



City of Kent
Wednesday, February 2, 2022
City Council Committee Meetings
320 S. Depeyster Street, Kent, OH 44240

MINUTES

6:50 p.m. Special Council Meeting (Separate Agenda)

7:00 P.M. Council Committee Meetings

At 07:00 PM, Mayor Jerry T. Fiala called the City Council Committee Meetings to order.

Present: Jack Amrhein, John Kuhar, Gwen Rosenberg, Roger Sidoti, Tracy Wallach

Also Present: Mr. Jerry T. Fiala, Mayor and President of Council; Mr. Dave Ruller, City Manager; Ms. Hope Jones, Law Director; Ms. Melanie Baker, Service Director; Mr. Jim Bowling, City Engineer; Ms. Joan Seidel, Health Commissioner; Ms. Rhonda Hall, Budget and Finance Director; Mr. Nick Shearer, Chief of Police; Mr. Bill Myers, Fire Chief; Mr. Tom Wilke, Economic Development Director; Ms. Amy Wilkens, Clerk of Council

Absent: Michael DeLeone, Garret Ferrara, Heidi Shaffer Bish, Robin Turner

Finance Committee Chair DeLeone/Vice-Chair Wallach

Due to the impending winter weather storm, Mayor Fiala moved the Finance Committee meeting to the first committee on the agenda. Chair DeLeone was absent, so Vice-Chair Wallach introduced the first topic and speaker.

2022 Budget Appropriations Amendment

Ms. Wallach introduced Ms. Rhonda Hall, Director of Budget and Finance, to speak on the first topic, the request for a 2022 Budget Appropriation.

Ms. Rhonda Hall stated she would like to request the approval of a Budget Appropriation that was submitted to the City Manager in a memo dated January

25, 2022 and then amended on January 31, 2022. She said a line item was amended for the reappropriation of body cameras which enables us to utilize grant money. She asked if there were any questions.

Ms. Wallach asked if there were any questions from City Council or the audience, and there were none.

MOTION TO APPROVE THE 2022 BUDGET APPROPRIATIONS

AMENDMENT MADE BY Roger Sidoti, SECONDED by None and CARRIED by a voice vote of 5-0-0.

There were no more items on the agenda for the Finance Committee and it adjourned at 7:05 p.m.

Committee of the Whole Chair Mayor Fiala

Board and Commission Applicant

Mayor Fiala asked Clerk Wilkens to introduce the applicant to the Fair Housing Board. Ms. Wilkens stated the applicant, Rouven Cyncynatus, had contacted her and would not be able to be present for the interview. She added he asked for consideration to be reappointed to this committee.

Mayor Fiala thanked Clerk Wilkens and reminded everyone that Council would vote on this appointment at the next Regular City Council Meeting.

Community Development Chair Kuhar/Vice-Chair Rosenberg

Annual Economic Development Update

Mr. Tom Wilke was introduced to give his annual economic development update. Due to it being such a small group, he decided not to use the large screen and just allow for Council to follow through with the presentation in the packet.

Mr. Wilke started his presentation by stating this was his annual Economic Development update, which is very similar to prior year's and, unfortunately, for the last two years he has had to include a line item about the effect of the pandemic.

He started by reviewing the completion of last year's projects. The first was the completion of Quench Juice Cafe on Erie Street. The owner is Natasha Bastrikov, who has made herself very well known, often times out in front of her store giving out samples. Mr. Wilke said she has done a nice job and it is a very high quality product.

The Barrio expansion was next and he reminded City Council about last year's discussion about how amazing it was that someone would be doing an expansion in the middle of a pandemic and Sean and Steve (owners) were very pleased. Kent is one of their highest performing restaurants and they have nothing but good things to say about this location.

Ms. Wallach asked if Barrio replaced the yogurt store and Mr. Wilke confirmed this.

Mr. Sidoti asked if there was any idea about Yogurt V going out and Barrio taking over that space in terms of the income from taxes. He asked if anything was lost.

Mr. Wilke said his guess would be that we would have gained because Barrio has a very large staff compared to Yogurt V.

