

**Council of the Village of Yellow Springs
Emergency Meeting (Work Session) Minutes**

Virtual Meeting

Friday, June 12, 2020

CALL TO ORDER

President of Council Brian Housh called the meeting to order at 5:00 pm.

ROLL CALL

Present via zoom were President Housh, Vice President Marianne MacQueen and Council members Kevin Stokes, Lisa Kreeger and Laura Curliss. Also present were Village Manager Josue Salmeron; Public Works Director Johnnie Burns, and Police Chief Carlson.

PETITIONS AND COMMUNICATIONS

MacQueen announced that the Fourth of July Parade will take place, and will have the theme of “Black Lives Matter”.

MacQueen reviewed the communications received regarding the two topics for discussion.

Carl Champney re: Masks
Jane Hockensmith-Reich re: Masks
Charlene Prestopino re: Masks
Kathryn Hitchcock re: Masks and Resolution re: Racism
Moirra Laughlin re: Masks and Resolution re: Racism
Marnie from Starflower re: Masks
Nancy Mellon re: Masks
Pan Reich re: Masks
Chris Powell re: Resolution re: Racism
Emily Seibel re: Rental Assistance Funds Available
Emily Seibel re: Tenant Rights
Emily Seibel re: YS Home, Inc. Annual Report and Meeting Invitation
Emily Seibel re: Resolution re: Racism
Shanah Hammock re: Masks and Resolution re: Racism
Rebecca Kuder re: Resolution re: Racism
Susan Alberter re: Masks
Karen Wintrow re: Masks
Cindy Oleynik re: Masks
Susan Burgos re: Masks
Kineta Sanford re: Requesting the COS Position Be Full Time

WORK SESSION

Meaningful Action re: Racism Public Health Crisis. Housh opened the discussion, noting that Council would primarily be listening to the thoughts and ideas of the participants.

Kreeger thanked all who had written and called regarding the topic of racism as a public health matter. She restated the goal of listening before writing anything that might be led by any Council member’s personal biases. Kreeger stated that representatives of the 365 Project had been asked to lead the discussion.

John Gudgel, representing the 365 Project, noted the similarities and differences of the current situation to the civil rights marches of the 1960’s, lauding the participation and leadership of young people in this action.

Louise Smith, representing the 365 Project, noted the work that she, Gavin Davore-Leonard, Janet Mueller and the Justice System Task Force (JSTF) had done in collaboration with Chief Carlson in creating the Guidelines for Village Policing. Smith read from the Guidelines regarding systemic racism. She stated that the idea was to hire, train and evaluate officers using these guidelines. We want our police focused on serving the community rather than addressing “threats,” Smith stated. She stated that how YS officers are trained to recognize implicit bias, and how is this backed up with hiring and firing is key. She added that the hiring of a social worker to the YSPD has been a good addition. Smith noted that ‘racism is a mental illness from which we are all recovering.’

Angela Allen, representing the 365 Project, who now lives in Dayton but grew upon the village has been involved in recent protests. She noted her involvement in conversation with her peers on the topic, and asked that a “sit down” be held with youth leaders and the YSPD. Allen noted collective efficacy as a key component of effective and fair policing. Allen stated that she is continuing work on an agenda for this discussion.

In response to a question from Gudgel, Allen noted that the conversation should involve a spectrum of community members, and should be positively oriented.

Gudgel noted the commitment on the part of young people and noted that the new school superintendent is committed to the goal of engaging in the conversation about race. Dr. Holden has launched a book talk with teachers and staff, and will continue this with students this fall.

Gudgel commented on the necessity of calling out racism when it occurs despite the discomfort that will likely occur.

Gudgel spoke of the efficacy of having police officers visit Mills Lawn School and address questions from students. He asked that the program be expanded into the middle and high schools. He lauded the presence of the Community Outreach Specialist as key to addressing village needs—both those of systemic racism as well as a host of others.

Gudgel commented that young people of color feel profiled when downtown, and Smith stated that she hears the same complaint from Antioch College students.

Gudgel described an online video entitled “the Look”, noting that persons of color are deeply familiar with “the Look”, which is a gaze of judgement inflicted upon persons of color.

In response to an online comment, Kreeger explained that she has proposed, and some work has been done on setting up a Citizen Review Board. She commented that last year the Village worked with a consultant on policing, and among the recommendations made, the consultant did indicate that a CR board would be appropriate.

Allen stated that she would be interested in being involved in the conversation around the Citizen Review Board.

Kreeger commented upon her joy at seeing youth leadership around the current situation.

Judith Ezekiel commented that Cities Against Racism, an offshoot of UNESCO might be a good resource.

Smith recommended a book by Ruth King entitled “Mindful of Race”.

Cindy Seick responded to a question from Curliss, stating her support for addressing the health issue on a local level. Sieck stated that when she spoke with officers about the presence of a COS, these officers were more willing to engage in situations and interactions they might not previously have felt comfortable addressing.

Ezekiel commented on the health impact of racism, noting that even with correction for socio-economic factors and lack of equal access to health care, racism factors into negative health outcome for Black Americans as an independent factor. She commented that new areas of funding for research should open up as a result of declaration of racism as a public health crisis.

