

**Village of Mariemont
Regular Council Meeting
May 11, 2020**

Mayor Brown called the meeting to order at 6:30 PM. Present was Solicitor McTigue, Police Chief Hines and Mrs. Van Pelt. Mr. Bartlett, Mrs. Graves, Dr. Lewis, Ms. Palazzolo, Mrs. Rankin, Mr. Stelzer and Fiscal Officer Borgerding were virtually connected due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Mrs. Rankin moved, seconded by Ms. Palazzolo to accept the minutes as written for April 27, 2020. On roll call; six ayes, no nays.

Mayor Brown said at the last Council meeting he mentioned the pending lawsuit in the State of Ohio versus Public Utilities regarding access to public right-of-ways. That case is no longer pending. It has been resolved and is not favorable to municipalities. Solicitor McTigue said if the Village works with the company that installs the poles we have a better opportunity to have them put them where we want them to be put. Mayor Brown said Building Commissioner Keyes is going to set a meeting with the representative possibly next week and he is hoping to have more information.

Mayor Brown read the following communications:

From Police Chief Hines: April 2020 Monthly Report

From Acting Assistant Fire Chief Feichtner: April 2020 Monthly Report

From Service Superintendent Scherpenberg: April 2020 Monthly Report

From Tax Administrator Darrah: April 2020 Monthly Report

From BWC: Employer Premium Refund: COVID-19 \$48,357.00

From Assistant Fiscal Officer Wendler: April 2020 Monthly Report

Solicitor McTigue said he is still working on the easement research for the Donnelly property on Homewood due to the limited availability of accessing the courthouse to determine what easements have been recorded and what properties they affect. He is hopeful to be able to get in the first of June.

Mayor Brown said Light Ohio Blue is running through May 15, 2020. He encouraged everyone to display a blue light, ribbon etc. to show support.

Mayor Brown was contacted by the manager at the Quarter Bistro desirous to expand the footprint on the outdoor dining area in order to be compliant with the new mandate for re-opening. The expansion would be approximately 5'-7' in a diagonal westerly direction towards the old PNC Bank. Ordinarily this would be something for Planning Commission/ARB but it is temporary and he believes it does fall under something he or the Building Commissioner could make the call on. He asked Council's thoughts. Council agreed it would be best to support our local businesses in an expeditious manner. Solicitor McTigue said he did not believe it would be a problem because it was temporary. He did caution that the new fish restaurant that wants to go in also wants outdoor dining and any accommodation the Village gives to the Quarter Bistro should be temporary.

Mayor Brown said he received an email from Jennifer Manzler and his understanding is that Council did as well regarding the 5G installation. He advised her that there is a meeting scheduled for May 21, 2020. He is in the process of putting together additional information for Mrs. Graves for the meeting. New fiber optic cable has been run linking with the big tower in Madisonville and Newtown. 5G will be coming to residents via an electromagnetic signal that is generated from the poles. It is wireless. Mrs. Manzler is fearful of the radiation and the harmful health effects. That is what the Safety Committee will address as a safety concern. It will be a separate argument that he will have on the placement of the poles. There was talk that it could be mitigated due to the Village's Historic Designation. Solicitor McTigue said he will see what other municipalities are doing. Mayor Brown said after talking with Tom Brinkman we have to make nice with them and negotiate the best we can.

Mrs. Graves moved, seconded by Mrs. Rankin to pay the bills as approved by the Mayor, Fiscal Officer and Chairman of the Finance Committee. Ms. Palazzolo asked about the charges for Aileen Beatty and Bill Fiedler. She asked if the charges for Bill Fiedler are the same as those who contract with Hamilton County. Mayor Brown said some communities do let the county handle permits because they do not have a building department. Mr. Fiedler does our building inspections and holds the license under which the Village operates the building department. Ms. Palazzolo said with the current revenue/expenditure concerns it may be something to look into. Mrs. Rankin said it is already on the table. Ms. Palazzolo asked if the two modems for the cardiac monitors were routine type maintenance that was budgeted for or if they broke. Chief Hines said he will check and report back to Ms. Palazzolo, but he thought it was routine maintenance. Ms. Palazzolo said if it is an ongoing maintenance issue it should be included in the rolling yearly plan budgets. On roll call; six ayes, no nays.