Mr. Sidoti said the only reason he is asking is if, due to taking over a business, there would be an increase in taxes. Mr. Wilke said he could guarantee that Barrio has more than made up for the loss of Yogurt V. He added that, of course, that is a guess.

Next up was Kent Mazda. He reminded City Council they approved a twelve year, fifty percent property tax exemption with the CRA Agreement for their expansion and renovation, which has been completed. This was a four and a half million dollar investment in the expansion and renovation and they spent a million and a half on the property. He would have liked to have spent more money on inventory, but it is hard right now to get cars.

The Mod Wash Auto Wash opened up on St. Rt. 59, and noted there are 36 locations under that brand with 147 more under development. They are a City water user but are not a JEDD participant.

The Asawi Building has changed quite a bit over the past few weeks, with scaffolding being taken down. The brick contract will be awarded soon and they are hoping to have all of the wall with the brick up by the end of April and the building open by the end of summer.

Mr. Sidoti asked about the south-facing side of the building and if it would be brick. Mr. Wilke said it would be brick with some banding to give it a little bit of variation. They hope for there to be a building on the other side of that somewhere down the road. It will not be attached.

The biggest project in town is the Davey Expansion. Council approved a 10 year, 75% property tax exemption for this project through an Enterprise Zone Agreement. It is a \$14 million investment and they are very much on track and ahead of schedule, hoping to be completed by the end of this year. They committed to creating 35 new jobs with an annual payroll of \$1.8 million. He stated they will have far more jobs than that, especially if you look at the 10-year time horizon.

The Singh Barani Indian Restaurant opened up and he had heard good feedback from those people who had dined there.

Lightly Toasted opened up on East Main Street. Cooper Dulick and Adam Lippy are the two partners and he added they will discuss medical marijuana dispensaries later in his presentation, as that topic had come up recently, but right now they sell vape products and "glass statues", as you can see in the pictures.

Ms. Rosenberg said it was beautiful artwork.

Belltower Brewery opened up and has been a great success. Ryan and Bridget Tipton are the owners . Mr. Wilke said he cannot say enough good things about how that place looks and how it's already becoming a destination for the city of Kent. Business is continually growing and when the weather clears and the patio opens, he thinks it will be an incredible success.

La Casa del Taco took the place of Continental Grille and Mike Awad still owns the real estate with Tyler Rickle owning the business. He is out of the Pittsburgh area. He said he understands the business is doing fine so far.

Erie Street Kitchen has expanded by taking over the interior of the Venice Cafe for lunch and dinner to be served inside. They just recently purchased what used to be the Lucky Penny Creamery off of Temple Ave and Lake Streets from Abby Turner. That will be the catering center for Erie Street Kitchen.

The second Dunkin' Donuts opened in Kent. They are very pleased with their early sales, and one of the reasons they added this location was to take some of the pressure off of the East Main Street restaurant, which would help with the line.

Hippy Fox Rocks opened where Cheesemonger was located. Their business motto is very much a Kent oriented business. The owner is Jared Bell.

The Over Easy relocation has been a big success and the owners are very happy with their sales. People are happy with the parking availability and they hope to have their liquor license soon and then it will be open for dinner. Mr. Wilke said they have a much more lively atmosphere than it used to be, reminding him of the days of the old Pufferbelly.

The Kent Stage has reopened and they have spent over \$600,000 in improvements. They received a \$440,000 State Capital Grant and then contributed some of their own money. There will be external cosmetic work done in the spring and some interior decorating. Acts are still selling out, some even in one day.

Kent Social Services has remodeled with help from Michelle Hartman, Christie Anderson, Mike Bruder, Metis Construction and a big donation from Klaben in

memory of Sister Jordan and private donations. They are waiting for the occupancy permit and will be serving hot lunches in a couple of weeks, with the pantry already open.

The DORA expansion was this past summer and is very popular and will continue to be in effect until a time City Council were to rescind it. He said it is hugely popular and does not recommend ever getting rid of it.

