

# the Voice

FALL 2020

CONNECT TO YOUR COLUMBIA TOWNSHIP COMMUNITY

## Little Miami Joint Fire & Rescue District Reorganizes; Excellent Services Will Continue

After an 18-month transition, Little Miami Joint Fire & Rescue District will continue service to original district members Columbia Township and Fairfax; Golf Manor to seek other options for fire and rescue services.

**O**ne of Columbia Township's fire and emergency service providers is reorganizing after projected benefits of adding a third member to the district did not fully materialize.

The Little Miami Joint Fire & Rescue Board recently announced that while the district will continue to provide full fire and rescue services to its three members (Columbia Township, Fairfax and Golf Manor) through 2021, current services beyond that point would be "unsustainable and underfunded" without changes.

Golf Manor has agreed it will withdraw from the district effective year-end 2021 rather than disband the district.

"After December 31, 2021, the Little Miami Joint Fire & Rescue District will

*Continued on page 4*



*Little Miami Joint Fire & Rescue District fire station on Wooster Pike*

## New Trustee Brings Business Mindset and Neighborhood Commitment

**C**olumbia Township's newest trustee Brian Lamar chose this community for its walkable neighborhoods close to restaurants, businesses and trails; as a trustee he plans to collaborate with citizens to strengthen the unique features that make up Columbia Township.

"One of my goals is to broadly explore and exchange ideas to strengthen our unique neighborhoods and business districts as the region's redevelopment wave pushes east along Madison Road into Columbia Township," he said.

Lamar is a market research executive for global brands who said he plans to put his skills helping clients build best practices to work in Columbia Township. The Madison Place resident was appointed in early August to fill a seat left open by the departure of Chris Kritikos who relocated for family reasons.

**"There's significant regional demand for what we have in Columbia Township – safe, walkable neighborhoods that are close to restaurants, trails and jobs,"** said Lamar. **"That's why I moved here 16 years ago."**

A researcher and analyst, Lamar noted he wants government to be open to the people. As the host of a top-rated marketing research podcast, he self-describes as "obsessed with making decisions that engage people and are supported by quality data."

"I look forward to collaborating with the community toward positive solutions," says Lamar. "I'm approachable and want to hear from people with all different points of view."

*Continued on page 4*



# During Unease and Uncertainty, We've Got You Covered – with Excellence

Through 2020's endless challenges, we continue to provide all the services that our residents and businesses KNOW and LOVE.

Our employees have dedicated more than 110 years (combined) working for the people and businesses of Columbia Township.

2020 is turning out to be a year unlike any other for us to serve you. We've stayed strong – and also have stepped it up - to meet new and never-ending challenges. **Through a 100-year virus, 500-year floods and every other new test this year, Columbia Township – as an essential business - has stayed open and continued serving.**

We've been open every work day to provide essential, and now expanded, public services to our residents and businesses. Plus, the pandemic has generated numerous federal and state orders for us to implement as a public agency and also as employees.

Chronic and heavy storms have piled on to our regular seasonal workload. We've tackled large brush pick-ups from yards after severe storms, tornados and high winds.



Melissa Taylor

**It's a privilege to serve you, and we work very hard to make your experience enjoyable – whether you live or work in Columbia Township.**

At just over six months on the job, I am in awe of this amazing Columbia "work family." I began as administrator in March at the exact moment when the earliest pandemic orders began to change everything.

Crews are out after every weather event to remove fallen trees and debris from roads. **As you read this, we're gearing up for autumn's demanding leaf pick-up season and winter snow and ice clearing.**

Many residents are clearing out – and fixing up – yards and homes during earlier stay-at-home orders and now while working remotely. Property maintenance complaints have spiked. Our phones ring off the hook as "how do I" questions and "please fix this" requests have soared.

In our spare time, we're underway with three major road improvement projects worth more than \$3 million.

**Even before COVID, our six-person staff was already too lean compared to communities with similar (and even smaller) residential populations and businesses.** 2020 has required us to bring an even stronger version of ourselves to each work day. The often-physical and always-emotional demands of serving others require us to also serve and support each other. We are not just co-workers but also coaches, advisors, counselors and most of all-friends.

