



## Merion Village Association

Meeting Minutes: January 6, 2015

**DESCRIPTION:** Monthly Association Meeting

**LOCATION:** 1330 S. Fourth Street, Columbus, OH 43206

**MEETING DURATION:** 7:15 PM – 9:10 PM

**BOARD MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE:**

- PRESIDENT: Tony Roell ([TRoell@MerionVillage.org](mailto:TRoell@MerionVillage.org))
- VICE PRESIDENT: Coda Bruce ([CBruce@MerionVillage.org](mailto:CBruce@MerionVillage.org))
- TREASURER: Allison Willford ([AWillford@MerionVillage.org](mailto:AWillford@MerionVillage.org))
- SECRETARY: Jessica Norman ([JNorman@MerionVillage.org](mailto:JNorman@MerionVillage.org))
- MEMBER-AT-LARGE: Nicholas Jenior ([NJenior@MerionVillage.org](mailto:NJenior@MerionVillage.org))

**BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT:**

- NONE

**TOTAL MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE:** 34

**TOTAL NON-MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE:** 13

**TOPIC:** Treasurer's Report (Presented by Coda Bruce)

**SUMMARY OF DISCUSSION:** We received a check from the Kroger Community Rewards program in December. The amount was lower than it has been in the recent past, so please remember signup for this free program each year!

**TOPIC:** Merion Village Association Committees

**SUMMARY OF DISCUSSION:** The purpose the committee initiative is to get the neighborhood involved so we have a wide range of participants helping to address issues and ideas that are important to our neighborhood. As the committees become established, a representative from each group will present briefly at the monthly MVA meetings. If you'd like to join one of our new committees, please visit our website and complete the quick registration form at <http://www.merionvillage.org/committees.html>. You can also reach out to us with your questions and ideas by e-mailing [Committees@MerionVillage.org](mailto:Committees@MerionVillage.org). We need to your help to better our neighborhood.

**TOPIC:** Meeting Location and the MVA Constitution

**SUMMARY OF DISCUSSION:** These two topics have been tabled until next month's meeting to allow additional time to discuss other significant matters on the agenda.

**TOPIC:** Membership Renewals

**SUMMARY OF DISCUSSION:** It's time to renew your MVA membership! Membership in the Association is maintained on a calendar year basis from January 1st through December 31st. Members who register on or after October 1st will maintain membership through the following year. The deadline for renewal is December 31st. A Member who fails to renew by December 31st loses voting privileges but is entitled to a grace period from January 1st through the last day of February, during which time the Member may renew the membership and immediately regain voting privileges. If a Member fails to renew prior to the last day of February, that Member shall thereafter be considered a new applicant and shall be subject to the forty-five (45) day waiting period for obtaining voting privileges in accordance with Article IV(D)(6) of the Merion Village Association Constitution. A complete copy of the Constitution can be viewed on our website at [www.MerionVillage.org](http://www.MerionVillage.org). Membership registration is not complete until all dues are received by the Merion Village Association. Your completed application and membership dues may be mailed or delivered to the Merion Village Information Center at 1330 S. Fourth Street, Columbus, OH 43207. All checks should be made payable to "The Merion Village Association". Registration may also be completed at any MVA event or online through our website, at [www.MerionVillage.org](http://www.MerionVillage.org). Merion Village Association members who reside within the boundaries of Merion Village will receive voting privileges, entitling the member to cast a single vote on issues presented at monthly meetings or during special circumstances. Members must be present at the meeting to cast a vote and no proxy votes will be accepted. Voting privileges are not active until 45 days after the date of a new membership registration.



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**TOPIC:** Scheduled Events and Activities

**SUMMARY OF DISCUSSION:** We are working on several events to occur over the next few months. Tatoheads is excited to host our annual chili cook-off in February. The final date has yet to be determined. We are looking to hold a Meet Local / Buy Local event with Hey Hey in March. If you know about community events that you'd like us to discuss at a meeting, please e-mail any Tony at [TRoell@MerionVillage.org](mailto:TRoell@MerionVillage.org).