He reviewed three retail closures this past year: Empire, which closed when its lease expired; Circle K, which closed due to the pandemic and had no students on the KSU Campus; and Uncle Maddios, which is hard to say why they closed and said it seemed as if they hadn't been trying very hard. Many people didn't even know they were there. He couldn't think of any other closures in 2021 that took place. This shows that resident business owners and the people of Kent are committed to buying locally.

Coming Soon:

The Pit Stop Pub in University Plaza is a new restaurant/bar that is due to open soon.

Garage 108 will have a first floor coffee roaster and shop, a Community Center, small retail shops and a recording studio. The second floor will house a co-working space and a ghost commercial kitchen and a large event center. The 1st floor of the closed Karate Center will become a fitness, meditation and yoga studio.

Bar Luci will be opening on N. Water Street and on the second floor, Cloud 9, which will feature arcade and board games. There will be a nice outdoor patio.

Eric Does Data opened an office on Martindelle, which has 14 employees. The reason they moved from Akron to Kent is because this is where their employees wanted to be.

Rocco's Cupcake Cafe is going to open in the former One Love Yoga Space on Water Street. The current business has been operating as catering only up until now.

The Heritage of Brimfield is opening on St. Rt. 43, which is a long-term care facility. It is going to have 90 rooms with 96 beds, 35-40 employees and will be using City water and will be participating in the JEDD.

The closed Arby's was for sale for \$550,000, and within one day there were three offers over that amount. It was sold to an investor who wants to lease it out.

The closed Burger King has a deal in place with a national chain and should have a deal in place within a week.

In the "Each and Every" building they will still have the Franklin School of Dance business on the left-hand side and then on the right-hand side there is going to be "Daisy Cake Pops".

Hazelmade is a home product primarily featuring tea towels. This will not be a retail space but instead where the business office is located and where the distribution center will be.

Main Street Kent moved to the same building as Each and Every.

The Circle K has been purchased by Mike Awad and will be called Campus Mart.

Concerning the medical dispensaries in Kent, the State Licensing Lottery was held last Thursday, and there were 68 applications for 3 licenses in our region. The only business that came up fairly near the top in this lottery, is Lightly Toasted. If they get a license, they will operate under a different name. They are number six on the list. The process is that the State of Ohio will vet the applications starting with number one, and if something is wrong with the location or application, they will move on to the next on the list and will keep moving down until they've awarded three licenses. There is a possibility they could get to number six. Business owners are hoping for another round of license awardings next year.

West End Apartments is still in the planning stages, having submitted building plans but have delayed the start of construction due to the cost of materials and labor. They are waiting and hoping it will stabilize and drop a bit.

The former AMACO transmission business in front of Marc's is now going to be a convenience store called "43 and 261" and is operated by a group of investors out of New York City. They operate several convenience stores in the area, including one in Garrettsville.

Mr. Wilke then went into the effects of the pandemic, which included supply chain interruptions , especially for manufacturers , but is affecting all sectors. Workforce shortages have a big effect on everybody and have a continued disproportionate impact on hospitality businesses. People are still uneasy about going out in public and uneasy going out to restaurants and stores. We seem to be heading in a positive direction.

He reviewed a couple of graphs that showed the effects of the pandemic on e-commerce. Before the pandemic, e-commerce was growing 15% per year. During the pandemic, it shot up to a 40% increase and then, now that we are coming out of the pandemic, it is still growing. It is making it very difficult to fill brick and mortar businesses downtown.

He reviewed income tax numbers, with 2021 having the highest number. The big risk in 2022 is employers having to withhold income tax from employees from where they work, not where they are headquartered. If someone is working

out of their home in another city, then the other city will get their income tax. Kent State Income tax was rising during the first part of the 2000's, and leveled off right around \$5.2 million and then had about a \$400,000 drop due to adjustments KSU made due to their enrollment. Reliance on KSU on income tax has dropped quite a bit. It is down to 32% of our income tax revenue.

