On Tuesday, December 20, at 6:00 PM, Mayor Fries-Seip opened the Council meeting with a word of prayer, and the Pledge of Allegiance to the flag was recited by those present.

The regular meeting for the Council of the Village of Monroeville was then called to order.

Present at roll call:

Chris Raftery and: Melissa Fries-Seip, Mayor

Craig Franklin Tom Gray, Village Administrator

Joe Galea Bonnie Beck, Fiscal Officer

Sue Rogers Heather Alicea, Administrative Specialist

Bob Whitacre Gary Lyons, Chief of Police

Sam Wiley

Also attending: Lieutenant Troy Kimball, Mike Raftery, Anthony James, Matt Kluger, Travis Odum, Aaron Dorsey, and John Wasiniak.

The November 2022 financial reports, bank statements, balance sheets, check reports, and bank reconciliations were previously distributed to Council via e-mail.

**APPROVAL OF AGENDA**

Mayor Fries-Seip asked for the Council’s approval of the agenda. Sam Wiley made a motion, seconded by Sue Rogers, to approve the agenda as presented. Motion carried with no discussion.

**DISPOSITION OF MINUTES**

Sue Rogers made a motion, seconded by Chris Raftery, to approve the minutes as presented from the November 8, 2022, regular Council meeting. Motion carried with no discussion.

**APPROVAL OF FINANCIAL REPORTS**

Chris Raftery made a motion, seconded by Sue Rogers, to approve the November 2022 financial reports as presented. Motion carried with no discussion.

**APPROVAL OF THE MONTHLY CREDIT CARD REPORT**

Sam Wiley made a motion, seconded by Joe Galea, to approve the November 2022 credit card report. Motion carried with no discussion.

**OPPORTUNITY FOR CITIZENS TO ADDRESS COUNCIL**

None.

**ADMINISTRATIVE REPORTS**

**Administrator** - Tom presented his report that was previously submitted to Council. There were two action items in the packet. Tom would like to request a 3rd action item, for Council to accept Street Department Superintendent Dustin Crabtree’s resignation, effective 12/28/22, as well as authorization to advertise internally for the open job position. The departments are prepped and ready for this weekend’s storm event. Twelve-hour shifts will be worked to cover the length of the event. Tom introduced Anthony James and Matt Kluger from Gray Matter Holdings. Anthony is the COO of Gray Matter Data and Matt is their legal advisor. Discussions of the feasibility of a new electrical load from a new customer at the Industrial Park began almost a year ago. A package was put together in a form that could best serve the Village and Gray Matter Data. When discussions began, a small five-megawatt load was considered, and Gray Matter Data is now requesting a fourteen-megawatt connection to its data center. Moving forward, it could grow greater than that. The Village operates behind the meter on a retail electric system. All of the power flows through a totalized, master meter into the Village, out to Berry Plastics, and out to the schools, Village departments, and residential customers. Those are all behind the meter loads and are connected behind the meter, as are the solar generation and the diesel generators. Gray Matter Data will be plugged in behind the meter, but the concept being deployed is what’s called retail wheeling. Retail wheeling is setting up a customer behind the meter, but giving them market access to purchase power other than from the Village. Due to Gray Matter Data driving the Village into this retail scenario, the energy that Gray Matter Data purchases will be able to be edged, and purchased in advance at a very competitive rate. The Gray Matter Data team has lined up the purchase power schedules for after the first of the year and this is all done as a paper transaction. The Village will deliver the energy, and supply the distribution system, and the bulk power data will get to Gray Matter Data just like it gets to any customer in the Village. This is an opportunity to break ground at the Industrial Park and supply new jobs, with a good rate of pay and a good benefits package. This is part of the Village’s future, providing stability and long-term gain. Sam asked if this is not considered part of the peak load. Tom said Council would be allowing Gray Matter Data to be uninterruptable. Bob asked for a brief description of bitcoin mining. Tom deferred to Anthony James. Anthony said what Gray Matter is essentially doing is providing computational hashrate calculation power to the network. Every ten minutes, there is a block of transactions back and forth and those are all packaged into a block. The miner who figures out the puzzle puts the piece into the block, the block goes onto a chain, and those transactions are memorialized forever. The bitcoin reward is 6.25 bitcoin plus transaction fees. Gray Matter is paid in the native currency. Bitcoin is then exchanged for fiat currency and that is how Gray Matter pays their bills, does their payroll, pays their insurance, etc. The blockchain is nothing more than an open ledger. Bob asked how the value comes from the ledger. Anthony said it’s a unit of account, just like the US dollar. Bob said he has no idea what bitcoin is. Tom said it’s a digital currency. Matt stepped in and advised when someone does a stock trade, the trade gets cleared on computers by a company like Goldman Sachs. Goldman Sachs charges a fee to do the processing and that is essentially what Gray Matter Data does. It’s continual processing, 24/7, 365 days a year, and Gray Matter gets paid the reward for providing the computing power and providing electricity that they are paying to the Village. Gray Matter is providing a service for clearing trades in bitcoin and is being paid for providing the transaction. Anthony said they want to build a purposeful building in the Industrial Park, bring in a bunch of employees, and on top of that, are going to support a ton of local trades, and high voltage contractors. They started with three employees in 2020, they now have almost two dozen and, they have the best benefits. Bob asked why Gray Matter is picking Monroeville. Anthony said Council can thank Tom for that, as Tom reached out to Gray Matter via e-mail. Joe said he reviewed the contract and it seems the Village fronts the cost associated with upgrading the circuit and will be reimbursed. Joe asked Tom if he knows what the estimated outlay will be. Tom said it is unknown at this time due to the diversity and ever-changing market. The Village would allow Gray Matter to contract directly and build the building according to Village specifications. Joe asked for a figure investment and Tom said it is a six-figure investment. It won’t change by much due to the structure and the nature of the load and how we get the power there. The cost component will not be exponential and will stay linear. Joe said as far as the lines coming into town that feed everyone, how does putting on a new load affect the current capacity. Tom said the existing transmission service from First Energy feeds from Halfway Road to Bellevue, it’s a loop configuration and power can go both ways. In 2023-2024, First Energy is upgrading the line to a 100-megawatt capacity, at no cost to the Village. During the upgrade, automated switching will be installed, and the reliability of service will go up a couple of notches, which is all a direct benefit to the Village. Should the Gray Matter load be 14 megawatts, AMP will enter into the discussion. Then you will start to see some structures appear in the Village, where the loop doesn’t come and pass us, but loops through whatever delivery point service we have for them and the Village. The reliability will dramatically increase. There is plenty of capacity on the substation now.

