

On Tuesday, October 24th, 2023, the Council for the Village of Monroeville held a work session at 6:00 PM, in Council Chambers, to discuss the 2024 solar eclipse.

Present were Mayor Melissa Fries-Seip; Council Members: Chris Raftery, Sue Rogers, Craig Franklin, Joe Galea and Bob Whitacre; Village Administrator Tom Gray; Fiscal Officer Bonnie Beck; Administrative Specialist Heather Alicea; and Chief Gary Lyons.

Also present were: Lt. Troy Kimball, MPD; HRJFD Chief Curt Stang & Asst. Chief Doug Long; Arthur Mead & Kye Stevens, Huron County EMA; Kevin Rasnick, Huron County Chamber of Commerce; Mike Raftery; Ann Beck, Village of Monroeville; Nicole-Luna Withrow, Mini Main Street; Leslie Meyer; Karen Krupp; Travis & Shelley Alsept, Simply Monroe; Nicole Waugh & Lori Siesel, Croghan Colonial Bank; Andrew & Elisa Brown, Old Soul Woodworking; and Pastor Wayne Chasney, United Church of Christ.

Absent: Councilman Sam Wiley

President pro-tem Chris Raftery opened the meeting and had everyone introduce themselves. A sign-in sheet was passed around to those in attendance. A total solar eclipse will occur on Monday, April 8th, 2024, which begins at 1:57 PM, with the total eclipse occurring from 3:12 PM-3:16 PM. Huron County is in the path of totality. A Huron County Chamber of Commerce meeting was held two months ago and Chris went over the bullet points from that meeting: loss of internet during the event, shortage of camp sites, porta potty rentals are no longer available, and the inability of movement on highways after the event is over, especially in the case of an emergency. There's also concern with where people will go to witness the event, which could be fields, yards, streets and highways. Huron County is expecting an influx of anywhere from 100,000-150,000 people. Taxi service is a concern, as it's unknown if it will be available. Communication is also a concern, especially between the hospitals, cities/villages, and EMS. Art Mead said the population of Huron County is 58,000, so we're looking at triple the size of the population in regards to people coming here for the event. The Village of Monroeville has prime seating for the event. Art said weather is a concern, which may help or hinder with people coming in. If the lake is open, 5000-7000 boats are expected to be on the lake, between Michigan and Ashtabula. The weather is the outlier for how to plan, as it could rain, snow or be clear. People will start rolling in on the Friday before, during the afternoon and evening. More folks will come in on Saturday and Sunday. A large group of eclipse watchers will show up on Monday morning. When the eclipse is over, everyone will hit the highways at the same time, which will be like Cedar Point on steroids. Kevin Rasnick touched on events that could be planned to help deal with the crowds, as it's easier having larger groups of people in one area. Kevin said Norwalk and other parts of Huron County would like to plan something the Saturday or Sunday before that includes live music, food trucks and vendors. The fairgrounds are going to open up for an event. The Milestone Event Center in Norwalk may open for an event as well. This could be a good opportunity for businesses to make some money. Art said that the EMA has reached out to the banks in regards to whether or not they want to be open on Monday the 8th, as security could be an issue with that many people here. Parking will also be an issue. Law enforcement will be taxed. The Mayor said Monroeville local schools are currently scheduled to be open that day, however, that could change to no school or virtual attendance. Art said it will take 8-12 hours for groups to leave once the event is over. Infrastructure will be taxed to the maximum. Kevin said virtual attendance may be an issue because of the lack of internet. Also, if Monroeville schools close, that offers an opportunity for people to park in the school parking lot and use the practice field for visibility. Art said the school could also charge for parking, but liability may be an issue and recommended a waiver be signed. Western Reserve schools considered charging for parking and using the opportunity as a fundraiser for a new weight room, but after reviewing the potential losses, they decided against it. They are going to close off their property with school busses,

