

In reversal, council, mayor won't seek raise from voters

Jeff Piorkowski *Special to Sun News*

Mayfield Mayor Brenda Bodnar and Village Council have reconsidered and will not be asking residents for raises Nov. 3 after all.

During a brief special meeting held via Zoom on Monday, council voted 7-0 to repeal an ordinance it had passed July 20. That ordinance, with voter approval in the General Election, would have given each council member a \$1,000 raise and increased Bodnar's annual salary of \$26,000 to \$50,000.

Passage also would have meant that Bodnar would have received full health benefits. The bump would have raised council members' annual salaries from \$10,000 to \$11,000.

When council originally passed the ordinance, some residents believed the timing — during a pandemic — was not right to increase salaries.

During the special meeting, Bodnar acknowledged that the coronavirus has created uncertainty. She told council that some of the village's largest employers are keeping their employees working from home.

"Residents have expressed concern that employees temporarily working at home can decide to pay municipal taxes to their home city rather than to their usual work city," Bodnar said. "There is even greater concern over the potential impact to our economy if, at some point, those employees continue to work from home on a permanent basis."

After listening to residents' concerns, Bodnar recommended that council repeal the ordinance, keeping open the possibility of revisiting the pay raises "when we are more certain of the future."

Council did not further discuss the matter before taking the vote to repeal.

During her address to council, Bodnar was quick to assure residents of the village's enviable financial position.

"In the nearly five years since I began as your mayor, our general fund balance has increased every year," she said. "In fact, it has increased substantially."

That balance, as of July 31, stood at \$31.2 million.

In 2020, despite the difficulties brought on by COVID-19, she said the village is on track to finish the year by covering its budget expenses out of its current income.

"So there is no need for fear or panic," Bodnar told council, "and neither will serve us well."

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Police Bulletin

Disturbance *Aintree Park Drive*

Officers responded to a residence Aug. 23 for a report of two men fighting. They learned a Mayfield Heights man, 18, had come to the residence to collect money that was owed to him. The 20-year-old resident claimed the man owed him money and a fight ensued. Neither man chose to pursue charges and the younger man was sent on his way.

Suspicious person *Derby Drive*

Officers responded Aug. 23 to a report of a woman wearing a hijab taking photos of houses. It was the second straight day of similar reports. They located her in the area and determined she was talking on her phone and was not taking photos. After further reports, officers identified the Arizona woman and learned she was staying at the Hilton Garden Inn and wanted to take pictures of the area.

Neighbor trouble *Robley Lane*

Officers responded Aug. 22 to a report of a resident upset because sewer work was being done and it was believed the workers were dumping dirt into the woods. They spoke with the resident and advised him to call the building department. They found no indication that dirt was being placed into the woods.

Welfare check *Wilson Mills Road*

A woman was found crying Aug. 20 near Hickory Hill Drive and in fear of a man that was going to hurt her. Police and paramedics found the woman, 30, was drunk and had a mental disorder. She had been picked up from her Mayfield Heights home by a man, who subsequently kicked her out of his car because she was having an episode. She was taken to the hospital for a psychiatric evaluation.

Traffic complaint *Interstate 271*

A caller said Aug. 20 that there was a car seat on the side of the roadway, and she wanted it checked to make sure a baby was not left by someone. Officers located the old car seat and confirmed there was no child.

Suspicious activity *Wilson Mills Road*

Officers responded Aug. 19 to a report of two people at True North Shell trying to get people to fill their gas tank. They found the vehicle at a Highland Heights gas station, where the passenger admitted they had been asking for gas money. At their current location, they said someone gave them \$10. Officers noted one man came out of the store with a drink and hot dog and did not purchase gas.

MAYFIELD

Ribbon-cutting opens inclusive playground

Jeff Piorkowski *Special to Sun News*

The ribbon was cut Monday afternoon to officially open the much-anticipated inclusive playground next to Parkview Pool.

The playground, located on the same spot as the former playground but expanded in area by approximately 50 percent, includes all new, colorful toys, a rubberized surface, a sandbox, an adult exercise area and more.