Ms. Palazzolo moved, seconded by Mr. Bartlett to adopt the recommendation of the Finance Committee which met on Friday, May 1, 2020 at 3:00 pm via videoconference to discuss changes to the health care plan for full time Mariemont employees. Present at the meeting were Finance Committee Chair Rob Bartlett, Finance Committee Members Kelly Rankin and Joe Stelzer, and council member Marcy Lewis. Mariemont currently participates in the Center for Local Government Benefits Plan. This is a consortium of municipalities that pools their money to self-fund health care and dental care insurance. Horan administers the plan and provided us with data on what other communities are offering their employees. Attached is a spreadsheet that includes Mariemont’s current plan and the plans of some of the communities that we benchmark with on salaries. The first key takeaway: of the communities we benchmark with, Mariemont is the only community that does not require its employees to pay a portion of the health care premium. Second, of the benchmark communities that offer the same plan as us (Platinum A), the employee contribution ranges from 9.8% to 19.1%. Third, Mariemont also has the lowest HSA contributions. Fourth, some of the benchmark communities offer multiple plans for their employees to choose from, with varying employee contribution rates and HSA contributions.

The table below summarizes the key changes being proposed by the Finance Committee.

	Currently	Proposed		
	Platinum A	Platinum A	Gold A	Platinum C
Employee premium share	0%	10%	7.5%	5%
HSA Contribution Single	\$600	\$1,000	\$1,100	\$1,500
HSA Contribution EE + 1	\$1,200	\$2,000	\$2,100	\$3,000

If we did not change anything, Mariemont’s costs would increase starting August 1st by roughly \$27,000/year. If we implement the proposed plan, the potential savings to offset that increase range from \$18,000 to \$62,000, depending on which plan the employees choose. If 100% of the employees chose to stay in Platinum A, then the offsetting savings would be \$18,000. If 100% of the employees chose to move to Gold A, then the savings would be \$33,000. And if 100% of the employees chose to move to Platinum C, then the savings would be roughly \$62,000. The Finance Committee also reviewed the Dental Plan. Currently, Mariemont covers 100% of the cost for the Dental Plan except for families. This is consistent with other communities who offer Dental, so the Finance Committee is proposing no changes there. It should also be noted that the cost of the employee’s premium for both health care and dental care are pre-tax, so it will reduce the employee’s taxable income. It’s important to remember that health care and dental care are part of the total compensation our employees receive. Which is why it’s important to look at salary and benefits as a package, and not individual items. This is also being implemented in the same year that we have increased the potential bonus for all full time employees. Previously, the bonus was \$250 for everyone, regardless of performance. Now employees can earn a bonus ranging from zero to \$850, depending on their performance. Implementing this change requires a change to the salary ordinance. At the recommendation of the Village Solicitor, the change to that ordinance is being submitted concurrent with the report. Open enrollment for the new health care plan runs from June 8-26. Having the first reading tonight allows us to have the third reading and vote by June 8, thus avoiding having to pass this as an emergency measure. If Council would like to make any changes to the Finance Committee’s proposal, those can be incorporated into the ordinance at the second reading in the May 26 council meeting. Mr. Stelzer and Ms. Palazzolo said the benchmarking data and report was excellent. Mr. Stelzer said this gives the employees some options of how much risk they want to assume. It is comparable to other communities. Mr. Bartlett thanked Chief Hines and Mrs. Van Pelt for their guidance and input. On roll call; six ayes, no nays.

Miscellaneous:

Council Meeting Scheduled for Monday May 25, 2020 will be held Tuesday May 26, 2020 at 6:30 p.m.

Mayor Brown referred to the Rules and Law permanently changing the start time of the Council meeting to 6:30 p.m. Ms. Palazzolo said she will try to schedule a meeting for next week.

Mayor Brown referred to the Safety Committee the Service Department's request to purchase Vapore 2800 Aspira Equipment. It is a high pressure steam cleaning device. It can sanitize more rapidly than spray chemicals. It would be useful after Mayor's Court and at the parks on picnic tables and playground equipment, tennis courts, swim pool etc. Council had many questions regarding its use and if there was something similar but more cost friendly. Mayor Brown suggested having the representative give a demonstration to the Safety Committee. Dr. Lewis said she will reach out to her medical contacts to get their opinion on effectiveness. Mayor Brown said it may be possibly reimbursed through a FEMA grant. He reiterated that after Mayor's Court with the number of people who are present we are going to have to have a thorough cleaning. It may be that we utilize Jani-King to do the cleaning and sanitizing and obtain a quote for the work.

Resolutions:

"Fixing a Time for a Public Hearing on the 2021 Budget" had a third reading. Dr. Lewis moved, seconded by Ms. Palazzolo to adopt the Resolution. On roll call; six ayes, no nays. Resolution No. R-8-20 was adopted.

Ordinances:

"Ordinance Levying a \$5.00 Motor Vehicle License Tax as Authorized by Section 4504.173 of the Ohio Revised Code and Establishing New Mariemont Code of Ordinances No. 110.12" had a third reading. Mrs. Rankin moved, seconded by Ms. Palazzolo to adopt the Ordinance. On roll call; six ayes, no nays. O-13-20 was adopted.

