

Mayfield Village Citizens Advisory Committee

Meeting Minutes

February 28, 2022

The Citizens Advisory Committee met on Monday, February 28, 2022 at 7:00 p.m. at the Civic Center.

Present:

Bob Haycox (Chair)/Ward 1

Katie Parker/Ward 3

Sandy Batcheller/Ward 2

Marilyn LaRiche-Goldstein/Ward 4

Lorry Nadeau/Ward 2

Peter Gall /Ward 4

Mary Salomon/Ward 1

Alison Markovic/ Ward 1

Joanna McNally/Ward 1

Sara Calo/Ward 2

Rosemarie Fabrizio/Ward 2

Loretta Williams/Ward 4

Absent:

Mary Singer/Ward 1

Mark Granakis/Ward 3

Also Present:

George Williams, Council Representative

Jennifer Jurcisek, Council Representative

Steve Schutt, Council Alternate

Allen Meyers, Council Member

Peter Batcheller, Resident

Diane Wolgamuth, Director of Administration

Oaths/Approval of Minutes

Mr. Haycox opened the meeting and thanked everyone for coming out. Mr. Williams administered the oath of office to Mrs. Calo, Mrs. Fabrizio, Mrs. LaRiche-Goldstein and Mrs. Nadeau. Mr. Haycox asked the Committee if there were any changes to the meeting minutes from January 24, 2022, previously provided for review. There were none and the minutes were approved.

Discussion with Animal Warden Steve Suder, A&S Animal Control

Mr. Suder introduced himself and explained that he deals with any animal complaint that comes to him through the Police or Service Departments. He works for multiple cities in the area and hears from residents all the time wondering why and how animals are getting into their houses. In his view, 99% of the animal problems are caused by bird feeders. "A bird feeder is like a Holiday Inn with a free buffet." Mr. Suder explained that bird feeders result in feeding other animals like skunks, racoons, deer, coyotes, fox, mice, rats and chipmunks. The protein in the food puts on fat and gets the animals through the winter, causing population problems. Mr. Suder stated that trapping animals that get into a home is a band-aid, not a cure-all, adding that, in fact, baiting traps actually draws more animals into the area. Feeding birds from November to January is okay, but feeders should be removed in the spring.

Mr. Suder spoke about the difficulty involved in trapping coyotes as it is dangerous to use the traps in backyards and he must be very selective about when to trap. He described that coyote can travel very far even in a short period, and

related a story about a coyote that was wearing a collar placed on it by the Metroparks. They tracked the animal and it traveled from Twinsburg to this area in one night. Mr. Suder described that coyotes are hunted in rural areas, but in suburban areas, they adapt to humans. In cities, if the alphas, or parents, are trapped and euthanized, it creates more chaos if pups have been born, so he tries to avoid trapping them.

Mrs. Jursicek asked if it is true that seeing a coyote during the day means that the animal is ill. Mr. Suder responded that that is not true and coyotes are active at all times of the day.

Mrs. McNally asked about skunks, mentioning that she smelled skunk odor in her garage today. Mr. Suder explained that skunk spray is oily and will smell when mixed with water, even into the future. So, the smell today may have been from a skunk that visited in the past. He added, "if a dog gets sprayed by a skunk, rather than wash the dog, get the dog into a dirt or mulch pile to help get the oil off. If you wash the dog first, it will keep smelling every time the dog gets wet."

Mr. Suder provided the following tips:

- Birds in your fireplace. Get your chimney capped.
- Raccoons in the attic. If no babies yet, get the roof fixed.
- For mice, go to the dollar store and get basic mouse traps. Use peanut butter on the bottom to bait them. Do not use sticky tape to catch mice--it is cruel.
- There are black snakes in this area. They are good to have around and will take care of rodents. There are no poisonous snakes around here, so there is no need to kill a snake.
- Don't use poisons. Poisoned rodents die in your walls, creating bad odors.
- Crushed moth balls will keep skunks from coming around your house or going under your deck. If you don't crush the moth balls, the skunks will just kick them out from under the deck.
- If you have dogs, don't use any poisons.
- Issues with deer become more prevalent in April and May. If you see a fawn in your yard, keep an eye on your dog as the mother is likely somewhere around. If a doe is jumping your fence to get to its fawn, open the gate so she can get the fawn out of there.

Mrs. Calo mentioned that she knows that bird feeders can drop mold and spores on the ground and then working in the soil can cause blood diseases. This is particularly bad for people with autoimmune diseases.