DATE (TIME)	EVENT DESCRIPTION	COORDINATOR(S)
February (TBD)	Annual MVA Chili Cook-Off	Coda B.
<b>LOCATION:</b> Tatohead's Public House (1297 Parsons Ave, Columbus, OH 43206)		
March (TBD)	Meet Local / Buy Local Event	Coda B.
<b>LOCATION:</b> Hey Hey Bar & Grill (361 E Whittier St, Columbus, OH 43206)		
April (TBD)	Merion Village Spring Community Clean-Up	TBD
<b>LOCATION:</b> Merion Village Neighborhood		
May 7 <sup>th</sup> (9:00 AM - 3:00 PM)	Merion Village Spring Community Yard Sale	Jessica N.
<b>LOCATION:</b> Merion Village Neighborhood (Location Map Will be Available)		
July 9 <sup>th</sup> (10:00 AM - 3:00 PM)	Annual Merion Village Garden Tour	Garden Tour Committee
<b>LOCATION:</b> Merion Village Neighborhood (Location Map Will be Available)		
August 27 <sup>th</sup> (TBD)	Annual Merion Village Summer Festival	Festival Committee
<b>LOCATION:</b> Moeller Park (261 Hanford St, Columbus, OH 43206)		
September (TBD)	Merion Village Autumn Community Clean-Up	TBD
<b>LOCATION:</b> Merion Village Neighborhood		
October (TBD)	Merion Village Autumn Community Yard Sale	Jessica N.
<b>LOCATION:</b> Merion Village Neighborhood (Location Map Will be Available)		
December (TBD)	Annual Merion Village Potluck & Bake Sale	TBD
<b>LOCATION:</b> TBD		

**TOPIC:** Southside Area Commission Report (Presented by Anne Stewart and Erin Synk)

**SUMMARY OF DISCUSSION:** The Southside Area Commission (SSAC) is an advisory body for the City of Columbus. Local neighborhoods provide input to the SSAC who then votes and passes input on to the City. Southwood was selected to have a holiday bash hosted at the school by the Fire Fighters Against Drugs (FFAD). This was a great event where each child received a holiday meal. The SSAC has invited the South High School National Honor Society to present at an upcoming meeting. There are positive things happening at South High School. On January 23rd there will be a special election for Hungarian Village and Southern Orchards positions within the SSAC. If anyone is interested in fire alarms for your homes, the fire department will provide them and install them. The commission meets the fourth Tuesday of the month. Erin is part of a focus group that discusses and tackles various housing issues on the Southside. They want to look at ways to market the exciting happenings on the Southside to other areas of town. The school board just swore in several new members on Tuesday to form a committee to review and propose a levy on an upcoming ballot. This committee is having their first public meeting on Saturday, January 9th. The deadline to add an issue to the ballot is early in the summer. There is a school choice fair coming up for Columbus Schools in February.



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**TOPIC: MVA Gateway Kiosks**

**SUMMARY OF DISCUSSION:** We will be hanging two of the remaining kiosk signs at Red Brick and Tatoheads in the near future. There are already kiosks hanging at T.Y. Fine Furniture and the Hey Hey. Each kiosk is an original work of Merion Village inspired art accompanying an enclosed board where community notices and advertisements are displayed.

**TOPIC: Merion Village Block Watch**

**SUMMARY OF DISCUSSION:** The Block Watch/Safety Committee is working on idea to utilize the funds we received from our safety grant. This grant is intended to improve the safety of our neighborhood through various classes and events which will work to educate residents. If you have suggestions for classes you'd like to see, e-mail [BlockWatch@MerionVillage.org](mailto:BlockWatch@MerionVillage.org).

**TOPIC: MVA Planters**

**SUMMARY OF DISCUSSION:** As we began picking up the planters for repair and repainting, we found that many were in very poor condition and are even falling apart. We want to use quality, long-lasting materials but need to find a reasonable price and we are having some difficulty finding the right signs for these planters. If you have any suggestions, please reach out to Coda at [CBruce@MerionVillage.org](mailto:CBruce@MerionVillage.org). The cost for each planter, minus the sign will be roughly \$75.00.

**TOPIC: United Way Neighborhood Partnership Grants**

**SUMMARY OF DISCUSSION:** The next round of United Way Grant requests are due January 22nd. Tony suggested that it would be helpful to request some funds to help with the pocket park at Morrill and Bruck. If anyone has ideas or suggestions for grant requests in 2016, please e-mail Tony at [TRoell@MerionVillage.org](mailto:TRoell@MerionVillage.org) as soon as possible. We can only receive two grants per year and only one per category. The four categories include Community & Economic Development, Education & Public Awareness, Crime Prevention & Safety and Home Improvement & Education.