We are strong, we are resilient, and together we'll continue to take GREAT CARE of each other and all of you in this wonderful Columbia community. **We've got your back!**



## Fall Brush Pickup Safety Reminders

We're happy to collect your yard brush. Follow these steps for easy pickup:



Do not mix brush with leaves, grass clippings, trash or metal; mixed brush will be left for homeowner disposal



Do not place brush in the street



Unable to make special pickups outside of regular schedule



Place brush in your yard at the curb



Place brush turned in the same direction, with cut ends facing the curb and placed in piles



Brush must be no larger than six inches in diameter to fit into chipper

*Thank you for keeping our crews safe!*

# We Love Our Local Businesses

The pandemic did not stop new businesses from opening in Columbia Town



## Fifty West Burger Bar

Outdoor seating, takeout and tailgating during COVID dining restrictions made the new Fifty West Burger Bar a popular spot at 7605 Wooster Pike within weeks of its April opening.

The family-style restaurant is housed in the former Pizelli pizzeria and pays homage to the 1950s roadside root

beer stand with 12 different ways its entrees can be served. The variations in burgers, chicken patties, flattop dogs or Beyond burgers recognize 12 different states that U.S. 50 Route travels through. Owned by Fifty West Brewing Company. Call 834-8789 or visit [fiftywestbrew.com](http://fiftywestbrew.com) for more info.



## Mr. Crab House

Po'boys, seafood boils and all things cajun fill the menu at the new Mr. Crab House restaurant at 3280 Highland Ave. Enjoy baskets of fried catfish, chicken fingers, tilapia or oysters with sides of Cajun or sweet potato fries. Open lunch and dinner seven days a week. Not open as of press time. Contact: 873-1530.

## New Businesses at Ridgewood Plaza

Columbia Township welcomes three new businesses to Ridgewood Plaza in recent weeks: **NAPA Auto Parts, Overstock Guys and American Freight-Furniture Mattress.**



## The Madison Place

The Madison Place opening on September 5 drew crowds from many neighboring communities. This new local specialty coffee shop and community meeting space occupies a formerly vacant hardware store. Located at 4200 Plainville Road across from Porsche of the Village, The Madison Place redevelopment in the Plainville Road Business District also includes market-rate apartments. The space is light and airy, filled with custom mill work and contemporary fixtures.

Reservable space is available for community groups, business meetings and small events. Visit [madisonplace.com](http://madisonplace.com) for info.



McKenna Brooks celebrates The Madison Place grand opening last month with her family and fur kids.

## Fire District Reorganizes

(Continued from cover)

continue uninterrupted fire and EMS services to Columbia Township and Fairfax and remain funded by current fire levies in the two communities," said Trustee President David Kubicki. **"The district has the necessary revenue to conduct daily operations, but a major change was needed to sustain it into the future."**

"There is no scenario whatsoever where our highly trusted emergency services won't continue in Columbia Township and Fairfax," said Administrator Melissa Taylor.

The fire district is not in financial trouble and operates in the black; it is, however, underfunded, Taylor said.

Former Administrator Mike Lemon is serving as special advisor to the township during the transition. Lemon has nearly 20 years of experience working with the township's fire and rescue service providers. Top priorities for the future sustainability of the district are investing in safety equipment upgrades and technology, and a larger reserve fund.

Columbia Township is in strong financial shape in the event the fire district would need additional funds for interim operations, Taylor said. She added that trustees have expressed support for a loan if needed. Fairfax provided a loan to the district in 2019 to cover any unanticipated major expenses while the fire district board began working on the reorganization.



## Questions about the reorganization?

Here are a few of the most-asked:

### 1 Will I notice any change in services?

Little Miami Joint Fire & Rescue will continue to provide services, as it does today, to Columbia Township and Fairfax residents and businesses either directly by Little Miami Joint Fire & Rescue District staff or through contracts with neighboring fire/EMS agencies.

### 2 What will happen to the fire levy taxes I pay?

There will be no change-Columbia and Fairfax residents and businesses will continue to pay the Little Miami Joint Fire & Rescue District levy amount as part of property taxes paid to Hamilton County Auditor's Office. Ridge Fire District residents and businesses will continue to pay the Ridge Fire District fire levy amount paid to the Hamilton County Auditor's Office. Because the levy for Golf Manor property owners will end December 31, 2021, Golf Manor voters will decide in March 2021 on a new levy to cover the village's fire and rescue services beginning January 1, 2022.

### 3 Will Golf Manor resurrect its fire department?

Golf Manor is assessing and determining which path will best provide fire and EMS services to its community. Options include reinstating its own fire department, contracting with another community or some other path. Golf Manor officials are diligently exploring which option will best serve Golf Manor.

