

**MARIEMONT PLANNING COMMISSION**  
**REGULAR MEETING HELD JANUARY 18, 2017**

The Mariemont Planning Commission met Wednesday January 18, 2017. Mayor Policastro called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. Present were Mr. Brown, Mr. DeBlasio, Ms. Reed, Mr. Rich and Mr. Vianello. Also in attendance was the Building Administrator Don Keyes.

Mr. Brown moved, seconded by Mr. DeBlasio to nominate Mayor Policastro as Chairman of the Planning Commission for 2017. Mayor Policastro moved, seconded by Mr. Brown to nominate Mr. Vianello as the Vice-Chairman of the Planning Commission for 2017. Mr. Vianello moved, seconded by Mr. Brown to nominate Ms. Reed as Secretary of the Planning Commission for 2017. On roll call; six ayes, no nays.

The request was from property owners and tenants on Murray Avenue, Beech Street and Oak Street to improve the parking situation for these areas. The Village has laid out three parking areas along Murray Avenue that will provide additional parking and these areas are now open for construction after the removal and planned replacement of trees along Murray Avenue. Findings of the Building Commissioner: The project to supply additional parking by laying out additional paved areas along Murray Avenue should follow the Mariemont code section 55 which outlines the process for designing and approving the design through the Planning Commission. The property is currently owned by the Village. There is a layout of the proposed three areas which will conform to parking area design and provide sixed properly parking spaces.

Village Engineer Chris Ertel said there are seven proposed angled parking spots on Murray Avenue between Plainville Road and Murray Avenue, six spots between Edith and Blaney and seven spots between Blaney and Beech Street. He estimates the cost to be \$7,000-\$10,000 and will take approximately one month to complete. Diagonal parking requires 18' which allows the car to be fully recessed from the road. The width is 10' per space. The median varies in width between 31'-35'.

Mr. Vianello asked if Duke Energy governs what we can do with the space at this point and if the power poles will handicap any plan. Engineer Ertel said the biggest impact is the height of trees that we can plant in the area. The south side poles are already in place which holds the distribution line. The north side pole holds the transmission line. No curbs are suggested at this point. Mayor Policastro said we are working with Duke Energy as to where we can put trees that grow to 15 feet tall. It is true that Duke Energy governs where we can plant these trees.

Mayor Policastro asked if the diagonal parking is the safer plan than the parallel parking plan. There is quite a lot of pressure on the people who live in the area when it comes to finding a parking space. Parking is sorely needed but we also want to keep the beauty of the area. Engineer Ertel said parking is always a tricky situation no matter which way you go. This plan provides the most amount of green space but you would still have to back out of the parking spot but angled parking is one of the safer options. Mayor Policastro said now you do not have to pass a State of Ohio parallel parking test to get a driver's license.

Martin Koepke, 3804 Settle Road, said he was asked by Rick Greiwe and several others in the community to take a look at this. As a landscape architect who does master planning as a profession he does not see why we cannot have parking, path and electricity. He distributed the plan design to members of the Planning Commission. He said the plans are just a suggestion of the importance of planning for a space instead of just launching forward. He disagrees with Engineer Ertel that diagonal parking is the safest way to park on the street. Parallel parking is the safest for

street parking because you are not backing up into traffic. Although diagonal parking takes up less space on the length of the road it takes up more space in the depth of the green space and cuts into the path. The poles that are going in on the north side of Murray Avenue are 24" in diameter which really prohibits pushing the path to the north side of the median. The path will be cut by the diagonal parking. The parallel parking does not interrupt the path and it allows for the most planting even on the north side of the median.

Mayor Policastro said Duke Energy will not allow us to plant on the north side of the median. Mr. Koepke said he has been talking with Duke Energy and they are willing to allow a variance for this stretch because there are two utilities on it. They have indicated to him that they want to work with the Village. Mayor Policastro asked who the contact was he was speaking with. Rick Greiwe said he has been working with Tara in the Legal Department. Mayor Policastro said there are too many hands in the pie – it should be Village Officials working with Duke. Mr. Koepke said he got involved because it will be more expensive if we do not plan for all three (parking, plantings and the path).

Mr. Vianello said it is noticeable on the drawing that the bike path is not as wide where there is diagonal parking. He asked how wide is necessary to have the bike path. Mr. Koepke said 12' width is the guideline. On this drawing the narrowest is 8' and the widest is 10'. Ms. Reed asked if you can allow a bike path that is 8'. Mr. Koepke said you can but you will not have any planting between the diagonal parking and bike path. You would have a bike path right there with the cars. Ms. Reed said with parallel parking you would open your car door into traffic.