except to first responders. The Mayor asked how the Village can help prepare citizens and farmers, as they need to be prepared to see people pull off to the side of the road or in the fields. Art said he and Kevin have been trying to get the word out to people for months now. The best recommendations he can make are to tell people to get their groceries, prescriptions and gas the Wednesday or Thursday before, and have enough supplies to get through the weekend. They've tried to express to the farmers what to do vs what not to do, and how it may differ from what city residents see. Farmers could also charge people for camping, etc. Kevin said it's a good idea to start posting and sharing information on social media consistently, send flyers, post messages on utility bills, use snail mail to reach out to the older residents and put flyers in kids backpacks to hand out at home. Art said people need to remember that emergency personnel are going to be taxed and people need to be aware of that ahead of time. EMS, fire departments and police personnel are going to be busy and may not be able to get to places as fast as they normally would. If businesses are going to close and block off their parking lots, they need to use more than cones, as people will move cones. Campground rentals are already filling up. Chris asked about railroads. Art said the railroads have said they are doing business as normal. Current cellphone capacity is about 25,000 over the current population, so if we get 100,000-150,000 visitors, internet, cable and phone service will all be affected and bandwidth will be tied up. The City of Norwalk is trying to bring in a FirstNet tower to help first-responders. Verizon is talking about bringing in their version of that as well. Kevin said from a business aspect, businesses could offer sales on eclipse glasses and schools could do special events with kids and families. The theme in Norwalk is "Moon Over Norwalk" and the Village could do something similar. Art said school districts who aren't in the path of the eclipse may have field trips for their kids to come here and witness the event. Lorain County is expecting up to 1,000,000 people and the hotels and bed and breakfasts are already full. Kevin said people can also make their properties into an Airbnb and make some money. Nicole Luna-Withrow recommended Starlink for high-speed internet as a backup should internet capability be limited or crash. Retailers may want to consider that as well if they use internet for customer checkout. Art said the fair board is considering renting out camping space and the event they are thinking about having would be for 100-300 people. Craig said something to remember is amateur radio, as it's not affected by cell towers. There will be an emergency operation center (EOC) in the Village, one in Norwalk, one in Willard and two in New London and Townsend. Art said EMA has air patrol who are going to do fly-bys over the county every few hours in order to provide real-time updates on traffic and train crossings. Kevin said in terms of communication, people can check www.NorwalkEclipse2024.com. That website also has a link to purchase eclipse glasses. Joe asked Chief if traffic control can be done for Route 20 in regards to getting people out of the Village afterwards. The Chief said it will be all hands-on deck. Right now, Chief is trying to get all of his full-timers and part-timers to work that day. Chief said he only has three cruisers available and he's not due for another cruiser until 2026. Chief has kicked around the idea of pushing that date up, but with the strike going on, it would be hard to get anything. It would give the MPD an extra cruiser, but his department will deal with it the best they can. Chief's biggest concern is the last hour before the eclipse, with people rushing to get in and clogging Route 20 by pulling over to watch the eclipse. The Chief asked Art if the Governor has made the National Guard available for that day. Art said the Governor would have to declare a disaster/emergency before the National Guard can be deployed. Art said pulling National Guard can also strip communities of first responders, so it can be a double-edged sword. Art said another issue may be people getting lost on their way out of town, as they may not have GPS available and may not have a map available or be able to read it. Elisa asked if there's any plans to have mobile emergency response locations or triage locations. Chief Stang said it's been discussed but there may not be enough personnel to man them. Joe asked if there's been any talk about using Village equipment to close off certain streets, like Broad Street, in order to keep traffic on the main roads. Tom said yes. Kevin said it's a good idea for businesses to check in with their insurance company and make sure they are covered on everything. Art suggested to businesses to close their restrooms to the public. Art said the big issues will be cell phones not working, trash everywhere and gas stations

running out of gas. Art suggested cities having a dumpster set somewhere for trash to cut back on littering. Joe asked Tom to look into the Village setting up temporary trash receptacles. Elisa said this is a great opportunity to showcase our area and Kevin agreed. Chris asked if another meeting should be held in the future to continue the discussion and planning. Art said as long as someone from the Village continues coming to the meetings that are held in Huron County, they can feel free to bring the information back to the Village and share it. Kevin said if anyone has an event, please reach out to him and he can help promote the event. The Mayor asked if anyone is aware of a revenue source or grants that can help the Village prepare or hold an event. Art recommended keeping receipts of any money that is spent, as there could be programs afterwards that could help. Kevin said events could also be good opportunities for sponsorship to help with revenue.

There being no other business to come before them, the meeting adjourned at 7:05 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Heather Alicea, Administrative Specialist