He reviewed unemployment, with it being just over 4% at the beginning of the year. In November 2021, it was at 2.9%, which is more than full employment. He is guessing this is the lowest it has ever been. The City of Kent is the same as the year before the pandemic. He reviewed the workforce in Portage County, dropping by 2,000. These are people that are quitting and not coming back to work, which is a combination of people who are retiring, or can't afford child care or people who are worried about being in the work environment due to the pandemic. It is believed some of those people are going to come back, but certainly not all of them.

Ms. Rosenberg asked if it could be due to not all of the KSU students returning. Mr. Wilke said this is county wide and is for the full year.

Conclusions

- COVID Still the Dominant Theme
- Workforce and Supply Chain Disruptions Create Havoc
- Disproportionate Impact on Small Businesses
- Possibly a Positive for Low-Income Workers
- Selective Impact on Manufacturing
- Still Much is Uncertain

KSU has a lease on the old Starbuck's building but the operator and type of business have not been announced yet.

The HW Industry Building on Mantua Street, north of Sheetz, has been sold and bought by a property management company. 10,000 square feet of warehouse space will be available for lease.

Longhitano's will be sold on Friday and is being bought by Klaben, who will be knocking it down and cleaning up the area.

Mr. Sidoti asked about the building being redeveloped on Gougler St. Mr. Wilke said it is Tim and Michelle Sahr who will be working on the lower level first, which will be a distribution center for online commerce. The upper floor is being considered as a residence.

An unidentified member of the audience asked if there were any plans for Davey Drill. Mr. Wilke said it has been foreclosed on and there are three customers. He is not aware of their identity. They are confident it will be sold in the very near future.

Mr. Kuhar thanked Mr. Wilke for his presentation.

Haymaker Farmer's Market Sub Lease Renewal

Mr. Ruller said Ms. Susel had a family emergency and he would be presenting this evening on the next two items. The Haymaker Farmer's Market item is a request to renew the request to sublet the property where the Market is held every year. There are no changes to the lease, other than the year, and we are asking for Council's authorization to renew it.

There were no questions from City Council or the public.

MOTION TO APPROVE HAYMAKER FARMERS MARKET SUB LEASE RENEWAL MADE BY Gwen Rosenberg, SECONDED by Tracy Wallach and CARRIED by a voice vote of 5-0-0.

ODOD Demolition Grant Program

Mr. Ruller said, in the past, Ms. Susel has come before City Council regarding demolition of blighted properties to be picked up by Portage County's landbank. He said sometimes they are picked up, purchased and rebuilt, sometimes they are demolished. It depends and is on a case by case basis. In this case, two properties have been identified to get grant funding for demolition of blighted properties. This is not to say they are ready to be demolished, but there is a tight timeline to apply for the grant, and they would like to get City Council's authorization to apply for the grant. If nothing else, perhaps it will motivate the owners to fix the properties.

Mr. Sidoti asked if we had done this a few years ago. Mr. Ruller said he was correct. Mr. Sidoti clarified they would be approving the intent to apply for the grant, not asking to move straight through to the demolition of the property. Mr. Ruller said he was correct.

There were no further questions from the City Council and no questions from the audience.

MOTION TO APPROVE ODOD DEMOLITION GRANT PROGRAM APPLICATION MADE BY Roger Sidoti, SECONDED by Gwen Rosenberg and CARRIED by a voice vote of 5-0-0.

Streets, Sidewalks & Utilities Committee Chair Sidoti/Vice-Chair Wallach

East Main Street Project - Public Meeting Update

Chair Sidoti introduced the City Engineer, Mr. Jim Bowling to address City

Council.

Mr. Bowling started by saying there was good news that the City received an additional \$700,000 from AMATS for this project. This brings it to \$15.3 million to date for the job. They are continuing to look for more funding to complete the job.

Mr. Bowling said he wanted to update the City Council on the meetings that were held in September. He thanked all who encouraged their neighbors to attend these meetings as they were well attended, with about fifty attendees. There were fourteen comments submitted, and most were positive. Several of these comments will be incorporated into the project, such as a traffic calming gateway on N. Willow, looking at native Ohio trees and tracking how the project performs after it is done. There were a few antagonistic comments, as would be expected of a job this size with this much change. They involved things such as not liking the crosswalks on Rt. 59 and one property owner wanting a traffic signal for their property.