Discussion ensued regarding if there would be need for detention work from Metropolitan Sewer District.

Mr. Vianello said speaking for himself additional parking in the area is necessary. He believes everyone wants it to look nice. When you combine that with how we park and we are talking about a difference between a 12' bike path and 8' bike path where there is diagonal parking he does not understand what the argument is. He is concerned with getting safety equipment down Murray. He wants the people of Mariemont to have a green space there more than a bike path but he is willing to move trees around a bit so if the residents in the future would like to see a bike path we can put one in. He does not want the bike path to be the number one priority over parking and the aesthetics.

Mr. DeBlasio said you lose some space with parallel parking when people do not park in just the space they are supposed to be in – they end up taking more than one space.

Mr. Wade Johnston, Regional Trails Coordinator with Green Umbrella, distributed a printout of Mariemont/Cincinnati path/bike connections. There is space to put the path between the library and the high school, crossing Wooster Pike at one of two locations ultimately connecting with Little Miami Scenic Trail. He said that the bike path can make the green space more functional such as walking your dog or walking your children to school. Mayor Policastro said there is plenty of space on the north side of the island for the path and that has been approved by OKI. Mr. Johnston said a physical separation from the roadway is best and putting it in the middle of the median will offer a safer experience. This is a real opportunity to connect to both the Wasson Way Trail and the Little Miami Trail. Mayor Policastro asked if the money was available now to do the project. Mr. Johnston said we need to preserve the opportunity.

Mr. Rick Greiwe said the Village submitted an application in 2014 to do this trail. It was very comprehensive. The preferred alignment that was submitted was along Plainville Road into

the Village along Madisonville Road through the center of the Village down Route U.S. 50. It is the job of the community to get the citizens involved and decide if you want to use the Village easement all along the transmission corridor. This is an important link to the Wasson Trail and Little Miami Trail. It is important to plan for the future and leave options open.

Mr. Don Mills, resident of Terrace Park said he has been working on the trails since 2000. He read, in part, an e-mail received from Jack Sutton, Executive Director of Great Parks of Hamilton County. A bit of timeline history included in the mid-late 1990's planning continued including discussion between Great Parks and Norfolk & Western Railroad to extend the trail to Clair Yard and further. Norfolk was not interested in permitting a trail on their property. Also threading a trail along Norfolk & Western Railroad's corridor and complying with ODNR Scenic River laws was also a complicating factor. ODNR wanted a trail as far away from the river as possible. Great Parks is supportive of extending the Little Miami Scenic Trail to the Mariemont Library in order to connect Mariemont residents to the Little Miami Scenic Trail. Great Parks owns a corridor along the Little Miami River from Newtown Road to the Kroger Grocery Store. Getting from Kroger to the library presents challenges but is achievable. This will require collaborations with private property owners such as Columbia Township, ODOT and the Village of Mariemont. Great Parks does not have funding identified for this project. Connecting Little Miami Scenic Trail to Mariemont is consistent with the Regional Trails Plan and would facilitate connecting the future Wasson Way with the Little Miami Scenic Trail. In addition, connecting Oasis, Little Miami Scenic Trail and Wasson Way is consistent with Cincinnati Connects plan.

Assistant Fire Chief Kiefer said his feelings on this matter from an operational and safety stand point is that we are not dealing with a lot of room in that area (Murray Avenue) as it is. His opinion is that slanted parking works better because it allows for consolidated spots to allow the equipment to maneuver and set up. The riggers extend out which take up more room and parallel parking will eliminate that space. In a residential structural fire there will be several trucks. In his profession, time is of the essence and they need to be able to get in quickly. With the common attics, if they are not able to knock them down quickly it could be extremely devastating.

Police Chief Hines said he looked at both plans and the slanted parking is preferred. Ms. Reed brought up a point that he had already had concerns with and that is the driver exiting the car into traffic. A driver's exam does not include passing a parallel parking test. He believes it will be easier for most people to park in a slanted parking space. Most people do not realize that you can legally park as much as 12" away from the curb. It can make the road more narrow.