Responding to a comment from the Clerk, Gudgel noted that he is working with Dr. Holden on a study of Mills Lawn’s discipline data and its impact upon students of color. Gudgel stated that he tends to be the “go-to” for intervention with students of color when many times the problem is not the child’s problem but may be a white teacher’s problem.

Pan Reich alleged that his understanding was that the COS is not being used fully or called to scenes when she should be.

Florence Randolph (COS) responded that she is indeed called to the scene when appropriate, and is being filled in and used as a resource in follow up. She noted that all officers have been trained in CIT and are trained to respond to crisis situations.

Gudgel commented that Kevin MacGruder, the 365 Project and the Chamber have put together a brochure to specifically attract persons of color to the village as residents.

Randolph noted that she did, prior to the COVID-19 shutdown, have regular hours at Antioch College to enhance the relationship between the College and the Village, and continues her work with staff there.

Mayor Conine commented upon the benefit the COS brings to the Mayor’s Court.

Gudgel commented that Randolph has served as a trusted resource and liaison between the community of color and village officials.

Matt Carson commented that the Village spends 1.5 million dollars annually on policing and less than 10 thousand dollars annually on the Youth Center. He asked that the social worker be moved out of the Police Department, and that resources should be moved out of the Police Department.

Housh commented that Council is continuing to listen, and is committed to continued and new actions addressing systemic racism. He noted that Council will be moving forward with the Justice System Advisory Committee immediately.

Requiring Masks in the Village. Housh introduced the session, again noting that Council is present to listen.

Lori Sparrow Knapp stated that she works in the village and is in the village many times daily. She commented that there is a lack of distancing and a lack of masks. She commented that there has been hostility reported to her when employees ask visitors to wear masks. She asked that the science be respected.

Judith Ezekiel commented that a recent trip into town showed many not wearing masks and not responsive to being asked to distancing.

Pan Reich commented that mask-wearing should be enforced, and that could save lives “with very little pain.” He added that this could be used as a marketing tool.

Kelly Ann Tracey asserted that visitors do not seem to be responding to being politely asked to wear masks, and asked that Council do what is right for the majority.

Troy Lindsey stated that many downtown are not wearing masks. He asked that part of the police budget be used to enforce mask wearing.

Mayor Conine stated that while she agrees with the efficacy of mask-wearing, enforcement would be a “law enforcement nightmare”, and described some worst case scenarios.

Shane Creepingbear spoke about the need for passage of the resolution declaring racism a public health emergency and asked that some of the police budget be directed to the Youth Center. He spoke of the need for an effective Citizen Review Board. Creepingbear commented that in his role as Admissions Coordinator for Antioch College he sees the racism perpetrated upon students of color by the YSPD.

Housh commented that he has not yet seen a community in Ohio that has passed a mask ordinance, but has seen locations that have asked for self-compliance.

Kreeger noted that one of the challenges faced by Council is the fact that there is no support on the State or County level for such an ordinance and that she fears retaliation from hostile groups if such an ordinance is passed.

MacQueen commented that visitors who are not wearing masks are not paying attention to the “kindness” messaging and that the messaging should be more direct.

Samantha Eckenrode commented that fear of potential bullies should not prevent the village from doing the right thing. She asked that the village be on the cutting edge in terms of mask requirement.

Pan Reich commented that transmission outside is lower than indoors and perhaps masks should be required indoors only.

Housh shared a comment from a recent Chamber meeting that the safety triad be promoted: physical distancing; masks and hand-washing.

Curliss noted a recent Chamber survey indicating that shopkeepers want to be able to set their own policies. She commented further that despite Memorial Day and nice weather, Greene County has still not seen any spike in cases. She commented her discomfort with having YSPD have to enforce any mask ordinance from a safety standpoint.

Stokes noted that the “low-key” approach has been minimally effective to date, and asked what benchmarks should be used to determine when and how to ramp up efforts. He then commented that he believes it is time to become more strict.

Chief Carlson commented that there are always several sides being debated among Village leaders. He stated that citing people for not wearing masks seems problematic to him as being in direct conflict with the style of policing the village has stated that it wants.

Salmeron stated that if an ordinance is passed, the village will enforce it.

Kate Hamilton stated that she is tired of hearing that residents should stay away if they are not comfortable when this is our home. We have to show what we care about, she stated.

Housh asked for clarification around what problem is to be addressed. He commented that enforcement could be figured out at a later time and then brought in line with village values.

Housh noted that the topic will be discussed again on Monday.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

At 6:51pm, MacQueen MOVED and Curliss SECONDED a MOTION TO ENTER EXECUTIVE SESSION for the Purpose of Discussion of the Potential Purchase of Real Estate. THE MOTION PASSED 5-0 ON A ROLL CALL VOTE.

At 7:05pm, Curliss MOVED and MacQueen SECONDED a MOTION TO EXIT EXECUTIVE SESSION. THE MOTION PASSED 5-0 ON A VOICE VOTE.

ADJOURNMENT

At 7:06pm, Curliss MOVED and MacQueen SECONDED a MOTION TO ADJOURN. The MOTION PASSED 5-0 ON A VOICE VOTE.

Please note: These notes are not verbatim. A DVD copy of the meeting is available for viewing in the Clerk of Council's office between 9am and 3pm Monday through Friday or upon request from Channel 5.

Brian Housh, Council President

Attest: Judy Kintner, Council Clerk