Mayor Brenda Bodnar, in her remarks before the ribbon was cut, said she refers to the playground as "Danielle's Dream," in recognition of the planning and grant writing work done by Assistant Recreation Director Danielle Echt, along with Recreation Director Shane McAviney.

"I'm excited to be here today to open the inclusive Parkview Playground," Echt said at the ribbon cutting. "I know our residents and neighboring communities will enjoy using this space, and I look forward to seeing all abilities and all ages playing here together."

The first playground opened at the site a little more than 20 years ago. Bodnar said \$500,000 was budgeted for the new playground, but that the recreation department was able to obtain state grants worth a total of \$378,000 from the Ohio Department of Natural

SEE PLAYGROUND, A5



Mackenna Foltyn of Columbus, age 3, was one of the first children to play on the toys in the new Mayfield Village playground, which officially opened Monday. Mackenna was at the playground with her mother, Jody Foltyn, and her grandfather, Joseph Licursi, whose Licursi Home & Garden built the playground. *Jeff Piorkowski, Special to Sun news*

Playground

FROM A1

Resources and the Land and Water Conservation Fund.

Including that grant money, the playground's final cost was \$868,000. The village spent about \$490,000.

Echt and McAviney worked with landscape architect Jim McKnight and Mid-states Recreation to plan and design the play area, which Echt said is unlike any other in the area.

In her remarks, Bodnar said the playground comes "complete with a swing in which an adult and child can swing together, a seesaw that can accommodate five or more without all having to climb into a seat, multiple pieces of sensory equipment that combine play with sound and vibration, a toddler area, and a really cool sandbox with diggers. There is something for everyone."

Young Dominic Polito, 8, was one of the first children to get an opportunity to use the playground. "I like this sandbox better than the one they had before, because this one has these," Dominic said, pointing out the installed diggers. Another thing he liked better, he said, was that "there's a lot more area."

Dominic was at the playground with his mother, Sarah Polito, of Willoughby Hills, and his sisters Natalia, 6, and Nadia, 4.

"We go to a few playgrounds in the area," Sarah Polito said. "We always like coming to Mayfield Village because we feel safe here. This (new playground) is really nice. It's got a good variety of things. We've been driving by every day waiting for it to open."

McAviney said the footprint of the former playground was expanded to the south in order to create more space for the new playground's many toys. Included is a drinking fountain that supplies, when activated, a water mist to cool people on hot days, a permanent pingpong table and board for playing chess and checkers, and a setup for cornhole play.

Although the playground does not now have lights, Echt said they may be added in the future.

Licursi Home & Garden was awarded the contract to construct the playground in February, and in March began the work of removing the old playground.

"Although the restrictions of COVID-19 have kept us from celebrating in grander fashion with a larger crowd here today, I know that our community will have many years to celebrate this field of dreams and



Enjoying their afternoon at the just-opened Parkview Playground were the Politos, from left, Dominic, 8; mother, Sarah; Natalia, 6; and Nadia, 4. The family lives in Willoughby Hills. Jeff Piorkowski, Special to Sun News

to share it with neighbors and friends," Bodnar told those assembled.

"At this playground, everyone is big enough, strong enough and able enough to play," Bodnar concluded. "This was our vision, and I am proud to say it is what we, together, have accomplished, thanks to all of you."

POOL SEASON WRAPS UP

The village closed Parkview Pool for the season on Sunday afternoon. The season was extended by two weeks from its original planned closing date of Aug. 16. McAviney said that the swimming season went smoothly, with no COVID-19 cases reported.

"Everyone cooperated, and it just went really well," he said. "It was an area we could control, who gets into the pool, and once inside, everyone cooperated."

Mayfield Village, Mayfield Heights and

Highland Heights were the only three area communities to open their pools this summer. None reported having COVID-19 problems.

RETIREMENT

Also on Monday, Bodnar and McAviney recognized Donna Heath for her 40 years of service to the village. A Painesville Township resident, Heath is retiring from her position of senior program coordinator, working with seniors at the Community Room.

"I worked for five mayors since I've been here," Heath said. "I started with mayor Robert Beebe and was the mayor's assistant for 25 years. The last 15 years, I've been senior program coordinator. I've loved working with the seniors, and I'm sure I'll continue to talk to a lot of them. Mayfield Village has been a great place to work."