Ms. Beckie Moore, 6737 Maple Street, said as a bicyclist she would love to see some sort of bike path come through the Village but she does not hear the parking crises in the Historic District being addressed. Presently there are 28 parking spaces on Maple with 44 units. Currently there are 57 cars that compete for the 28 parking spaces. Murray Avenue experiences the same parking issues. Trying to get to her front door while juggling groceries and kids can really be a daily challenge. Due to some of the tree issues many do not feel safe parking in the lanes. While she sees parking in this plan she does not see any way to ensure it is protected for residential parking. She has heard that residential parking permits are not necessarily the answer to the problem and she would not want a fee associated with a permit type process. She believes the parking will come with consequences such as people who want to enjoy the bike path driving to Mariemont parking their car and then using the path. Unless you can truly protect the parking for the residents we will continue to have parking issues and she would not want to see the path put in. Slanted versus parallel parking she said there needs to be a give – we have a serious parking issue and dangerous situations for families. Perhaps Mt. Vernon would be a good choice for a bike trail given that the street is really wide. It does have to be linear and suggested looking at some other

streets that are wider and without the unintended parking issues that will arise. This does not have to be the only place we talk about putting the bike trail. She also said we need to address the crumbling sidewalks

Mr. Bill Collins, resident of Madisonville, said the Madisonville Community Urban Development Corporation is operating under the assumption that the trail network will proceed. They got a \$30,000 grant in 2015 from the Public Health Foundation and contracted with JMT Engineering Corporation. They are the same firm that did the streetscape project for the Village of Fairfax and the Safe Routes to School Project for the Village of Mariemont. The goal is to connect Bramble Park with the Murray Trail. They will be applying for funds with the State of Ohio later this year and also trying to secure private funding. They were impressed with JMT Engineering and they worked well with public involvement, parking and where the pockets of money are. He also suggested looking into the idea of “backing in” angled parking. It gives you the angled parking with the plus of being able to pull out into traffic.

Mr. Keith Vearil, 6753 Murray Avenue, said his family has lived in the Village since 1938. The parking issue is bad on Murray Avenue and those who do not live on Murray do not seem to understand. The whole Historic District suffers parking problems. A person cannot pull into one of the garages and open a car door. Not everyone wants a bike or walking trail through the area. It’s a nice green space now that people use. Why do we need to put in a trail to limit parking? He is constantly listening to people’s conversations. People do not know how to be polite and quiet when going through a residential neighborhood. He believes the angled parking is a better idea.

Mr. Dennis Wolter, 3804 East Street and a current Council member, said he is very much in support of the bike trail. He believes we need to have a plan that will work for all the needs in this space. He does think the diagonal parking is viable and safe. We have it in front of Starbucks and have little or no problem. Parallel parking is going to take a lot of space and will cost more money. The Village has been solvent because we do not spend money we do not have. Mr. Wolter said the first obligation is to the residents who live and pay taxes here. We do the parking plan with the potential for the bike trail. He is pretty much for the plan as drawn with perhaps just changing the way we plant the trees.

Mayor Policastro said he has been told by Duke Energy that we can only plant trees in the middle. The poles are metal and cannot be climbed. If the power goes out they need to be able to get a truck in there and they do not want the poles surrounded by trees. He is concerned with parallel parking because all the water is coming off the blacktop and will go to the lowest point and then the trees could drown especially the fir trees we have been putting in. He wants to see a bike path but believes it should go on the north side. The slanted parking will cost the Village \$7,000-\$10,000. The parallel parking according to the Engineer’s estimate will be \$50,000-\$60,000 plus the cost of plumbing of the rainoff water system.

Mr. Koepke asked how many parking spaces that number includes. Engineer Ertel said 45 parking spaces. Mr. Koepke said that cost would include a whole lot more parking. The square foot of asphalt is the same price. Mayor Policastro said we are not going to argue and asked Mr. Koepke to please not talk while he is talking. Mayor Policastro said parallel parking will require drainage improvements and a ten foot widening of Murray Avenue into the island. We do not have the extra money. We are going to take care of Settle Road and the following year Homewood Road. We did meet with OKI several years ago and they said the bike path could snake around.

Mr. Vianello said he would not be in favor of the Village spending tax dollars to put in a bike path but believes it should be planned for should the funding somehow become available. It would enhance the Village and provide parking.

Mr. Rich said he does not know that you can hang your hat on the safety issue aspect when people often get groceries out of the back of the car as opposed to the side of the car. The parking downtown is mostly parallel parking and people are not hit.