### 4 How will the Ridge Fire District be serviced?

Service will be provided through or by a contract with a neighboring fire/EMS agency which will be established before year-end 2021.

### 5 Will Little Miami Joint Fire & Rescue be seeking membership or contracts such as Mariemont?

The district will be open to membership or contracts as long as the operational and financial impact will provide sustainable benefits to the members and/or contracted parties.

## New Trustee

(Continued from cover)

He holds a Bachelor of Arts in Marketing from the University of Kentucky and a Master of Marketing Research from the University of Georgia.

Reach out to Lamar at [blamar@columbiatwp.org](mailto:blamar@columbiatwp.org) or 272-7871.

Lamar joins Trustee President David Kubicki and longtime board member Susan Hughes. Kubicki is in his 11th year as trustee and focuses on "smart development" to help fund better services that townships typically cannot afford.

Hughes, Columbia's longest serving trustee, has been on the board since 1997 and continues her commitment to honesty in government, particularly in public finances.



Trustee Susan Hughes leads Columbia's beautification program for public spaces. Hughes works with Columbia staff to design seasonal floral plans for planters and gateways and to introduce more pollinator-friendly specimens. In this photo, fall mums stand at attention at the Veterans' Memorial at the township's administration and maintenance building.

## COVID Stimulus Efforts Help Support Columbia Restaurants

Residents 'show some lovin' to local businesses in a 'carry-out challenge' during pandemic.

As restaurants in Columbia Township struggled to survive during the "stay at home" order starting in March this year, Columbia Township jumped in to help them stay afloat during the pandemic.

Within just 22 days after the order was given, restaurants were identified as one of the hardest hit sectors.

Columbia Township was the first community in Hamilton County to act to support its businesses.

Township officials quickly collaborated with economic development partners HCDC and the Community Improvement Corporation of Greater Cincinnati for a \$50,000 business stimulus.

The program awarded 10 restaurants that relied heavily on dining room

services with a \$4,000 grant to re-tool for robust carry-out operations.

Trustee President David Kubicki said trustees "put together a great plan to help our most vulnerable restaurants survive these terrible circumstances. They're enormously important to our community's quality of life and economy."

Restaurants that received the grant included Angilo's Pizza, Flipdaddy's, Green Papaya, Hooligans, Jersey Mike's, Mango Tree, 50 West Brewing, New Magic Wok, Patron Mexican Grill, and Subway.

Township Administrator Melissa Taylor said the township also created a "We're in This Together" promotion geared toward encouraging Columbia residents to order carry out and return to their favorite restaurants. The

remaining \$10,000 was set aside for a round of "Hardship Grants" for awards on a case-by-case basis, she said.

Columbia's innovative collaboration received publicity in several local papers and business publications and was recognized by Hamilton County Commissioner Denise Driehaus during a countywide meeting with county and local officials.

Grant recipients expressed praise and appreciation for the township's generosity.

Jeff Ayers, who owns Jersey Mike's on Wooster Pike, said the program

helped keep his 19 employees working. "Columbia Township is giving us a fighting chance to keep our doors open. We're working very hard - one sub at a time," Ayers said.



Jeff Ayers



## Popular Leaf Pickup Starts Mid-October

Columbia Township helps you prepare your yard for winter by picking up your leaves each fall. Your support of Columbia's waste levy provides this very popular service! **Our community is one of only a few in the region that provides fall leaf pick-up and removal thanks to our residents' choice.**

Starting around mid-October (depending on when leaves begin falling frequently), our road crews will start working throughout the community and return to your street every one-to-two weeks until Christmas. Our crews will reach every street to pick up leaves at least seven times during fall and early winter.

Leaf pick-up is a time-intensive service that requires our entire crew to work daily and exclusively on leaf removal for two months or longer.



Many of you tell us you especially like that our crews are dedicated to clearing leaves from the sidewalk and "street lawn" in front of your home, on both sides of the street, as they pass through.

**Because we must stay on a demanding schedule, we won't have staff available to make a return trip if you didn't have your leaves ready during a regularly scheduled clearing or to respond to other special requests.**

### To be eligible for leaf pick-up service:

- Place leaves in your yard as close to the curb as possible.
- Do not park on the street in front of leaf piles in your yard or neighbors' yards until after crews have passed through.
- Do not rake leaves into the street. Leaves left in the street could cause clogged storm drains or be a factor in an auto accident.



