, asked for clarification of which we are solving for: Safe Routes to School or are we solving problems for those turning left on Wooster Pike. He also asked what Ms. Duffy's skin is in the game. Mayor Policastro said he asked the Village of Fairfax if they would allow the signal to be put in and they were agreeable. He has had a lot of complaints the past years of cars speeding along Homewood and Settle. We are always trying to find ways to put a stop to it. Mr. Meade said to him it appearing that we are over engineering. Ms. Duffy said she does many Safe Routes to School Projects throughout the State of Ohio. All of the data reports become funding mechanisms. We can get \$460,000 in federal grants to do these projects to

improve walking and maneuverability to prevent anyone from getting injured or killed. Her skin in the game is for the students. The byproduct is that everyone will gain from safe routes for walking and biking. They have seen property values go up in Fairfax because of the project.

Mr. Andrews asked if the study comes back and says there is a safety issue but the traffic patterns are not there would an option be to put an advanced technology crosswalk in place. Ms. Duffy said that could be an option. It would also have to go through the warrant analysis, pedestrian crossing data etc. It would help with pedestrian crossing but will not help anyone making turns at that location. She is not sure that there would be enough pedestrian activity to warrant a crosswalk.

Mr. Wolter said traffic lights today are very different from years ago and the ones now can very quickly react to traffic flowing through and gives us control at a given intersection. He is not concerned about the light being over engineered but he would be concerned that we would not have the pedestrian counts that we would need. Having smart lights installed working together will be an improvement.

Mr. Bill Ebelhar, 6595 Wooster Pike, said he agrees with the comment of over engineering. The comment was made that with the two new lights the flow will change dramatically. His question is why put in a third light if it may not be needed. Until the lights are in, even with the studies, we do not know how it will work. Ms. Duffy said if the light is put in it is only going to change if someone is waiting on the side street. Mr. Ebelhar said he failed to see the purpose of putting in something that may not even be necessary.

Mr. Black asked the purpose of the meeting. Mayor Policastro said it is to determine if we want to employ Ms. Duffy and her firm to do the study needed to determine if a light is warranted at Wooster Pike and Belmont. However, time is of the essence if we want to incorporate the grant money. Mr. Black asked if Fairfax has committed to putting money on the table for the project. Ms. Duffy said Fairfax has the funds to do this project today. The signal is a priority in Phase II which should begin in October 2012. If the project is 'shovel ready' then we can apply for other funding should this grant money not come through. Mayor Policastro said right now we are here to listen and ask Ms. Duffy any questions. The matter will be put into Committee at the next Council meeting.

Mr. Jeff Finke, 3736 Settle Road, asked statistically is there a point where there are too many number of cars which will determine that we would not put a light there. Ms. Duffy said they would refer back to the warrant signal analysis and all the data that is required in order to determine if a light is warranted. When you have too many cars there are not enough gaps for cars to get out - that is what they are hearing. Mr. Finke asked if this was the smartest time for the study with school being out and with the installation of the new lights in addition many of the businesses are not open such as Chipotle. Ms. Duffy said again it does not matter with schools being out because what was is not what is going to be. They will use existing data along with projected data. A new business will require a traffic impact study.

Mr. Scheeser asked what the ramification would be to wait for the schools to open, businesses to open and the installation of the new lights before a study would be conducted. We will know more with less unknowns and asked what we would forego. Ms. Duffy said the construction of the signal. It would not be included in the Phase II project. If the Village wanted to put it in later Mariemont would have to come up with the \$200,000 funds.

Mayor Policastro said if the money is not available we can still apply through the Safe Routes to School Program. The study will be done and we will be 'shovel ready'. Mr. Scheeser said we are going to have a lot of variables that are going to go away so he is a little nervous about solving for a problem that may be a moving target.

Ms. Mary Ann Bragg, 3871 Settle Road, said her child walked everyday to and from school and her concern was that no one stops at the stops signs. In addition, there are no sidewalks.

Ms. Beth Finke, 3736 Settle Road, said he concern is now that Fairfax is the Village to nowhere there is a lot more traffic on Belmont in front of her home. She has only seen a couple of patrol officers watching to see if people stop at the stop sign. Traffic has always been bad turning left onto Wooster Pike. She is not opposed to a study but she is not sure a light is necessarily the best thing. However, she does believe a sidewalk is needed and it would be hard to do a study without the new lights installed.

Mr. Kevin Venneman, 3809 Homewood Road, asked if the study will included those trying to get out of the Village such as along Murray and Settle or will it only be a study of east-west on Wooster Pike. Ms. Duffy said it will include the east-west on Wooster and traffic on Belmont. Mr. Veeneman said he cannot separate the next phase he thinks Council has which is to close the island and make Settle one way. Presently he goes out of his way three blocks to get to the other side of the Village. He cannot get out of Mariemont without going through Fairfax which to him is ridiculous. He does not believe anyone knows the volume of cars in the area. Ms. Duffy said that is the type of data that will be count in the field. Mr. Veeneman said no other resident in the Village have to go through this much inconvenience especially if the island is closed. Mayor Policastro said we are not even discussing that right now - we will probably look at possible changes later on in the year. Mr. Veeneman said if residents do not have assurance that the island will not be changed. The traffic numbers will change and it will be extremely hard to travel east in the Village. Mr. Andrews clarified that Mr. Venneman's concern was if the study was done with Settle at Murray not made a dead end it would be different data if we dead end Settle - which makes sense to him. Ms. Duffy said she could put that in the signal warrant analysis for data collection. Mr. Andrews asked how do we make sure that we do not just look at this one isolated intersection. One of the reasons he has heard is for children to cross the street. His perception is less than 10% of the kids that

cross Wooster Pike today to use the elementary school cross at other points. There has also been some talk about a potential light at Plainville and Wooster Pike. That would affect the flow of traffic with four lights between Plainville and Frisch’s. Ms. Duffy said the lights would be actuated and would stay green unless there was traffic waiting to get out. The traffic count will also take into account the pedestrian count as well but you will not get a traffic signal just because of the pedestrian traffic.

Mr. John Fakes, 3817 Settle, said the study would cost \$19,000. If the light is not warranted his understanding is that the money will roll over. He questioned what we really have to lose in doing the traffic study. Mayor Policastro said we do not have much to lose but a lot to gain. He does not believe it will hurt anything - it does not necessarily mean the light is going in. Mayor Policastro said it is a great chance to obtain some grant money.

Mr. Wolter asked if the study data could be separated by how much traffic we really have that is cut through. Ms. Duffy said they could do a license plate study but would require more funding than what she proposed. She also suggested that a survey could be done.

Mr. Scheeser said if Ms. Duffy could model scenario A which is today and scenario B which is tomorrow of the scope of work that is being proposed. Mayor Policastro said we will look at this first and then if the residents want to look at Phase III we can do another study. Right now we have an opportunity to really do something on Wooster Pike that can save us some money.

The meeting adjourned at 7:21 p.m.

Dan Policastro, Mayor

Anthony J. Borgerding, Clerk