The next step is the detailed design phase. He added that we've gone through the planning and feel we have an understanding of what the community wants and what will solve our problems. Next there will be drainage evaluation, the elevation of the road evaluation and other engineering-related items. After that, there will be right of way acquisition with hopes of construction in 2025.

Mr. Kuhar asked if the sidewalks would be at the end of the snow plow blades. Mr. Bowling said he wished after this last snow storm he wished this project would be done so they would have room to store the snow between the sidewalk and the roadway on East Main. He added "absolutely".

There were no further comments from City Council and no comments or questions from the audience.

Mr. Sidoti thanked Mr. Bowling and said this is complex work. Mr. Bowling agreed and thanked the City Council for their time.

Street Closure Request for Juneteenth Event

Mr. Ruller spoke on the topic of requesting the Willow Street Closure for the day of the event. This is the new Juneteenth celebration that Kent State is looking to relocate on the Esplanade with a day full of festivities. In light of that, he added, there is an issue of attendees crossing Willow Street safely, so the request is to temporarily close the street for the day. Mr. Ruller confirmed the times with Dr. Dana Lawless-Andric from Kent State and added the City staff are in favor of the street closure.

There were no questions or comments from City Council or the audience.

MOTION TO APPROVE WILLOW STREET CLOSURE REQUEST MADE BY

John Kuhar, SECONDED by Gwen Rosenberg and CARRIED by a voice vote of 5-0-0.

Executive Session CANCELED

Adjourn

Before adjourning, Mayor Fiala asked if Ms. Melanie Baker would like to give an update in light of the snow emergency this evening.

Ms. Baker said she wanted to make sure City Council was informed about the impending storm coming. She wanted to put together a list and have a six-man crew come in at 11 p.m., or earlier if needed. Bridges and intersections will be monitored and catch basins checked until the snow hits. It is anticipated to snow between 11pm and 1 am. She said the snow plowing will occur around the clock until the streets are cleared and cleaned to provide access. She wanted to let City Council know this doesn't necessarily mean they will be down to wet pavement, but the priority is to have the streets open for access, especially for emergency services. She provided a snow plow map, (**attachment #1**) which is now on the website, so people can see where the priorities are for plowing. The snow is cleared from crosswalks and corners for clear visibility. We are hoping not to be hit as hard as predicted and are hoping to stay caught up. Ms. Baker said she knows clearing the sidewalks is a big issue, so they are trying to stay up to date on that, hoping for the sidewalk machine to start by 8 am.

Mr. Kuhar asked if the sidewalk machine would be out before the end of the snowfall and if it would have to make a couple of runs. Ms. Baker said yes, and the only reason it was not out the last time was due to it being a holiday. She added that when you get eighteen inches of snow, it is hard to push any of it. A parking ban was instituted at 7 pm and will continue to run until it is lifted. Friday is going to be hard and she anticipated the ban would be lifted by 5 pm on Friday.

Ms. Baker said trash pickup this week was moved up by one day and will not be picking up trash on Thursday and that pickup is postponed until Friday and Saturday. Recycling will follow the same schedule. She asked the City Council to remind residents there will be ice underneath the snow, which creates a dangerous situation when people want to shovel.

Ms. Rosenberg asked if the City plows the driveway between the High School and the Middle School. Ms. Baker said the school should be doing that. She asked for everyone to give the plow drivers plenty of room and that if you cannot see their side mirrors when you are behind them, they cannot see you. She said plows throwing snow can be dangerous as well. She said they try to be very careful, but after long hours, everyone gets tired. She thanked everyone for their continued support in allowing them to do their jobs.

Mayor Fiala and members of the City Council thanked Ms. Baker for the report.

Mr. Ruller said Chief Myers would be bringing in extra fire personnel working on shift in

case there is an increase in emergency calls. He appreciated Chief Myers thinking ahead about that.

The meeting adjourned at 8:02 p.m.

