On Tuesday, October 25, 2022, the Council for the Village of Monroeville held a work session at 6:00 PM in Council Chambers, to discuss whatever business came before them.

Present were: Mayor Melissa Fries-Seip; Council Members: Chris Raftery, Sue Rogers, Craig Franklin, Joe Galea, Sam Wiley and Bob Whitacre; Fiscal Officer Bonnie Beck; Administrator Tom Gray; Chief Gary Lyons; Lieutenant Troy Kimball; and Omni Fiber representative Jeff O’Brien.

The Mayor opened the meeting. Tom Gray introduced Omni Fiber representative Jeff O’Brien. Jeff gave a presentation on the fiber installation that will occur in the Village towards the end of the first quarter of 2023. Omni Fiber installs a mesh network, which creates a single seamless wi-fi network, and helps prevent blackspots or slow connections. Omni Fiber offers both wi-fi and cable tv. To prepare for construction, signs will be posted and mailers will be sent. The Village Administrator will be notified every morning in regards to what location Omni Fiber will be working in. Jeff exited the meeting at 6:40 PM, at the conclusion of his presentation.

Tom advised yard waste was wrapped up today and leaf pick-up has started. Dustin will be meeting with Jeremy Loose from MLS. Jeremy is bringing in a company that has autonomous mowers and is reviewing that for possible field use. Dave Hamons hung the lights on the large pine tree at Commons Park and the other bulbs and strings are being prepared. Tree trimming is currently being done and has to be completed. Park restrooms will be idled back next week for winter time mode. The Mayor asked if the divots on Milan Avenue are from Columbia Gas. Tom advised the gas company, through Miller Pipeline, put in what’s called cathodic protection. They put in a sacrificial anode that discharges the stray electric current from the pipes to keep it from corroding. Columbia assured Tom they would fix the divots before winter. Tom also advised Miller Pipeline and Columbia Gas were to drill under River Road. It’s now an excavation and the road won’t be the same again. The Village brought it to Miller and Columbia’s attention that they have to restore it. Bob asked if the ditch is going to be mowed. Tom said he spoke with the county about reviewing ditch maintenance. The Mayor asked about application status for the Street Department position. Tom advised two applications have been received and one of the individuals would be a possible fit.

Bonnie advised that at the last meeting, she mentioned that Poggemeyer had gone over their contract amount for the planning and design for the water system improvement project. Bonnie spoke with Neal today and the amendment going to be about $17,000. Council will have to review that for approval at the next Council meeting. The Village has already paid almost $1,000 past the loan amount. The Mayor asked why. Bonnie said there were a lot of issues on Hilltop Court with rights-of-way, and the surveying was difficult. The property owners are on board, so they will have to have easements put in place and every easement will have to have a description and need to be filed with the Recorder’s Office. There’s a lot of expense involved, especially when it’s done by an engineer. This project has been pushed back four times and may be pushed back again, when it was originally planned for finish around the end of 2022. Bonnie confirmed with the Mayor that a formal motion will have to be made at the next Council meeting since the contract amount is being changed.

The Mayor said she had a meeting with Jessica Wasserman. Jessica is interested in learning more about what she needs to do to complete a 501c3. The Mayor had suggested Jessica speak with Bonnie or the bank for further advisement.

