



City of Kent
Wednesday, December 7, 2022
City Council Committee Meetings
320 S. Depeyster Street, Kent, OH 44240

MINUTES

Public Hearing

Present: Mr. Jack Amrhein, Mr. Michael DeLeone, Ms. Gwen Rosenberg, Ms. Heidi Shaffer Bish, Mr. Roger Sidoti, Mr. Robin Turner, Ms. Tracy Wallach

Also Present: Mr. Dave Ruller, City Manager; Ms. Hope Jones, Law Director; Ms. Bridget Susel, Community Development 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; Ms. Angela Manley, Parks and Recreation Director; Mr. Oliver Wuensch, Marketing and Events Coordinator; Ms. Suzanne Sternnock, Human Resources Manager; Ms. Amy Wilkens, Clerk of Council

Absent: Mr. Garret Ferrara; Mr. John Kuhar; Mr. Jerry T. Fiala

MOTION TO EXCUSE MR. KUCHAR AND MR. FIALA FROM THE PUBLIC HEARING MADE BY Ms. Gwen Rosenberg, SECONDED by Mr. Roger Sidoti and CARRIED by a voice vote of 7-0-0.

Ms. Bridget Susel stated that in accordance with Section 1112.01 (E)(1) & (2) of the Kent Zoning Code, notice was given on November 16, 2022, that the Kent City Council will conduct a Public Hearing to allow for public comment on proposed text amendments to the City of Kent Zoning Code:

- CHAPTER 1103: ZONING DISTRICTS, LAND USE, AND ZONING MAP
- CHAPTER 1105: CONDITIONS APPLICABLE TO SPECIFIC LAND USES

Mr. Amrhein asked if there were any questions or anyone who wished to speak on this topic. After no reply, he concluded the Public Hearing.

Board of Control

Council Committee Meetings

Call to Order

At 7 p.m., President Pro-Tem Mr. Jack Amrhein, called the City Council Committee Meetings to

order.

Committee of the Whole Chair Fiala/ Vice-Chair Amrhein

City Flag Committee Update

Mr. Jon Ridinger introduced himself as the Chair of the Flag Committee, stating this committee has been meeting since July 2022, reviewing all of the different factors that go into choosing a city flag. At the end of the presentation, he said they would be presenting the three final designs. **(Attachment #1)**

The committee began its work by reviewing the specification of a good flag design, and stated that good flags do not have intricate pictures, words or seals. They wanted limited colors, no lettering and meaningful symbols. Their main ideas came from "Good Flag, Bad Flag" from the American Vexillological Association. They began the process at the Kent Heritage Festival by asking for submissions from the public. These were not limited to people that specifically live in Kent, but by anyone connected to Kent in any way. There was a flier at the Heritage Festival along with using online methods and word of mouth. They received 68 designs by August 31, 2022 from about 33 different people.

Next, they reviewed the submissions, stating this was not a contest, and that they were not looking for a winner. They noticed repeated themes and a spreadsheet was developed to keep track of colors and symbols used on submissions. They gravitated towards the simpler flag designs and gravitated toward what was the most prevalent symbol, which included the Cuyahoga River, the Tree City, the Railroad, the Underground Railroad, Kent history, Kent State University and Education. They opted out of using colors representing KSU or Kent Roosevelt High School because there is a lot more to Kent than those two schools. The most common colors were green, blue, white and black or red.

An article was in the Portager on October 5, 2022 that showed all of the flag submissions received up to that point and took any comments submitted. He added there were no members of the public who attended any City Flag Committee meetings, which were advertised through the City's website and various other social media sites.

The Committee then discussed the remaining choices and narrowed down the submission to the three strongest concepts and discussed color combinations, symbols and flag shapes.

Next, Zach Garster introduced himself and began by reviewing the three designs being submitted, Flag Option A, B and C. He reviewed the shape, design, converging line, star and colors. He said the next step is to solidify a roll out plan in January. They are requesting from Council a budget to create 3 flags to display to the public. They would like to get feedback from the public and want to gather input on the final three submitted. There will also be a media release.