## 'Come Together' Crosswalk Opening Celebrates Community Connectivity and Public-Private Partnerships

51 years after the Beatles' iconic 1969 "Abbey Road" album cover was shot in a London crosswalk in August, officials from Columbia Township and neighboring communities gathered to celebrate the opening of the new US-50 crosswalk at Fifty West - in the same month and style of the famous photo.

"We're building Columbia Township as a place where people can easily come together and connect to each other, to neighboring communities and to the region," said Trustee President David Kubicki of the event's "Come Together" Beatles theme.

Built at the Fifty West campus, Columbia's new US-50 crosswalk is a vital connection in a nearly \$4 million series of coordinated projects built this summer on US-50 in eastern Hamilton County to connect bike lanes, trails and sidewalks and improve road safety.

Four public entities - Ohio Department of Transportation (ODOT), Columbia Township, Mariemont and Great Parks of Hamilton County - partnered to deliver the improvements.

ODOT's reconstruction of US-50 through Mariemont and Columbia Township included adding a new bike lane in Columbia's Wooster Pike District anchored by Fifty West. Great Parks and Columbia partnered to extend the Little Miami Scenic Trail from Newtown toward Mariemont. A future phase will connect the trail in Mariemont.

Kubicki called the success of Wooster Pike's growing entertainment and recreational district a "textbook public-



A public-private partnership along the Wooster Corridor has produced greater safety for pedestrians and bikers with the construction of a new crosswalk. Participating in the grand opening event in late August were, from left, former Columbia Township Administrator Mike Lemon, Trustee Vice President Brian Lamar, Fifty West Brewing restaurant owner and entrepreneur Bob Slattery, Trustee Susan Hughes, Trustee President David Kubicki.



"Abbey Road," 1969

private partnership" and praised the township's project partners Fifty West and Great Parks of Hamilton County.

"Big things happen when businesses and communities invest in each other, and public agencies come together and get along," said Kubicki.

Fifty West launched its successful family-friendly Burger Bar and beer garden concept in April at its newly renovated campus. The company invested nearly \$1.5 million in the project which created 100+ new jobs.

"Our vision for this corridor is amplified by our successful public-

private partnership with Columbia Township and Great Parks of Hamilton County," said Fifty West owner Bob Slattery. "Their investment in infrastructure and services, like the new US-50 crosswalk and extension of the Little Miami Scenic Trail, is a big win for our community and connectivity throughout the region."

The Little Miami Trail extension is the newest piece of a 100-mile regional "rails to trails" plan to connect Cincinnati's riverfront and urban core to the region's eastern suburbs and beyond.

### Here's how to use this crosswalk:

- A flashing beacon mounted on signs alerts oncoming traffic that you want to cross the road.
- After carefully watching to be sure traffic stops, cross from one side of the road to the other.
- An additional safety feature called a "refuge island" offers a central place to wait halfway, if needed, to assure traffic stops on the other side before continuing across the road.

## Crossing with Care at New Wooster Crosswalk

The new Wooster Pike/US-50 crosswalk provides a designated place to allow bicyclists and pedestrians to cross between the sidewalk system along the north side of Wooster and a path on the south side at Fifty West Burger Bar. The crosswalk leads to the newly extended Little Miami Trail.



## Too Tall Grass? Junk Vehicles? Notify Columbia Township for Help

Columbia Township has a simple way to file a complaint about a property with ongoing property maintenance issues. The township's residential and business property maintenance program addresses many common complaints including tall grass, hanging gutters, garbage, junk vehicles, peeling paint and more. Columbia's property maintenance program has been successfully operating for a decade.

The township contracts with Sycamore Township for its exterior property maintenance code enforcement program. Inspector Kevin Clark promptly responds to complaints with the goal to resolve the problem and not allow it to escalate to potential prosecution.

To file a complaint, fill out the form on the home page of Columbia Township's website [ColumbiaTwp.org](http://ColumbiaTwp.org). Or call 561-6046 to provide details.



## Summer Projects: Trail and Crosswalk Finished, Road Projects Underway

Columbia Township is investing in connectivity with roads, paths, trail upgrades



Did you enjoy a ride or walk on the new Little Miami Scenic Trail extension this summer? The long-awaited joint project, undertaken with partners Great Parks and Fifty West Brewing, is a 1.6-mile link now complete that connects Newtown Road to the Walton Creek bridge behind Carriage House Auto Wash.