In regards to the sidewalk situation, Bob asked if the Village has the funds to do the engineering. Bonnie advised the engineering was for the planning and design. Bob asked if it’s complete yet. Tom said no, not yet. Tom said the next step for the green space will be to discuss boring the property and the same is true for both sides of the street, especially the side that Smash 180 is on. It’s not just a concrete replacement. There will need to be tremendous expenditure to stabilize it and get a design that the state will accept. The other side of the street may not be as distressed, but there are some concerns that were expressed closer to the end of the former Leis building, between the Leis building and the Legion, as to the stability of the ground and the green space. Estimates will come from Neal as to what the boring costs may be and those are not factored into the funds that Council previously approved for the downtown streetscape and sidewalk improvements. Bob asked when will it be determined what percentage of expense goes to the landowner and the property owners. Bonnie said the property owners are responsible for four feet of sidewalk. Bob asked what happens if the engineer comes up with a figure that the property owners aren’t agreeable to. Tom said the Village could assess the individual properties. Tom said on US 20 and State Route 547, it’s not in finality that the Council approves the project and the engineer approves the project. ODOT has to offer their approval for the project. What the Village went through previously regarding ADA compliance and crossings, that’s all going to have an impact on what’s done on Route 20 as well as an impact on the individual merchants. ODOT will not turn away if we’re designing an ADA compliant sidewalk. There will be some additional expenditures required by the merchants to facilitate an ADA compliance entryway/walkway into the building. It’s not for sure, but knowing the individual from the State level that we’ve dealt with before, issues came about with the sidewalks in front of the MMC and in front of the train depot, because we were an eighth of an inch wrong in one direction. Bob asked about funding for those projects. Tom said there are a couple of grant programs, Safe Streets for All being one of them. There has to be a fully blessed design before applying for grants. Bonnie said that’s no different than any other loan we do. Every loan applied for has to have the “blessing” of the design work first. Tom said Safe Routes to schools requires an active survey, showing how many youths travel in the area.

Chief Lyons spoke in regards to the day after Thanksgiving that was approved as a paid day off for the staff at the last regular Council meeting. Chief apologized as he misunderstood what was being discussed at the time. The way it appears, the three full-time officers would have to work without any additional compensation, so he’d like Council to consider modifying it and to treat it like a holiday, where the officers would get regular pay, plus time-and-a-half. Bonnie said that effects the Water Department as well. Tom said Don is trying to squeeze the hours in before that Friday and then have Isaiah work that Friday. The Mayor said that is doable, but she needs to know what verbiage is required. Joe asked if it would be better to change it to a holiday, and if so, does that require a motion, or does it have to be passed as legislation. Bonnie said she will have to ask Jim. She also confirmed that if Council wants to treat it as a holiday, then they would be changing the policy manual. Chris confirmed Council can think about it and see what Jim says as well. Chief said he received three applications for the full-time police officer position. One is tentative and for the other two, he’d have to take a long, hard look. Bonnie advised that the job advertisement ended up being run in both the Reflector and the Register. The Register ad was free due to a delay on the Reflector’s part in running the ad in their newspaper.

The Mayor spoke about the registration fee that is being charged to food vendors. She said the way she remembered it, she thought the schools and churches would be given the same consideration in regards to the not having to pay the registration fee. Chris said she doesn’t remember that. Joe asked if this was in regards to Reading Under the Lights that was held at the school recently. The Mayor asked if the vendors were charged for that event last year. Bonnie advised the food truck Ordinance wasn’t in place last year. The Mayor asked if that’s possible to grandfather that agreement in. Joe said language could be added to define what a festival is. Chris said an exception could be made that any food truck sponsored by the schools or churches would be exempt from any fees. Bob said if it’s a fundraiser or something for the community, he doesn’t see why the fee would need to be charged, especially if the school or the church isn’t benefitting from the vendor. Bonnie said Council will have to give that consideration, as there are food trucks that come here and set up for periods of time, so Council would have to decide where to draw the line. A food vendor that is here for the reading program could come back later and set up in a different parking lot. The Mayor said she would like to address this before it’s forgotten. Bonnie said the Ordinance would be the same, but the rules and regulations would change.