Mrs. McNally asked who residents should call with animal problems. Mr. Suder advised that they should call the Service Department during work hours. If the problem occurs after hours, call the Police Department.

Mrs. LaRiche-Goldstein asked who pays for the animal control services. Mr. Suder responded that the animal warden will come out to a resident's home one time per year at no cost to them. After that, if they do not fix the problem, the

cost will be on the resident. "We cannot go to the same house to trap 13 or 14 times. That is not fair to the Village." That was actually happening and, this year, a new agreement was reached with these new terms.

Mr. Suder asked if any of the members were having a problem with coyotes. Mr. Haycox related a story from several years ago, when a coyote was stalking a neighbor's small dogs. People from the Metroparks came and removed the coyote. Mr. Suder responded that dogs know their territory and will go after a coyote if it comes into their territory. Small dogs won't win that fight but larger dogs will kill a coyote.

Mr. Haycox asked if the Metroparks regularly do anything about coyotes. Mr. Suder responded that they do not and only care about the deer. The philosophy of the Metroparks is that people need to learn to live with wildlife.

Mrs. LaRiche-Goldstein asked if coyotes are the biggest animal in this area or if there are bobcats and wolves. Mr. Suder responded that there are some bobcats in Summit County. "There are also foxes, but they are great to have around as they take care of rodents. People need to learn to not feed or play with foxes and not make them dependent. That's what causes the problems." Mr. Suder advised that if Animal Control traps an animal, they are not permitted to release them somewhere else. They must euthanize the animal, so when people call for trapping, he does his best to dissuade them.

Mrs. LaRiche-Goldstein asked if there are bears in the area. Mr. Suder responded that 3 to 4 calls are received per year and suggested that if a bear is spotted, the police should be called.

Making final remarks, Mr. Suder reiterated the following:

- It is against the law to trap and release animals elsewhere. They must be euthanized, so be aware if you are using traps at home.
- Do not use sticky traps—they are cruel.
- Learn to adapt to wildlife. They are just trying to survive.
- No birdfeeders!

Mr. Haycox thanked Mr. Suder for taking the time to come out to speak to the committee.

Council Update

Mr. Williams explained, for the benefit of the new members, that Council, the Administration and the Mayor all work together. The Mayor and the Administration determine needed purchases or projects and Council approves the expenditure.

For example, this past month:

- The Service Department came up with a plan to upgrade street lights with LED bulbs. They presented an option that, when a light burns out, CEI will replace the bulb with an LED at no cost to the Village. Over time, this will result in all the street lights being changed over to LED bulbs. Council approved this agreement with CEI.

- The Police Department recommended that funds from the speed cameras be used for future law enforcement expenses, particularly traffic safety. Council approved this recommendation and passed the resolution.
- The Police Chief also made a request to purchase four new police cars, which Council approved.
- The Administration presented a grant agreement from the OFCC (Ohio Facilities Control Commission) for funds to use to upgrade the Civic Center. The funds will be used for the restroom and kitchen renovation.
- The Recreation Department presented a fireworks agreement for this year's July 4 celebration and Council approved the expenditure.
- The Finance Director reported on income tax decreases based on employees working from home due to the pandemic. Revenues increased in 2021 and the Village currently has \$41 million in its coffers.

Mr. Williams stated, "So, as you can see, the administration is working."

Mrs. Calo asked about the amount of the grant and if it was being used for ADA upgrades. Ms. Wolgamuth responded that the OFCC grant was for \$100,000 and the Village received a second grant administered by ODNR (the Ohio Department of Natural Resources) for an additional \$100,000. Both grants are to be used for ADA upgrades to the Civic Center. Ms. Wolgamuth explained that the original plan was to upgrade the entire Civic Center and install an elevator, however, plans were scaled back to just the restroom and kitchen renovation. Since the funds were available for that purpose, the Mayor and Council felt that it made sense to go ahead with those needed upgrades now and push other improvements to the future. The cost of the project is approximately \$330,000, with \$200,000 funded by these grants.

Mrs. Calo asked how much federal money was received by the Village through ARPA, as she heard many cities were receiving large sums of money, and asked if that was why revenues increased in 2021. Ms. Wolgamuth responded that ARPA funds were calculated based on population, so larger cities received more substantial funds. The Village only received about \$370,000 and the funds were placed into the general fund to be applied toward revenue loss. *[Post Meeting Note: The Village was granted \$349,554.28 in ARPA funds, half received in 2021 and the other half in 2022].*

The Committee discussed the loss of revenue to the Village due to income taxes going to the home cities of employees that worked from home during the pandemic and continue to do so. Ms. Wolgamuth advised that in addition to these losses, employees who worked from home will also be able to request tax refunds for 2021. The amount of these refunds is still unknown, adding to the financial uncertainty.