Mr. Bob Hedleston, 3905 Beech Street, said parking is a problem and he supports the angled parking over parallel parking. He asked if there could be more angled parking just west of Beech Street. Engineer Ertel said the topography would make it more difficult there and possibly more expensive but it is doable. He estimates it would be an additional seven spaces. Mr. Hedleston for the record said he was not impressed with JMT Engineering and the job they did in Fairfax. Someone made the comment that it would be dangerous for bikers to go down the north side of Murray Avenue. It irritates him when bikers do not stop at stop signs. He observed Murray Avenue for three hours. There were ten groups of bikers and not one stopped at any of the three stop signs.

Ms. Karen Koetzle, 3865 Beech Street, said she has been in the Village for 30 years. She counted on Beech Street which has 66 residences and it has 65 parking spaces on the west side of the street. It does not include the McKenzie Building or the new houses who do not park in their garages. We have a huge parking issue. There is lots of documentation to show that when Mariemont was built they knew it was going to be an issue. She shows lots of rental property in the Village and believes having a bike path outside their door would be detrimental to fill those buildings up with people who want to stay. We want to keep the Village beautiful so people want to move here and she thinks the parallel parking would look horrible. Parking is an issue and we may have to look beyond the Murray Island such as Patriots Park. We pay a lot of taxes and some are at the commercial rate. It is unfair to tell them they can only have one car – tell that to the residents who live on the south side of Wooster Pike. There is often gridlock with traffic and parking on one side of the street. She would prefer the angled parking. The South 80 is beautiful and would imagine that bicyclists would prefer to be in a more natural environment.

Mr. Matt Tripepi, 3865 Settle Road, said on Settle Road there are 33 children under the age of six. Right now when walking up Murray they have to walk in the street until Beech Street. It is difficult to push a stroller in the grassy area and the sidewalk on the north side of Murray only goes so far. It is an unsafe area to walk. He hears the argument for parking and trees but safety of the residents should be the number one concern regardless of how this flushes out from a design or execution standpoint.

Mr. Grant Karnes, 6909 Mt. Vernon, said this is the type of discussion we should be having. Often times we have issues in the Village that seem to be small or localized when in reality it gives us a chance to look at it from a broader perspective. We have a lot of smart passionate people in the Village. He is a cyclist and agrees that parking concerns are a real issue. We have heard a lot of pros and cons regarding the parking and could debate this for hours. He did not hear from either the Police or Fire Chief that they could not work with one design over the other only that they preferred the angled parking. He suggested not looking at this as a bike trail but rather a multi-use trail. He also suggested looking into natural surface trail instead of a hard paved surface. It allows for natural drainage which reduces the need to create water retention. It also helps with the landscaping and costs less. Perhaps it would be best not to make a decision tonight but to look at a plan that takes into account all the interests that have been expressed. Communities rarely get an opportunity for a project like this.

Mr. Rich suggested that Mr. Koepke and Engineer Ertel work together to revisit this plan to include a path/trail. He believes you can have your cake and eat it too but it will involve looking at the plans and making adjustments.

Ms. Aileen Beatty, 6757 Murray Avenue, said she has lived in the Village for 35 years and agrees that parking is a serious issue. She does not believe either one of these plans are perfect. She encouraged the Planning Commission to not make a final decision tonight because there are too many unanswered questions. She finds the parallel parking less desirable but does agree that there should be more parking than what is projected. She feels emergency services access for the residents is the number one priority and fears parallel parking would be a hinder. It is essential that all residents have the same access to safety services. As a member of MPF she does feel we can balance the needs of living in the modern world and maintaining the integrity of the Historic District. The visual barrier with plantings and landscape would be next on the list of priorities. She stressed that you cannot have parking across from the access lanes because trucks need more room to make turns. There is no drainage in the lane behind the buildings between Murray and Maple. It would be imperative to have drainage in the median. The bike path should be at the bottom of the list of priorities.

Mayor Policastro said Council needs to go out to bid for our Street Rehabilitation Project after the next Council meeting to get the best price. If you wait too long we will get just a few competitive bids as opposed to eight or nine like last year's bidding process that saved the Village \$20,000.

Mr. Lorne Hlad, 3602 Center Street, said he is a Council Member and for five years lived on Settle Road. He commended everyone on the work. He believes it is a multi-problem issue that we are dealing with. It would be wise to go back to the drawing board and encouraged Mr. Koepke and Engineer Ertel to work together. For aesthetics and for safety he is leaning towards angled parking. He recommends the Planning Commission before making a final decision look at another set or two of angled parking landscape design with the potential of a bike path. It is a great opportunity to do due diligence while still keeping in mind that time is of the essence. The Mayor is right that Council does want to get bids out in a timely fashion. Planning Commission would not be approving "funding" for the bike trail but that they adopt a plan that implements all three. The legislation would come before Council and state that funding would first go towards the parking because that is the most essential. It does not mean you cannot look at a comprehensive plan which would include finance meetings to discuss grants, donations etc.