Amy Wilkens

Amy Wilkens
Clerk of Council



CITY OF KENT, OHIO

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC SERVICE

MEMO

TO: Dave Ruller, City Manager
Council

FROM: Melanie A. Baker, Service Director

DATE: 2/2/2022

SUBJECT: Snow Storm 2/2/2022

Streets - Snow plowing plan

- 6-man crew coming in 11:00 p.m. (earlier if needed)
- Bridges and intersections will be monitored and catch basins checked until snow hits
- Snow plowing will occur around the clock until streets are cleared and cleaned to provide access. This does not necessarily mean wet pavement. Will make sure streets are opened up for access and emergency services.
- Plowing map, see attached. This map indicates our road and priorities during a snow storm.
- We will begin clearing and cleaning the downtown, once the snow has stopped and streets are accessible. (Snow is cleared from crosswalks and corners to provide for clear visibility and safe crossing of streets. This snow is taken to our parks and allowed to melt there.)
- Current piles are at Stonewater with room for more.

Sidewalks – Snow plowing plan

- The Ventrac is currently in the shop for repair, parts will be picked up first thing in the am and machine will be repaired and put back into service. (hydraulic issues)
- Parks staff will begin to hit the sidewalks and attempt to get high traffic areas cleared once the Ventrac is in service
- Piled / pushed snow from contractors in the aprons and intersections make traversing the sidewalks difficult.

Parking Ban – 7:00 p.m. 2/2/2022

- I have instituted a parking ban for the City of Kent starting at 7:00 p.m. today. It is in place till it is determined that we have cleared the streets for access and emergency services. There were 15 other communities in north east Ohio that have issued a parking ban as well. Akron, Tallmadge, Ravenna are 3 local entities that issued their parking bans.

Current weather anticipated as of 4:30 p.m.

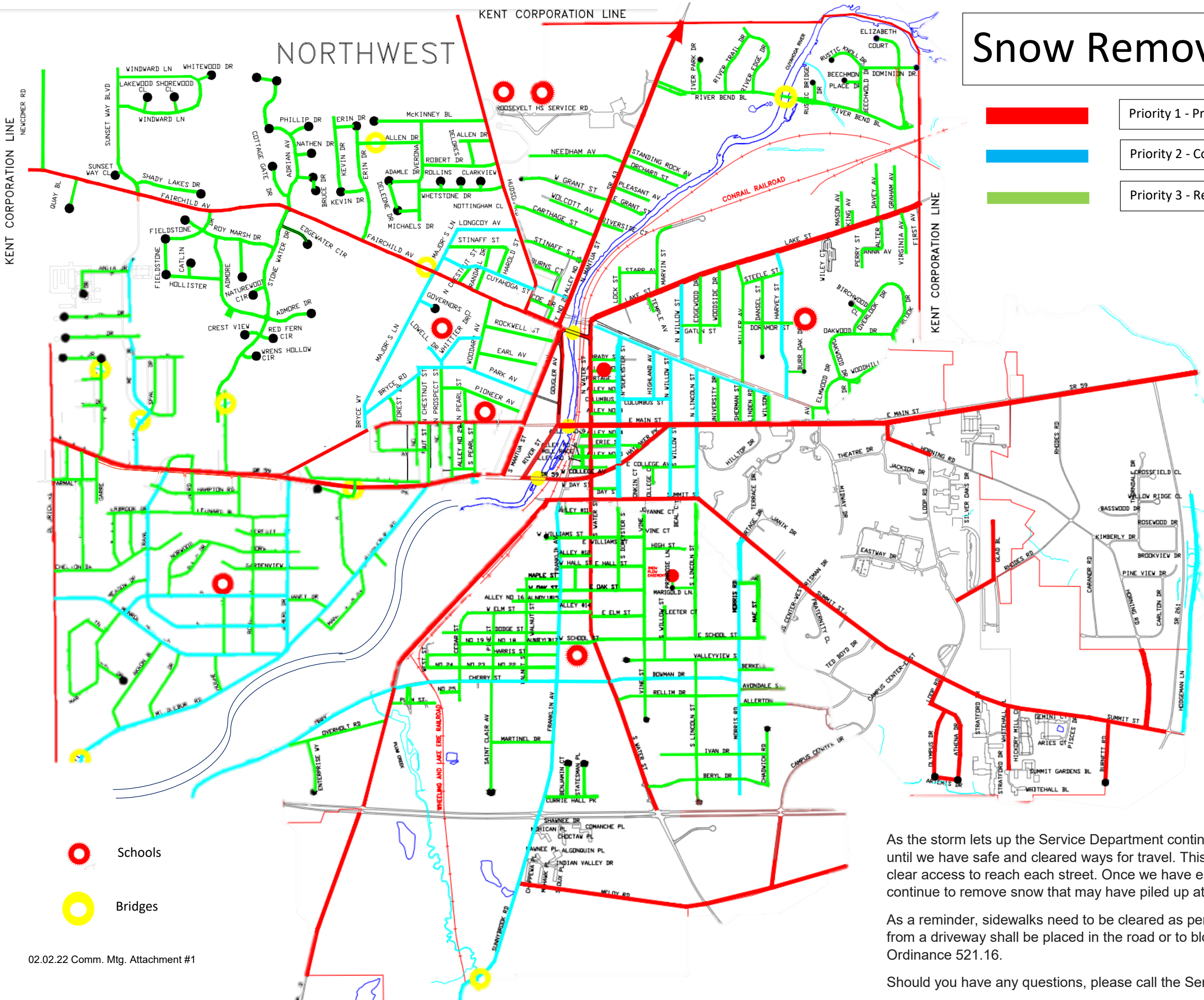
- Rain to continue to 12:00 p.m.
- Temperatures will continue to drop, currently at 37 degrees.
- Projected winds up to 30 mph.
- Ice will form on bridges sooner than the road.
- Expected transition from rain to snow is between 11:00 p.m. and 1:00 am.
- Expected snow fall 2 to 4 inches by morning; with additional snow fall during the day and accumulating an additional 6 to 8 inches. Heavier snow fall is predicted Thursday afternoon and into the evening with additional accumulations of 2 to 4 inches.
- The storm is expected to taper off and be done by 10:00 a.m. on Friday January 5th.