Mr. Turner asked if they would be explaining the designs when they are displayed to the public. Zach Garster said yes, signage would be provided with each flag.

Ms. Rosenberg asked about the submissions and after a brief discussion, it was clarified that the three flags being shown were made using everything from all of the flags submitted. Ms. Rosenberg asked if, with 68 submissions, we could have some more added to those displayed. She would like to see a couple of more submissions to review. Mr. Ridinger said the reason they came back with three is it makes it difficult to get a consensus with a larger number. The point of the committee was to narrow it down to bring them back

to council and if we have too many choices, it makes it harder. He said he is hesitant to add more because of the process they went through.

Mr. Sidoti thanked the committee and said it would be important for those who submitted flag designs to understand the approach to developing a flag is a lot different. He asked if there is a way to display the three flags but to also show the others that were submitted. Jon said it could be part of the campaign that will be used to gather information from the public. He said this can be done to show the thought process on how they made the decision.

Mr. Ferrara thanked everyone's efforts on the committee and asked how he would respond to someone's comment that there was no variation. Jon said all three designs have similarities based on all the data that was submitted by the community. Mr. Ferrara asked about modern vs. classical design, such as the silhouette of the bridge or the silos. Mr. Ridinger said pictures on flags don't typically look good from a distance. He said many submitted were awesome logos, but they need to be more simple to display properly on a flag. Mr. Ferrara said this is a valid point.

Jon said these were valid questions. They wanted to guide the process to make sure the design was very simple. Zach said they did receive submissions that had classical symbols and discussed including those symbols. He said it was very hard to pick one symbol that fits. They were looking for a design that could stand on its own and not get dated. Ms. Valerie Landis, a member of the committee, suggested those listening to "Google" flag design and principal elements and that something simple is the right move. She has heard from many people in the community that they would like to see the 68 designs that were submitted.

Ms. Shaffer Bish said her initial thought was they were too abstract. She thanked the committee for the knowledge, time and thought that was put into this. She said what's really exciting about Kent is that it is a destination. She asked about what the next step should be to explain this to the public and provide feedback. The next step is a very important part of the process. She asked about the mechanism of getting public feedback. Mr. Ridinger said the flags would be displayed with a QR code to offer input and see the process. She asked if written feedback would be taken in. Zach said the intention was to use Survey Monkey and collect comments for the committee to discuss. He said they could print out slips for written comment, possibly.

Mr. Turner said he was concerned initially about having symbols on the flag. He said the clean approach with an explanation works and thinks it is very good. He said having symbols on them is not a flag and, by doing what was done with colors, design and cleanliness represent what a flag really should be. He said the options presented are alike because of what represents the city.

Ms. Wallach said she likes the idea of adding two more choices to the group and it would be nice to have more options. Mr. Ridinger said this complicates the process and would prolong this even further.

Ms. Shaffer Bish asked about funding and how much was needed. Mr. Ridinger said they were estimating approximately \$1000. Mr. Ruller said that we are really lucky to have the people we have on this committee. They are not pushing a personal agenda and if the City needed to hire someone to create a flag, we would spend \$25,000, easily. He commended the work the committee did on this project and said there is money in the budget to support their request.

Ms. Jen Mapes came to the microphone as one of the members of the community whose design was used. She said she likes the idea of having all of the flags available to be seen by the public, perhaps through an infographic.

Mr. Amrhein asked if there were any further questions or comments. He thanked the committee for the work put into this project, stating he had taught geography and said they were right. If you were to look at flags from around the world, 95% are done with symbolism and not pictures.

There were no further comments and Mr. Armhein thanked the committee for its work.

City Hall Project Update

Ms. Melanie Baker, Service Director, came to the podium with an update on the new City Hall building progress. She said they are steadily making progress on this project. Most materials for the first quarter of next year have been ordered and we are on schedule for next Tuesday to begin erecting the steel. The gas main from Depeyster is scheduled for next week. She said there is progress from week to week.