Mrs. Batcheller asked how Progressive has handled the situation. Mr. Schutt advised that on January 31, the offices were opened. Employees voluntarily returned but must be vaccinated and wear a mask. The majority of employees have not returned—10% at best—as people do not want to wear masks all day. They also realized that they are unable to collaborate or work together, so now less than 10% of employees are at work. Mr. Schutt stated that he hopes that Progressive will eventually get back to about 50% of employees in the office. Mr. Schutt added that Progressive began reallocating tax dollars in August of 2021, so any requested refunds will be for January to August 2021, and we still don't know about refunds for 2020.

Mr. Meyers asked, "What is the amount we are not taking in?" Mr. Williams replied, "\$170,880 less." *[Post Meeting Note: This amount reflects January 2022 income tax collections compared to January 2021 income tax collections and is not specific to Progressive].*

Compensation of the Mayor and Council

Mr. Williams stated that the Administration is trying to manage and work through the Progressive situation. He feels that one of the things lost in the process of running Mayfield Village is compensation for elected officials. Mr. Williams wanted to bring this issue to this committee for their input and feedback. He passed out a chart with information comparing compensation paid to elected officials in other municipalities. He suggested that the committee members review the information and plan to discuss the issue at the next meeting. He reminded the members that, by Charter, any increases in compensation for officials must be voted upon by residents.

Mr. Williams suggested that the committee first focus on the position of Mayor. He passed out a copy of the Village Charter sections that deal with the responsibilities of the Mayor. He suggested that the committee consider four topic areas:

- 1) Compensation
- 2) Responsibility
- 3) Performance
- 4) Affordability

Mrs. Batcheller asked if the Mayor is a part-time position. Mr. Williams responded that it is and Mrs. Nadeau added that it is not defined in the Charter. Mr. Williams reminded everyone that we are trying to set standards for the future. Mrs. Calo asked when the last increase occurred. Mr. Meyers stated that it was approximately ten years ago. At that time, the Mayor's salary was increased from \$19,000 to \$26,000.

Mrs. McNally asked, "what was the rationale for selecting the cities on this chart?" Mr. Williams responded, "population and location." Mrs. McNally asked why Gates Mills was not on the list as they also have a small population.

Mr. Gall asked if the Village has a Safety Director. Mr. Williams responded that the Mayor serves in that capacity.

Mrs. LaRiche-Goldstein asked if all the Mayors listed on the chart are part-time. Mr. Williams responded that he did not know.

Mr. Batcheller stated that Gates Mills is probably not listed because the Mayor serves voluntarily. Mrs. Fabrizio stated that both Hunting Valley and Gates Mills have voluntary Mayors. Mr. Haycox pointed out that those are "bedroom" communities and do not have the amenities that Mayfield Village offers.

Mrs. Fabrizio noted that the Mayor of Mayfield Village has to have another source of income and needs to secure benefits. Mr. Haycox added that any potential Mayor also has to have flexible hours. Mrs. Fabrizio stated that if someone is looking at the position, it would deter a lot of people from becoming Mayor. The salary and benefits offered limit the pool of people able to run.

Mrs. Batcheller stated that it appears that the higher paid Mayors are full-time and are getting benefits.

Mr. Haycox noted that Cuyahoga Heights is an anomaly. "They have very few residents and huge steel factories that bring in huge tax revenue. That is why the Mayor there is paid so highly."

Mrs. McNally stated that to make an informed decision, she would want to see a list of all municipalities in Cuyahoga County. She would want to know if they are full or part-time and the number of staff they have. She thinks the list provided looks like the communities were hand-picked. She wants to see the entire County so that an apples-to-apples comparison can be made.

Mrs. Calo disagreed, stating that she likes the 5,000-person population line. She feels that comparing the entire County would be too much information.

Mrs. Parker questioned what additional information should be considered, asking, "What are the responsibilities of the Mayors in the other cities?" Mrs. Batcheller responded, "Some Mayors may be responsible for recreation." She added, "We have administrators in each department. What responsibilities do these highly-paid Mayors have?" Mr. Williams responded that such specifics are difficult to get.