**TOPIC: Bump-Outs on Fourth Street**

**SUMMARY OF DISCUSSION:** The missing trees have not all been replaced but will be according to the City. The City has also indicated that they will not be replacing the guard rails but did not provide an explanation as to why.

**TOPIC: Neighborhood Welcome Packages**

**SUMMARY OF DISCUSSION:** Some residents would like to see an initiative to provide welcome packets to new residents in Merion Village. We would need to work together as a neighborhood to make this happen, but the MVA encourages further discussion on this topic and would like to see this idea translate into a project for our new Social and Membership Committee.

**TOPIC: Tatoheads Community Garden Fiscal Agent Request**

**SUMMARY OF DISCUSSION:** As an active business in the neighborhood and member of the MVA, the board voted to approve Tatohead's request to act as the fiscal agent for the Tatoheads Community Garden.

**TOPIC: Pocket Park at Morrill and Bruck**

**SUMMARY OF DISCUSSION:** This Park was created by a group of neighbors and the Merion Village Association in 2002. It's currently overgrown and is not being well-maintained. We are hosting special meetings and working on a plan to improve and revitalize this park. If you are interested in contributing to these efforts in any way, please contact Tony.

**TOPIC: Columbia Gas Line Improvements**

**SUMMARY OF DISCUSSION:** The next round of gas line improvements are beginning between Parsons Ave. and High St. and between Sheldon Ave. and Welch St. The work will begin in the spring after the heating season concludes, likely at the end of March. There will be a special meeting to discuss these improvements at the Parsons Ave. Library on January 27th from 6:00 to 7:00 PM.



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**TOPIC:** Southbend Tavern Café Permit for Patio Along E. Moler St. Request

**SUMMARY OF DISCUSSION:** BACKGROUND: The owners of the Southbend Tavern came to the MVA in September of 2014 to request approval for a parking variance to allow room for a patio at the back of the establishment. This was approved with a vote of 16 in support and 3 opposed. The patio that was intended for this location was not constructed due to overwhelming cost and additional City laws that would have prevented smoking on the patio. The MVA also worked with Southbend and the residents living closest to the tavern to draft a Good Neighbor Agreement. The members who worked on this agreement passed out forms to 50 or more of the nearby residents, asking for feedback and input regarding their concerns about Southbend. They received a total of 4 responses. The members working on the agreement extended the deadline to reply and received very few additional comments. The agreement was finally drafted and executed. Tony reminded those attending the meeting that a Good Neighbor agreement only works when communication related to concerns occurs. For example, the MVA board has not received any complaints about the Southbend since the Good Neighbor Agreement was signed in May of 2015. One local neighbor even stated that the issues they were personally concerned about had improved after the agreement was signed. Tony reminded those in attendance that documentation is absolutely necessary to help establish problem patterns and ensure they are reported to the Southbend owners, the MVA and the CPD when appropriate. In light of tonight's request and vote, there have been discussions on Facebook and Nextdoor as well as emails voicing concerns about the Southbend Tavern. Some of the concerns, for example, are related to litter around the bar, disorderly patrons and noise late at night which they feel exceeds the appropriate levels. However, to date, the Southbend have never been cited for exceeding the allowed decibel level for noise.

**SOUTHBEND PRESENTATION:** Val and Connie, the owners of the Southbend presented their request for the new patio along with Lisa who is with The Design Center who partner with the city to draw-up plans for local businesses. Lisa use to work for the City and drew up the plans for the Southbend's newly proposed patio.

Connie has been involved with the tavern for over 10 years and she and Val have owned the Southbend for the last 5 years. When they took it over, there was a lot of cleanup necessary. The owner of the building does not provide any litter removal, so the Southbend team regularly cleanup the entire area. They have been working to install additional lighting outside as well as an awning above the front door. Connie wanted to convey to those in attendance that the staff and many of the patrons are like a family. They also do local charity work to help feed the homeless thanks to their income from the Southbend. They have been working hard to make interior and exterior improvements to the tavern including the installation of security cameras. There have been several incidents, not involving the bar at all, where the CPD has contacted the Southbend asking if they can provide security footage for surrounding areas. There was recently a group of teenagers who walked down the street throwing bricks at the buildings and the security cameras.