The Mayor asked Bonnie for an update on the Sunshine Laws training. Bonnie is checking into how to get credit for the four Council members that she attended the training on behalf of, as the State has changed the regulations. Bonnie has to verify attendance online as certificates aren’t provided anymore. Public records and open meetings were discussed. The Mayor asked when is a meeting considered a quorum, is it with two members or three. Bonnie advised it’s three. The Mayor asked what if the Mayor is involved in the meeting. Bonnie said the Mayor is not considered part of the quorum. The Mayor said she is asking as she had a meeting with a business representative, who wants to continue the meeting with more people, more businesses and more Flea committee members, which is fine. She doesn’t necessarily think it needs to be a forum with all of Council, but she would like some Council representation and perhaps the Village Administrator before the next meeting is held. Bonnie explained that three Council members constitute a quorum, as the Council members are the decision makers. Joe said he has a comment about that. There is an individual from eastern Ohio that has been trying to find municipalities who are breaking sunshine laws and that individual files legal suits accordingly, with statutory penalties. There have been newspaper articles in regards to this, especially about misuse of executive session. Joe wants to put that out to Council as a reminder to be cognizant. Bonnie said numerous years ago, Council received a letter of warning from the Auditor of State, because after reading the Council minutes, they saw Council went into executive session during every meeting and that was considered excessive. Joe said it would be a good idea for Council to have a refresher on the basics. Bonnie said she is more than happy to pull hand-outs that are available. Bonnie also explained there is a three-hour online course that is available for Council and the Mayor.

The Mayor said the last regular Council meeting had her feeling very frustrated, as she had no idea any of that was coming towards Council nor did all of it apply to what was being discussed. As a Village, the Mayor and Council welcome anyone who wants to attend a public meeting. The Mayor said she thinks Council needs to consider qualifications for people to be able to speak, like having to be on the agenda, unless they are talking about something that is on the agenda already. Discussion on current Council rules. The Mayor said it’s not that she doesn’t want people coming and talking, but she wants to be better prepared with answers. Bonnie said there’s something in the Council rules about not being able to speak negatively against anyone on Council and she suggested expanding that. The Mayor proposed the following language: The Village of Monroeville welcome public input at Council meetings; in an effort to have efficiency, preparedness, and equity, the following criteria will be followed: members of the public may have five minutes to address Council regarding items on the agenda only; in order to be placed on the agenda, members of the public must request to be added to the agenda 3:00 PM, the Thursday before the Council meeting; behavior and language should represent and promote professionalism. Bob said he doesn’t think what happened recently is going to be an on-going problem. The Mayor would like meetings to be productive and informative. Bob asked if the Flea committee requested a meeting. The Mayor verified and said that she met with one of the members, trying to see if she could work on issues. The member still wants to meet with multiple people, but if the entire Council is involved, then it’s an open meeting and has to be advertised as such. The Mayor isn’t sure if that is in the best interest of everyone to bring it into a public venue. The Mayor will bring this up again at the next meeting and asked Council to consider what they would like to do.

The Mayor said next month is Thanksgiving and the following month is Christmas. Unless there is a matter that comes up where there is need for a special meeting, the Mayor would like to plan on not having those work sessions. The Mayor confirmed with Council, Tom and Bonnie. Chris said a Planning Commission meeting is scheduled for 11/7/22. The Mayor said hopes were expressed from the Flea Committee to get more support from the Village for set up and tear down. The Mayor’s goal is to sit down with all the responsible parties in June, three months before the Flea, to make sure all questions and requests are answered, and she expressed that hope to the business owner from the Flea Committee when she met with her. The Mayor said she received an email from Elisa Brown today that said Elisa contacted Dick Stein and he is bringing DJ Swearingen to a meeting in the Village at 1:00 PM, on Friday, 10/28/22. They will be discussing economic development in the Village. The Mayor and Joe Galea were made aware of the meeting. The Mayor isn’t able to leave the school to attend, but she wanted to make everyone aware of the meeting.

Chief asked if wage ordinances are going to be discussed next month. Chris said Bonnie is working on some things, so Council isn’t there yet. Once they have the green light to look over everything, they will discuss it, and it may take them all the way into January 2023. At that time, a finance meeting can be scheduled.

Sam looked over the plans for the MLS track and noted there are nearly 300 parking spaces on the plans. The men’s restroom only has one urinal and one stall and the women’s restroom only has one or two stalls. The fence is around the field area only, which the neighbors are questioning.

There being no other business to come before them, the meeting adjourned at 7:34 PM.

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Bonnie Beck, Fiscal Officer