Trash and Recycling

- Trash this week was moved up a day.
- Trash has been cancelled tomorrow and will resume pick up on Friday and Saturday
- Recycling did an abridged version of preparing by picking up routes early if it was out.
- Recycling has cancelled tomorrow and will resume regular routes on Friday.

NOTE: These activities will be dependent on weather and ability to get around after the storm.

Snow Removal Routes



- Priority 1 - Primary Roads / Bridges
- Priority 2 - Collector Roads / Bridges
- Priority 3 - Residential / local Roads

During those harsh winter months in Northeast Ohio, we often experience heavy snowfall and or ice buildup on our roadways. The Service Department, through the hard work of the Central Maintenance crews, works to remove snow from our roads and to lay down salt and/or brine solutions to minimize or eliminate ice.

Priority routes are determined by several factors including traffic volumes, safety, and the need for movement of traffic through and around the City for fire, medical care, police protection, and goods and services during a weather emergency.

As per City Ordinance 352, when there is a snow fall of 2 or more inches in a 24-hour period a snow emergency exists. Once the Service Director declares a snow emergency parking ban all cars are to removed from all City streets to allow for the safe and efficient removal of snow.

During winter events where snow fall is in excess of 2 inches in a 24-hour period, the prioritization of roads become greatly enhanced and dedication to the primary and collector roads are paramount to safe travel and providing routes for fire and police protection.

As the storm lets up the Service Department continues to remove snow from the streets until we have safe and cleared ways for travel. This does not mean wet pavement but rather clear access to reach each street. Once we have established clear ways for travel we will continue to remove snow that may have piled up at intersections or cross walks.

As a reminder, sidewalks need to be cleared as per City Ordinance 521.15 and no snow from a driveway shall be placed in the road or to block pedestrian travel as per City Ordinance 521.16.

Should you have any questions, please call the Service Department at 330-678-8105.