Connie apologized to anyone who lives immediately near the bar with respect to noise levels. She and Val have explicitly instructed their DJs to keep the noise levels at a respectable levels and also have several signs posted instructing patrons to keep the exterior doors closed. They have never been fined for violating the noise ordinance level. They are very sorry for any patrons who come to the Southbend and cause problems. They remove them, but cannot control when they come to the bar in the first place.

Lisa then presented, speaking about the proposed plan for the patio. Five different agencies look at these plans to determine which variance requests are necessary. The conceptual plans that were circulated are a collaboration of the business and what is allowed by these various agencies. The fence around the patio will be a 42" rod iron fence which is standard for the city and is similar to the fence surrounding the front patio of the Red Brick Tap and Grill on Gates St. There is a jog included in the plan which is present to allow for umbrellas on the patio tables. The City requirements to dot allow umbrellas to extend beyond the fencing. This is a request for a "Café Permit" which is not a variance request and does not require the normal site hearing. The Southbend's request for this Café Permit has been approved by the City and now needs a signature of acceptance from the Southside Area Commission.



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Curtis from the SSAC was asked by the City to sign-off on this request and was not comfortable doing so without bringing the same to the MVA for discussion. The SSAC will vote on this issue at their next meeting held at the Reeb Center, 280 Reeb Avenue at 6:30 on the Fourth Tuesday of the month. This City requires a certificate of appropriateness from the SSAC, the process for which is not defined by the City. The votes from the MVA will act as our recommendation, but ultimately, the decision will be made by the SSAC.

### QUESTIONS AND ANSWER PERIOD:

- A resident who lives on 5<sup>th</sup> St., around the corner from the Southbend stated that he created a post on Nextdoor about this issue which began a heated discussion. He appreciates the security cameras installed by the Southbend and will welcome the planned additional lighting. He read a statement he prepared outlining what he feels are a history of issues with the Southbend, stating that the Tavern's location pre-dating the residency of those with concerns does not invalidate their concerns. He feels that the Southbend contributes negatively to the crime, noise and litter in the immediate area. Another resident living on Fifth St. responded that in her 30 years of residing in the area, she has seen many bars occupy the Southbend's current location. She feels the Southbend is a vast improvement on previous tenants. A third member in attendance asks how we come to a conclusion on this topic. There is a presentation suggesting many improvements and positive contributions by the Tavern, but also several complaints. How do we know what issues actually need to be addressed? The resident who initially read his statement of concerns countered that he feels that the patio will, without a doubt, increase the outdoor noise.
- A resident who has lived in Merion Village since 2008 at the corner of S. Fourth St. and Frebis Ave. shared that he and his wife bought their house as a deteriorating foreclosure several years ago and have since made multiple improvements. He feels his home is an example of an improvement in the neighborhood which will raise surrounding property values while he feels the Southbend makes the opposite, negative contribution. He conveyed that he appreciates the Southbend owner's presence at our meeting to present their proposal and answer questions. Inevitably, he said that the owners know their patrons and he wants to know how they will manage their behavior given what he feels is a history of problems. He asked what the owners will do differently to manage the noise issues that they are not doing today. The owners responded that the patio will close at 10:00 PM, despite the City allowing it to remain open until 11:00 PM. The Southbend they will stack and chain the chairs and close the patio at the 10:00 PM hour. They will continue to have signs posted instructing patrons to keep exterior doors closed and will remind their DJ's to keep the music to a respectful level. Additionally, there will be absolutely no outdoor music.
- A long-time resident who lives about a block away from the Southbend has a friend who lives significantly closer to the Tavern and who wonders if the owners have permits to cover all of the various activities they host. The owners responded that they absolutely have entertainment permits to cover all activities and events hosted at the Southbend.
- A resident commented that she anticipates that the patrons who are already going outside to smoke will be those who primarily use the patio. She feels this means the remaining issues come down to noise and litter control and commented that the Southbend owners should firmly instruct their employees to follow their rules regarding both of these concerns.
- A resident who also owns several properties in Merion Village commented that he used to live down the street from a biker bar in his old neighborhood. A "yuppie bar" took over the space and within two months his front window was smashed. He wanted to share his opinion that Val and Connie are absolutely trying to make improvements in the neighborhood and should be supported in those efforts. A resident from 5<sup>th</sup> St. who spoke earlier responded that he doesn't feel anyone is trying to shut the Southbend down and that the primary issue is being uncomfortable with the installation of a patio. Another resident cautioned the inclusion of hypotheticals in these discussion and stated that he feels the Southbend is currently a problem with respect to litter and noise.
- One of the members who helped to complete the Good Neighbor Agreement between the Southbend and Residents stated that she would like to see an addendum to the agreement if the café permit is approved which will clearly state that the patio is to close at 10:00 PM.
- A resident who lives five houses down from the Southbend on Fourth Street shared that he is personally a patron of the Tavern and a smoker who currently stands behind the building. He asked why the initial plan for the back patio