"Ordinance Levying a Supplement Motor Vehicle License Tax and Establishing a New Mariemont Code of Ordinances 110.13" had a third reading. Mr. Bartlett moved, seconded by Mrs. Rankin to adopt the Ordinance. On roll call; six ayes, no nays. O-14-20 was adopted.

"To Amend Ordinance O-11-20 of the Mariemont Code of Ordinances to Increase Payment for Employees; And To Effect Changes to Full-Time Employees Health Care Plans" had a first reading.

Mr. Bartlett said he sent to Council an update of where the Village stands from a cash basis, revenue year to date and spending year to date. The Village is \$ 483,000 below our cash balance versus the same time last year. Part of it is due to timing. Revenues will get hit due to COVID-19 and the gap is growing with spending. He sent to Council a breakdown of cost savings/cost delays/revenue ideas. He received feedback from Ms. Palazzolo. Mayor Brown is to meet with the Department Heads for their input. Dr. Lewis said she has some ideas she will send to Mr. Bartlett.

Mr. Stelzer said he and Mr. Bartlett have been spending time over the last months looking at the data. Right now it is real difficult to try to figure out what type of revenue reduction the Village may be looking at during 2020/2021. The withholding tax (2019) for businesses right now is only down a little bit in April. He is still trying to figure how the Village's cash balance is so low coming into 2020. It is half of what it was 10 years ago. Many have stated it is not a spending problem but a revenue problem. One of the keys to this is that in 2013 the State of Ohio eliminated estate taxes. The Village averaged \$300,000 per year with estate taxes. The Village never identified revenue sources to offset that lost income. It was a failure on the part of Village leadership. It was addressed a bit with the safety services levy in 2018 but by that time we had gone through 5 years without adequate resources to offset the revenue loss. There were opportunities lost over the years, such as providing administrative services for neighboring communities taxing process. It was blown mainly due to petty personal grudges. It was bragged that the Village had a million dollar general fund balance but what we now know by benchmarking with other communities that goal was a false measure of success. In addition, the Village has \$650,000 debt obligations. He believes if Council is honest with the residents of the Village and explain to them what is going on we can solve the problem and address the challenge.

In response to Mrs. Rankin's question asking if a levy was something Council needs to discuss, Mr. Bartlett said Council needs to turn over every stone for costs and revenue before we can begin talks of a levy. Council discussed different revenue options such as increased Mayor Court costs and fines. In addition, they asked what services would be impacted trying to run the Village on reduced dollars. If residents believe we need to keep the level of services we offer right now – the math will not work. Mr. Stelzer said the Village should be able to get through 2020 and manage costs this year, including deferring the road project. He would like to see the year end with the same cash balance we started the year with. Ms. Palazzolo asked for the definition of services. Mr. Stelzer said all the services the Village provides – police, fire, maintenance, recreation etc. Right now the Village has 4.9 million budgeted in appropriations. We need to have that in revenue. Dr. Lewis questioned what areas the Village sees deficit. Mr. Bartlett said the swim pool was \$59,000 and the waste collection was \$70,000-80,000 last year. The other area of concern is the Building Department which runs at a deficit.

Solicitor McTigue said he will talk with the Magistrate regarding increasing the fines in Mayor's Court. Mayor Brown referred to the Rules and Law Committee increased court cost fees. Ms. Palazzolo said with the current financial situation she asked to have the line item of the Code Recodification removed. She acknowledged it needs to be addressed, but it will not happen this year. Council agreed to remove it from the agenda.

Fiscal Officer Borgerding asked if there was any benchmarking on what other communities do regarding credits given on income taxes. Mr. Stelzer said he looked at that informally and believes that Fairfax give a credit equal to their income rate. Mariemont gives 1% on 1.25%. He believes that is an area Council should definitely look into. It is also something that Council can vote on – it does not require a resident vote but would require further discussion from Council. It would take a fair amount of work to go through the process – he estimates 6-8 months.

Mr. Bartlett said he sent out a worksheet on committee assignments and asked if anyone had questions with the process. He did not want to focus on completion numbers. Dr. Lewis said her feeling is it depends on the Committee and what kind of assignments are assigned. Some things may be delayed because of COVID-19. She does not have a problem with target dates or monthly/quarterly updates but quantifying seems a bit draconian to her. Ms. Palazzolo said some matters are not "just done or not done" but it is helpful to keep Council updated on project management. If it is a complicated matter and there are several meetings that should count for you not against you. Mr. Bartlett said there have been problems in the past where committee assignments were moved from one committee to another due to lack of work.

The meeting adjourned at 7:53 p.m.

William A. Brown, Mayor

Anthony J. Borgerding, Fiscal Officer