**Fiscal Officer** - Bonnie presented her report that was previously submitted to Council. Bonnie asked Council to approve a sewer excusal of $767.76 for utility account 06.1880.2, for the 86,000-gallon water loss. Sam Wiley made a motion, seconded by Bob Whitacre, to approve the sewer excusal of $767.76, for utility account 06.1880.2. Motion carried with no discussion. Bonnie asked Council to consider a pay increase for all non-probationary Village employees, in the amount of .50 per hour, effective 1/1/23. The increase is normally done at this point in the year, to avoid having to set up retro-pay. Bonnie asked for Council’s approval to purchase three new PCs for the office at the cost of $9,052, as the current PCs are fourteen years old. Sam Wiley made a motion, seconded by Chris Raftery, for the purchase of three, new PCs for the Administrative Office, in the amount of $9,052. Motion carried with no discussion. Bonnie said the PC order will be placed after the first of the year, but the wait time will most likely be three to five months. Sam asked if the cost includes the new software package for the utilities. Bonnie advised the utility software cost isn’t part of the $9,052. Bonnie asked Council for consideration of the sale of six tablets that are in storage at the Administrative Office. Sam Wiley made a motion, seconded by Chris Raftery, to approve the sale of six tablets. Motion carried with no discussion. Bonnie asked Council to make arrangements for a January Utility Committee meeting. Bonnie said Star Ohio is finally at over four percent interest for the first time since 2008. We don’t have any CDs that are due for maturity until April 2023, but our corporate account is growing. Bonnie would like to discuss taking some of that money and putting it in Star Ohio. When a final decision is considered, she will bring that to Council for approval. The Audit report has been provided to Council. Bonnie explained how the audit report was pulled together and how the findings were transacted. Bonnie asked Council if they would like an exit conference with the Auditor. Council declined.

**Police** – Chief presented his report that was previously submitted to Council. Activity has been slower for December, due to being short one full-time officer and because December is a slower month. Chief advised Jordan Eggelston may be leaving to join the Elyria Police Department. Chief advised most officers that are interested in taking a position with the Village won’t do it because the pay isn’t high enough. It all depends on what Council decides on the wages in the next few months or even tonight. To fill the current gap, the Chief would like Council’s approval to hire Jonah Mersereau as a part-time officer. Jonah previously resigned from the Sheriff’s Office and is currently a part-time officer in Wakeman. Right now, it’s between Jonah and another officer, who is also working part-time. Joe Galea made a motion to hire Jonah Mersereau as a part-time officer at $14.00 per hour, seconded by Sam Wiley. Motion carried with no discussion. Chief said part two of the body-camera grant award has been approved, although he is awaiting an official e-mail.