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was abandoned in favor of this new plan. He has called the bar before to ask them to turn down music or ensure the front door is being kept closed. The doors all have signs asking patrons to keep the doors closed and limit noise. He strongly feels the owners should revert to the previous plan for the patio in the back. Val responded that the City would require an awning over the back patio which would prevent smoking in that area and would cost \$15,000.00-\$20,000.00 to install. For those reasons, the previous plan is no longer feasible.

- A resident who lives near the intersection at Moler and Fourth Streets would like to know how she should report concerns to the bar. Val and Connie encouraged anyone with concerns to contact them by at 614-444-3386 or by e-mail at [southbend@wowway.biz](mailto:southbend@wowway.biz). Allison commented that what she hears from this discussion is that the Southbend is absolutely working to make improvements in the neighborhoods which she appreciates and a resident who is very excited about positive change in Merion Village.
- One of the owners of Bake Me Happy, which is located across Fourth St. from the Southbend, commented that she also appreciates seeing improvements to the area. Looking at the good neighbor agreement (which was passed around the room during the meeting), she would like to know who concerned residents have reported their issues to. As a business owner, she picks up trash, clothing, used needles and other items each morning before opening the bakery. She also calls the police and makes reports when appropriate. If Southbend worked with the neighbors to draft a good neighbor agreement, how have residents voiced their concerns to address any issues?
- Tony commented that he has a concern specially related to the aesthetics of the patio. He feels the 6' buffer between the curb and the patio isn't enough in this space specifically at the corner near Fourth Street.
- A resident asked how the patio area will be safe for local residents. He is concerned that the Tavern cannot monitor who is drinking within the required boundaries. The owners responded that there are two cameras outside which can be monitored during open hours. They also have security guards onsite during operation hours.
- A resident voiced a traffic concern as she feels the patio and furniture will obstruct vision at the intersection. Curtis with the SSAC responded that the City's public Safety office came to the site to review this plan and determined it would not cause any traffic obstructions.
- Connie thanked everyone for attending this meeting and for sharing their comments and concerns. Lisa also commented that this type of patio is not necessarily a permanent installation and could be removed in the future if necessary.

Curtis outlined the City's process for this request. The Southbend applied for a café permit which is classified as a City ordinance. There is no process or procedure requiring a vote on this by the City, SSAC or the Civic Association (MVA). The City simply requests a signature from the SSAC showing support for the request. Curtis felt this request and plan should be reviewed and discussed with the neighborhood. The SSAC typically makes their recommendation based upon the input of the neighborhood. The actual application is reviewed and approved by one or two individuals in the City's zoning department. As previously mentioned this will be further discussed at the next Area Commission meeting.

**VOTING RESULTS: APPROVED/REJECTED** (SUPPORT: 22 / OPPOSE: 6 / ABSTAIN: 2)

### **GENERAL REMINDERS:**

- ✓ Community Rewards: The board would like to remind members and residents of the reward programs which help support the MVA. Visit our website for instructions to sign up for the 4 community reward programs in which we currently participate, including AmazonSmile, GoodSearch, GoodShop and Kroger Community Rewards.
- ✓ Report non-emergency crime to the Columbus Police Department by calling 614-645-4545.
- ✓ Report potholes, code violations, broken dumpsters and other requests for City services through the 311 Program. Call 311 from your telephone or visit [www.311.columbus.gov](http://www.311.columbus.gov)

**NEXT MONTHLY ASSOCIATION MEETING:** Wednesday, February 3, 2016 in the basement of St. Paul UCC (225 E Gates St, Columbus, OH 43206) beginning promptly at 7:15 PM.