"The completion of this link of the Little Miami Scenic Trail is a tremendous boost to the business community along Wooster Pike," noted Trustee President David Kubicki.

"We've been very busy managing two large road projects at one time," said John Servizzi, Columbia's road superintendent. "We believe our residents are going to be very pleased when they're done."

During COVID-19, the township has continued in major road improvements, including work on Maphet Lane and Ebersole Avenue. The roads, previously in significant disrepair, are being



Construction on Maphet Lane



Wooster Pike

widened, resurfaced and had new utilities installed. Financing came in part from the State Capital Improvement Program. Project's end is estimated for this fall.

"Residents have been fabulous to work with during this challenging project," said Administrator Melissa Taylor. "They are appreciative of the investment we are making. When we are finished, we will throw a big block party," she said.

The Hill and Dale Drive road reconstruction project is planned for later this year. That job includes replacement of water lines, new curbs, resurfacing and a new water main.

New bike lanes have been installed on Wooster Pike. The lanes were added when the Ohio Department of Transportation resurfaced U.S. 50 this summer. The lanes run from Spring Street near McDonald's east to Newtown Road.

## Halloween is Saturday, October 31

Guidance has been released by the Ohio Department of Health.



Little spooks and goblins are looking forward to their annual Halloween neighborhood events, which may look a little different this year.

**Time for the celebration is from 6 to 8 p.m. on October 31.**

The Ohio Department of Health has released several tips for making the experience safer:

- If taking your children trick-or-treating, limit the number of houses you visit and ask your children to stay as far from treat-givers as possible. For small children, consider holding the bag for them.
- Wipe off candy wrappers with sanitizing wipes when you arrive home. (Never wipe unpackaged food with wipes.)
- Allow children to eat only factory-wrapped treats. Avoid homemade treats made by strangers.

For more information, visit: <https://coronavirus.ohio.gov/wps.portal/gov/covid-19/pulbic-health-advisory-system/> for details.

**DEA NATIONAL <sup>Rx</sup>**  
**TAKEBACK**

**Saturday,  
 October 24**  
 10 a.m. – 2 p.m.

**Safety Dispose of  
 Unwanted Medications**

The Hamilton County Sheriff's Office hosts the National Prescription Drug Take Back Day from **10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Saturday, Oct. 24.**

Bring in your unused or expired prescription drugs to be safely disposed of at the **Silverton Administration Building, 6943 Montgomery Road.**



### Important Phone Numbers in Columbia Township



Trustee President  
**David Kubicki**  
 272-7870  
[dkubicki@columbiatwp.org](mailto:dkubicki@columbiatwp.org)



Trustee Vice-President  
**Brian Lamar**  
 272-7871  
[blamar@columbiatwp.org](mailto:blamar@columbiatwp.org)



Trustee  
**Susan Hughes**  
 272-7872  
[shughes@columbiatwp.org](mailto:shughes@columbiatwp.org)



Fiscal Officer  
**Caroline Heekin**  
 272-7867  
[cheekin@columbiatwp.org](mailto:cheekin@columbiatwp.org)

**POLICE PROTECTION–**  
 Emergency- 911

Hamilton County Sheriff's–  
 Non-Emergency  
 825-1500

Columbia Township–  
 Non-Emergency  
 825-2280

**FIRE PROTECTION**  
 Emergency- 911

Deer Park–  
 Silverton Joint  
 Fire District  
 791-2500  
[www.dpsjfd.org](http://www.dpsjfd.org)

**The Little Miami Joint Fire & Rescue District**  
 271-3636

Station 1 Wooster Pike  
 271-3636  
<http://lmfr.org>

Station 2 Wiehe Road  
 531-2022  
<http://lmfr.org>

### Township Administration

Administrator  
**Melissa Taylor**  
 561-6046  
[Melissa@columbiatwp.org](mailto:Melissa@columbiatwp.org)

Administrative Assistant  
**Kimberly Gray**  
 272-7877  
[Kgray@columbiatwp.org](mailto:Kgray@columbiatwp.org)

JEDZ Tax Administrator  
**Jane Fette**  
 272-9954  
[JFette@fairfaxoh.org](mailto:JFette@fairfaxoh.org)

Property Maintenance Enforcement  
**Kevin Clark**  
 792-7256  
[columbia@sycamoretownship.org](mailto:columbia@sycamoretownship.org)