Mr. Koepke said he would work with Engineer Ertel. They would not be coming up with plans on how to build a bike path but locating a path so we know how the parking will take shape so it is not precluding a path. He does not think it would take long for them to work up new drawings.

Mayor Policastro said there is only \$10,000 budgeted for the parking. Mr. Hlad said no one is proposing increasing a spending plan for adding items to the project. What he is suggesting is that the plan that includes exactly where the parking is laid out include also the potential for a future bike path.

Mr. Rick Greiwe said he is a developer who cares a lot about this community and has invested 55 million dollars in the Village. The biggest selling point of the condos is the Village of Mariemont and the lifestyle. People are working diligently on the regional bike plan. Cincinnati is competing with other cities that have mountains and oceans - we have rivers. The way we

leverage that natural resource is a bike path and walking trails. He said there are several facts that need to be tested. (1) Parallel Parking will take up less space than angled parking. Angle Parking takes 18' while parallel parking takes 10'. There is data available that says that parallel parking is safer. (2) Gravel and asphalt is the same cost per square foot no matter what parking you do. He believes Engineer Ertel tested the cost of 45 spaces to give the potential of what could go there. Only 20 are needed and asked that number to be tested. (3) Parallel parking will provide more green space and aesthetics. Using the safety guidelines for pedestrians and bikes also makes it easier to get federal funding for projects. Most communities would kill to have the easement from Settle Road to the High School. He encouraged the Village to use the land to the best of its ability.

Mr. Rob Bartlett, 3611 Mound Way, said he had been a resident for 45 years and we have the opportunity to get this right by thinking it through and placing the parking and trees in the spots that meet the needs of parking, landscaping and the multi-purpose trail. He encouraged Mr. Koepke and Engineer Ertel to review the plan together.

Mr. Reid Hester, 3821 Homewood Road, said he believes many people were unaware that this meeting was taking place. He understands the need for parking and would love to have a path down Murray Avenue for getting the kids to school and for walking. He runs several times a week on the path in Fairfax and the majority of the users are pedestrians not bikers. He urged that the possibility for the trail be left on the table.

Mr. Vianello said he heard a lot of support for diagonal parking and head nods when discussing leaving an opening for the path. It was suggested to delay further discussion until Mr. Koepke and Engineer Ertel could get together. He would like the Planning Commission to decide what they were called to do and that is to decide on parking but he does not want to preclude in any way shape or form, the bike path. By deciding on the parking Mr. Koepke and Engineer Ertel would know which way Planning Commission recommend they design the parking. He would also like to include the additional seven parking spaces west of Beech Street and charge Council with finding the funding for the extra parking. It would be a living document that we set the time on when they would need to come back with a plan that would envision the parking, landscaping and the multi-purpose path.

Mr. Rich said he feels we should let Mr. Koepke and Engineer Ertel make a plan and come back in two weeks to review the plan. He does not know how you approve parking based on a future plan we are going to see.

Mr. DeBlasio said he would agree with Mr. Vianello and his biggest concern is safety services being able to service the area. He would like to agree on the parking and then address the landscaping and bike path.

Mr. Brown asked if we are really squandering an opportunity for the bike path by proceeding with the diagonal parking.

Ms. Reed asked if the exact spot of the diagonal parking needs to be tweaked which is another plan. She favors the diagonal parking.

Mayor Policastro asked Mr. Koepke and Mr. Greiwe to not interrupt since discussion at this point was between the members of Planning Commission only.

Mr. Brown said the plan should be tweaked where the center parking pad has a utility pole directly opposite of it. Mr. Rich suggested that the middle section could be parallel parking and the others to be diagonal parking.

Mr. Vianello moved, seconded by Mr. DeBlasio to approve diagonal parking, based on what was heard from the citizens and Police and Fire Chiefs; the plan will include the seven extra diagonal parking spaces west of Beech Street (with the funding to be approved by Council) and that this plan (put together by Mr. Koepke and Engineer Ertel) will not preclude the multi-purpose trail. Another meeting will be held in two weeks to look at the aesthetics and the path. On roll call; five ayes, no nays (Mr. Rich abstained).

The meeting adjourned at 8:22 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

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Ms. Shelly Reed, Secretary  
Secretary