**Solicitor** – Jim Barney was absent from this meeting due to a previous commitment.

**Mayor** - The Mayor asked Council to consider the action items that were discussed earlier in the meeting. Sam Wiley made a motion, seconded by Craig Franklin, to approve hiring Trask Ott as a part-time employee with the Street Department, effective 11/29/22, at $15.00 per hour. Motion carried with no discussion. Sam Wiley made a motion, seconded by Sue Rogers, to authorize the Village Administrator to submit a grant application to the Ohio Environment Protection Agency for funding the replacement of the Emergency Power Generator at the Water Treatment Plant. Motion carried with no discussion. Sue Rogers made a motion, seconded by Chris Raftery, to approve the resignation of Street Department Superintendent Dustin Crabtree, with the last date of employment as 12/27/22, as well as approval to advertise for the open job position. Motion carried with no discussion. The Mayor advised she would like to hear of any recommendations for a new member of the Planning Commission. In January 2023, there will be the State of the Village address, the volleyball team will be in attendance for their proclamation, and Robb Smithson will be joining the meeting for discussion regarding Rails to Trails. The Mayor expressed her appreciation for the Village employees and all their hard work. Christmas in the Park was wonderful and the Mayor thanked everyone for their help with that as well. A Utility Committee meeting and a Finance meeting need to be scheduled for January 2023. Bob asked about hiring the part-time police officer at $14.00 per hour and asked what happened to $15.00 per hour. The Mayor reminded him that he will be a part-time officer, whose current rate of pay starts at $14.00 per hour. A full-time officer would start at $15.00 per hour. The Chief said he would like to discuss starting the part-time officers at $15.00 per hour. Chris advised that can be discussed at the next Finance meeting.

**BOARD AND COMMISSION REPORTS**

Bob Whitacre reported that the H.R.J.F.D. met on 12/7/22. There were 17 calls in November, one in the Village, and five in Ridgefield Township.

**ORDINANCES AND RESOLUTIONS FOR FIRST READING**

**Resolution 2022-32** *A Resolution authorizing the Village Administrator to make application for an Ohio BWC Safety Intervention Grant to purchase trash bin lifters for Monroeville, Ohio* was presented for first reading. No discussion.

**ORDINANCES AND RESOLUTIONS FOR PASSAGE**

The Mayor asked for a motion to suspend the rules for the following legislation. Sue Rogers made that motion, seconded by Craig Franklin. Motion carried with no discussion.

**Ordinance 2022-21** *An Ordinance amending, reducing, or supplementing certain funds for appropriations Ordinance No. 2022-26, and declaring an emergency* was presented for passage. Chris Raftery made a motion, seconded by Joe Galea, to pass Ordinance 2022-21 by title only. Motion carried with no discussion.

**Ordinance 2022-22** *An Ordinance establishing an electric rate applicable to new large electric customers locating in the Village of Monroeville, Ohio, or existing customers having an increase in connected load in excess of 10,000 kilowatts and declaring an emergency* was presented for passage. Sam Wiley made a motion, seconded by Sue Rogers, to pass Ordinance 2022-22 by title only. Motion carried with no discussion.

**Ordinance 2022-23** *An Ordinance amending section 933.05 of Monroeville’s Codified Ordinances relating to the electric rates, and declaring an emergency* was presented for passage. Chris Raftery made a motion, seconded by Sam Wiley, to pass Ordinance 2022-23 by title only. Motion carried with no discussion.

**Resolution 2022-31** *A Resolution authorizing and directing the Village Administrator to enter into and execute an electric service agreement between the Village of Monroeville, Ohio, Gray Data, Inc., and Gray Matter Holdings, Inc., and declaring an emergency* was presented for adoption. Sam Wiley made a motion, seconded by Chris Raftery, to adopt Resolution 2022-31 by title only. Motion carried with no discussion.

**APPROVAL OF BILL SUMMARY**

Sue Rogers made a motion, seconded by Sam Wiley, to pay the bills as presented on the bill summary, which included memo expenses and checks # 044616 to # 044697, for a total of $562,182.33. Motion carried with no discussion.

**COUNCIL BUSINESS**

Bonnie asked Council to consider the .50 per hour increase for all non-probationary Village employees, effective 1/1/23. Chris advised it can be discussed at the next Finance meeting and if agreed upon, it can be retroactive to 1/1/23. Sam said he thought Council had already talked about this. The Mayor advised it hasn’t been discussed yet. Bonnie explained that amending the entire wage ordinance had been discussed and is in process, however, this increase is just the across-the-board, annual increase that is normally done. Bob asked if anyone from Council had anything in mind for the wage increase discussion. The Mayor asked Bob what he thought. Bob said he wasn’t prepared with a number and the Mayor said she wasn’t either. Bob said he would like to see Council do what it can to keep employees here. The increase done last year hasn’t seemed to do anything to keep employees here, so maybe percentages or per hour need to be discussed. Chris advised all avenues need to be explored, as it is an issue and in-depth discussion needs to be had. Bonnie asked if they are talking about the across-the-board increase or the wage ordinance. Chris advised the across-the-board increase is secondary and will be discussed later. Chris said the pay bump will be addressed first and then the wages, at the next Finance meeting.

**ADJOURNMENT**

There being no other business to come before them, Sam Wiley made a motion, seconded by Joe Galea, to adjourn. Motion carried with no discussion. The meeting adjourned at 7:00 PM.

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Heather Alicea, Administrative Specialist

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Melissa M. Fries-Seip, Mayor

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