Mrs. McNally stated that she thinks Gates Mills and Hunting Valley and all municipalities in the County with a population under 5,000 should be included in the chart. She would like to see surrounding communities, even if their population is higher.

Mrs. Calo agreed that she would like to see the scope of Mayor's responsibilities. Mr. Haycox agreed that such information could be helpful, stating, "For example, some Mayors may write their own speeches, while others may have someone who writes for them." Mrs. Nadeau agreed, stating that the responsibilities can be as unique as the Mayors. "Some Mayors are attorneys and bring that expertise to the job. Another could be an accountant, who would focus more on the finances." Mrs. Batcheller reiterated that the Village has administrators in each department. Mrs. LaRiche-Goldstein agreed that more information about job responsibilities was needed, stating, "We have an economic development person. In Pepper Pike, the Mayor may be doing that himself. That's the type of information we need."

Mr. Haycox stated that the Village has many different recreation programs, more than other communities. Mr. Gall responded that we could cut that back. Mrs. Batcheller stated that she believes the Village is an awesome place to live but added, "The last time this was brought up, the request was for a 50% increase. That is never going to happen. People won't accept that."

Mr. Williams reminded the members that there has been no increase over a ten-year period. Mr. Gall responded that the same person has not been doing the job for ten years. Mr. Williams asked, "How do we stay on top of this?" Mrs. Batcheller stated that she believes the timing is bad. "People are struggling. We are not getting a 50% increase. We got 2%." She added that the Mayor is doing an awesome job, but she feels a large raise will not pass.

Mr. Haycox suggested that a cost-of-living factor should be built in. "Elected officials shouldn't have to keep asking for a raise. It should be based on some index." Mrs. Nadeau stated, "This is not just a raise for the Mayor right now. This is a raise for the position. If it passes in November, by Charter, it takes effect the following January." Mr. Haycox agreed, saying "that is exactly what we are trying to figure out."

Mrs. Calo stated that, as an employer, you must go through a review process every year. "Shame on us for not having an annual review process. They shouldn't have to wait ten years." Mr. Gall disagreed, stating "this is not a ten-year process. They could ask for a raise every year." Mr. Haycox suggested that if a COLA were included, they could avoid having to come back every year. Mrs. Calo stated that this is a volatile time to have this conversation. She understands that it is long overdue, but people are struggling.

Mrs. LaRiche-Goldstein noted that she does not see anything in the Charter that defines if the Mayor is full-time or part-time. "If they have a lucrative law practice, the Mayor's salary is a plus. If the Mayor does not have a full-time position elsewhere, the current salary is nothing." Mr. Meyers responded that even if the Mayor has a full-time job, they are still working 30 to 40 hours a week for the Village as there is time spent behind the scenes. "No matter how many committees and departments there are, everything goes past the Mayor." Mrs. Batcheller responded that the Mayor may make the decisions, but the administrators put them in place.

Mr. Williams stated that he is asking the committee to look to the future and this is an area that has not been addressed. Mr. Gall added that we must consider that the Village only has 3,460 people who can run for Mayor. Many are children, decreasing the number more. Mr. Haycox stated that we don't want people to be turned off from running for office. Mrs. McNally agreed that even if the conversation is uncomfortable, it is good to have it. Mr. Haycox added, "we need to think about the skill set required and what is a fair wage."

Mrs. McNally stated that only 13 communities in Cuyahoga County have similar populations. She just looked it up and went up to 8,000 in population. "I hear the sentiment and the concerns. It is a disservice to the community to not have the conversation." She feels the comparative information needs to be transparent and visible to the community in order for them to make a decision.

Mr. Williams addressed the point about timing. He asked, "When is a good time? It is always something. It was Covid, now a war." Mrs. Batcheller stated that she agrees that this should be done on a more regular basis. Mr. Haycox suggested the language in the ordinance and on the ballot include some sort of index for regular increases. Mrs. Nadeau stated that she believes many other Charters include an automatic trigger for increases so the elected officials don't have to keep asking. Mr. Haycox stated that it is similar to the schools always having to beg for more money. "We can't expect the schools to live on the same amount of money for years." Mr. Gall suggested that increases equal the percentage that police and fire get each year.

Mr. Williams suggested that conversation be continued at the next meeting.

The Committee was provided with a copy of the Grove and Gazebo Concert schedule for 2022 and, there being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 8:45 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Diane Wolgamuth
Director of Administration