



City of Kent
Wednesday, November 17, 2021
City Council Committee Meetings
320 S. Depeyster Street, Kent, OH 44240

MINUTES

6:30 P.M. Special Council Committee Meetings

1. Call to Order

At 06:30 PM, Mayor Jerry T. Fiala called the City Council Committee Meetings to order.

2. Committee of the Whole

2.1. Proposed Ward Changes from 2020 Census (Bridget Susel)

Mayor Fiala opened the Committee of the Whole meeting at 6:30 pm . He called the first speaker to the microphone.

Ms.Bridget Susel, Community Development Director, came before City Council to present the proposed changes to the City's Ward boundaries that resulted from the latest Census Count. She began her presentation by explaining that Wards are to be balanced within 10% of each other and the changes that resulted from the latest Census data will eventually require a change in the Ward boundaries. When her and her staff pulled down the data from the Census website (which is the new method of obtaining this information), they noticed changes in every Ward that didn't make logical sense. She and her staff have been diligently working and comparing data and maps to make sense of these shifts in population. Ms. Susel added she has reached out to the Secretary of State's Office as well as the Census to discuss and try to decipher these discrepancies. She is asking them to review their numbers and re-verify the information. Wards will not be drawn until this is done and she explained that she will be coming back to Council in February or March to report the findings.

Mr. Turner asked if there are other factors in the defining of wards and Ms. Susel replied the only factor is population, and they need to be contiguous. Other demographics or political affiliation are not considered, it is strictly population.

Mr Sidoti asked what the lead time is for the next election. Ms. Susel replied we

are done with redistricting that happens at the state and federal level.

Ms. Rosenberg asked if residents ever have an opportunity to weigh in on whether their ward changes. Ms. Susel said it is a formula in the Ohio Revised Code. If residents were concerned, they could contact Community Development, but at this point there is nothing that can be done until numbers are verified. Ms. Rosenberg asked if it leads to confusion when voting and Ms. Susel said she has never heard of any from the past.

Mr. Kuhar asked when this would be official. Ms. Susel said it will be official at the beginning of 2022.

Mr. Turner said the reason he brought up contiguousness was due to an election in the 90's where Ward 3 was split and voters were confused about their representation. Ms. Susel clarified that boundaries are defined by Block Group blocks and not physical boundaries. The contiguousness is due to block groups and not natural features.

Mayor Fiala commended Ms. Susel on the work done and verified she will be coming back before Council in February or March.

3. Finance Committee

Chair DeLeone opened the Finance Committee meeting at 6:50 p.m. He called the first speaker to the microphone.

3.1. 2021 Review and Proposed 2022-26 Capital Plan Update (Jim Bowling, Rhonda Hall)

Mr. Jim Bowling said that before going over the Capital Plan, he will be giving a short review of what happened this year. He referenced his PowerPoint during his presentation (Attachment #1).

He began by stating that this year started unusually due to the COVID pandemic. That delayed projects in 2020 which were then bid on in 2021. Prices bid out when prices were low and projects were prioritized by outside funding. We had to use money by the deadlines we were given and we progressed those as quickly as they could. The Fire Station #2 Improvements were reviewed, which have been on the books for three years. He reviewed the scope of the project, construction costs, start dates and completion dates. He reviewed the Bike and Hike, Brady's Leap Segment, which is near completion. The handrail is currently delayed being delivered and the entrance signs will be installed this week. Mr. Bowling then reviewed the Miller, Harvey and Steel Storm and Water improvements to help with chronic flooding in the area. He went into the next few projects that are of high importance to residents regarding streets and sidewalks. N. Water Street improvements were finished in October and tree planting is to be done this week. This project was done mainly to reduce vehicle speeds and it has done what they hoped for, specifically in regards to people driving 25 mph or less. Prior to this project, only 13% were driving at this speed and after the project was completed, that percentage tripled.

Mr. Kuhar asked about the crosswalk sign and the fact that it's knocked down every day. Mr. Bowling said most of the time it is due to buses. They approached St. Pat's School for help and it has not operationalized as planned. Mr. Kuhar asked if the signs could be moved to the side of the road. Mr. Bowling said these types of signs are required to be in the center of the road.

Mr. Bowling continued with his presentation, reviewing the Walnut Street Reconstruction, Phase 1. The annual Street and Sidewalk program was reviewed next, highlighting Harris Street where a mile's worth of sidewalks were fixed and gaps were filled in, improving the neighborhood.

Milling and resurfacing was done on Alley #2, Cherry, Frances, Overlook and Woodhill Drive with pavement repairs on many others. Concrete pavement and sidewalk replacement was reviewed next, and are projected to be completed by August 2022. Over \$3 million of infrastructure changes were made.

The next couple of projects have been forced on us by age with work needing to be done on the Water Reclamation Facility and Pump Stations. The emergency rehabilitation of primary clarifier #2 is needed to repair a damaged clarifier and is due to be completed by August 2021.

Ms. Shaffer Bish asked if this clarifier is flood proof. Mr. Bowling said this is not in the flood zone and they already considered a 100-year flood.

Mr. Bowling continued his presentation by reviewing the Southwest Pump Station replacement which has been on the capital plan for fourteen years. It will eliminate the Yacavona Pump Station, replace the Middlebury Pump Station and put in new sanitary sewer. The project started in October, which caused Middlebury to close because the sewer was fifteen feet deep. The project would have started three months ago but was delayed due to delays in getting the pumps.

Mr. Kuhar asked why they didn't put the sewer lines in when originally done. Mr. Bowling said it was done in 1950 and he assumes it was due to the depth or that they were built at different time periods when the streets were built.

Mr. Bowling reviewed the Water Reclamation Facility's upcoming needs for the next 5-10 years. We are in a much better position this year than we thought we were going to be in. The five measures that were approved by Council and put in place last year helped get the sewer work completed. A lot has helped with costs, including a DEFA Loan, State ARPA funds, and OPWC funding for the SW Pump Station, Final Clarifiers, and Heat Digesters. We received half of the needed funding of \$14.4 million. The next big need is the heat digesters, which have been postponed for five years because of the \$4.9 million price tag, but could be funded in 2023.

Ms. Shaffer Bish asked if these projects are state of the art, energy efficient and environmentally conscious. Mr. Bowling said the whole purpose of the water

reclamation facility is the protection of the environment, preventing pollution of the river. We do not get violated. The clarifiers and digesters are repairs and not replacements. The work that is done is taking out the old and putting in the new mechanical equipment that does the same thing. Ms. Shaffer Bish asked if we were recapturing methane and Mr. Bowling replied that is what the heat digester does which is the flame that is eternally burning. Ms. Melanie Baker added the methane is recaptured for use in the heating process of the digesters. If there is excess, you will see a flame. She said no methane goes out into the environment.

A question was raised by a member of the audience and Mr. DeLeone said he would go to the audience at the end of the Committee meeting for questions and comments from the public.

Mr. Turner asked how ARPA was formulated that created this pot of money. Mr. Bowling did not have an answer and Ms. Susel said the ARPA was limited to strictly water and sewer projects. Mr. Bowling said the good news is that we are in a better position than we thought we were going to be last year. Hopefully, if things go well next year, we will have another 30% of our needs funded. Then we can go back to "normal" capital plan improvements.

Mr. Bowling then reviewed a few miscellaneous items which included a West Main Street side path, the Chimney Swift Tower and Hammock Park.

Mr. Bowling concluded his presentation by reviewing the key initiatives for 2022, which include continued work on streets and sidewalks, the new Administration Building, resurfacing of State Route 43 North and Middlebury Road (when the sewer project is complete). They will continue the work on the pump station, start the work on the clarifiers and continue with the East Main Street Design.

Ms. Rhonda Hall referred City Council to their Capital Plan books that were distributed. The five year capital plan discussion is at the very beginning of the booklet. She said the biggest discussion is in the last four pages with an analysis of funds. She highlighted the net cost to the City and how money is allocated to different funds. The water fund is up because of projects that were deferred due to the COVID pandemic. She reviewed various funds and said they are looking at them and if there isn't the funding, they will have to delay projects. The 9% increase that Council passed a few years back helped maintain the balance. The Sewer Fund doesn't start with a prior balance because it was put into the ARPA funds (the American Rescue Plan Act). Projects have not been budgeted yet, but will see them in the 2022 budget book that will be presented in December. The 3% increase in the sewer fund has helped but probably will not be enough and they will maintain and watch. She stated there is not a lot going on concerning the Stormwater fund with the fund balance increasing in 2022 due to a dip in 2021.

Ms. Hall continued with her presentation by stating the next fund to review is the Capital Fund, which the largest fund and shows what money is available. Expenditures in 2021 were a bit higher than 2020 due to Council allowing the

Budget and Finance to allocate a portion of staff salaries to the Capital Fund which allowed for water and sewer projects to be completed. All of the projects of the City that keep us working and maintaining equipment are included in the Capital Plan, but we can only budget for what there is money to do. Outside funding from the U.S. Treasury is allowing us to be able to complete projects currently needed.

Ms. Shaffer Bish asked if the Capital Plan helped position us to attract infrastructure funds. Ms. Hall agreed, stating it is due to being prepared and organized. Mr. Ruller said the Capital Plan allows for strategic planning. He said he has worked for three different city governments and believes this is the most sophisticated Capital Plan he has seen. It is a reflection of the fact that we are not a wealthy community that does an amazing amount of work and that a plan really helps with management and strategic planning. Mr. Bowling added that this is why they see so many changes each year and are tracking where infrastructure funding will fit.

Ms. Wallach asked who originally implemented the Capital Plan. Mayor Fiala said he believes it was when John Layman was the Finance Director in 1983.

Ms. Rhonda Hall concluded her presentation by stating this process has been a collaborative effort by all of the departments and thanked Jim Bowling for all of the work he has done.

Mr. Turner asked if we didn't have the COVID pandemic and not received extra funding, what would have happened? Ms. Hall said we probably would have to raise rates and go into debt. Mr. Ruller reminded Council about the conversation that they couldn't rate their way out of the gap last year. It would have taken creative mechanisms to relieve the sewer fund. If there is a silver lining, it has been the injection of cash and us being ready and opportunistic enough to take advantage of it.

Mr. DeLeone asked the audience member if she got her question answered and the audience member replied that she did.

MOTION TO ACCEPT THE CAPITAL PLAN AS PRESENTED was made by Mr. Sidoti, **SECONDED** by Ms. Rosenberg and **CARRIED** by a voice vote of 9-0.

4. Adjourn

The Special Committee Meeting adjourned at 7:30 p.m.

Amy Wilkens

Amy Wilkens
Clerk of Council

Any person who requires an auxiliary aid or service for effective communication or a modification of policies and procedures to participate in any City or City Council public meeting or event should contact the Clerk of Council at 330-676-7555 or councilclerk@kent-ohio.org. Any request for auxiliary aid or other accommodation should be made as soon as possible, but no later than forty-eight hours prior to the event.