There were no questions from the audience or from Council and Mr. Amrhein thanked Ms. Baker for the updates.

Parks and Recreation Open House Update

Ms. Angela Manley wanted to provide an update for the Master Plan study. They are trying to wrap things up and get feedback in a report to plan the 5 year plan. She introduced Oliver Wuensche, the new Marketing Coordinator for the Parks and Recreation Department.

Oliver Wuensch introduced himself to City Council and said they are in the middle of the planning process for the Parks and Recreation Master Plan and came to discuss the open house being held at the Roy Smith Shelter House from 6-8 pm on December 8, 2022. This is an opportunity for the public to come and vote on services they would like to see provided. He reviewed how they would be displaying all of the activities for the public to review and select.

Ms. Shaffer Bish asked if this was a one-shot deal and if there would be other times for the public to weigh in. Mr. Wuensche explained that this open house is their second event they have held. He added that if they find the attendance is too low, they will look at other methods. They are also going to be distributing a survey which will help gather data as well. It will be online and will be up for a while.

Ms. Rosenberg said the Parks and Recreation Department has been doing a lot of great work and asked Ms. Manley if she could share the good news she had with all.

Ms. Manley said they were contacted by The Great Ohio Bicycle Adventure, GOBA, which is an organization in which approximately eight hundred bicyclists tour Ohio. They had never been to northeast Ohio, and came up with a route to include Kent during the third week of June. They look for areas where camping is supported. They are in the process of reviewing contracts and agreements with them and are very excited about this possibility.

Land Use Committee Chair Ferrara/Vice- Chair Shaffer Bish

Mr. Ferrara introduced Ms. Bridget Susel to talk about zoning code text amendments.

Zoning Code Text Amendments: Chapter 1103 and Chapter 1105

Ms. Bridget Susel said the Community Development Department was contacted by a local design professional working for a local establishment requesting the establishment of a new

land use category that would allow for a limited food use to be added to a microbrewery. Ms. Susel clarified the difference between the term "restaurants" and "microbreweries", stating restaurants are mainly for serving food and microbreweries are for alcohol production. Microbreweries are allowed in the Industrial District, the Commercial District and the Research Technology and Office District. The amendment would create a new land use category called the "Microbrewery- Limited Food Service" and was approved by the Planning Commission on October 18, 2022.

When staff reviewed this, they were looking to ensure this was not a restaurant, which has different zoning requirements. They wanted to make sure it was limited and ancillary to primary alcohol production, so the conditions in Chapter 1105 were updated. A new condition was added (Item 2) to state that "Microbreweries that include an interior tap room, may provide limited food service, but such food service must be ancillary to the primary use of alcoholic beverage production. Ancillary is defined and limited to no more than 30% of the interior square footage to be utilized for food prep and service."

Mr. Sidoti asked if it impacts oversight from the Health Department. Ms. Susel said it would and, if approved by Council this evening, it would have to go through all of the submissions with the Health Department and Building Department.

There were no further questions and the Committee Meeting concluded at 8:17 pm.

Finance Committee Chair DeLeone/Vice-Chair Wallach

Mr. DeLeone opened the Finance Committee and introduced Ms Rhonda Hall, Budget and Finance Director, to speak.

City/Portage County Public Defender Contract Renewal

Mr. Dave Ruller said this is an annual renewal of the contract with the Portage County Public Defender's Office. For those people arrested in the city of Kent meeting the income eligibility requirements of the Public Defender's Office, the County provides that service. He said it costs approximately \$4,000 per year. They are asking for the Council's approval on the renewal of the contract for 2023.

MOTION TO APPROVE THE CITY/PORTAGE COUNTY PUBLIC DEFENDER CONTRACT MADE BY Ms. Gwen Rosenberg, SECONDED by Ms. Tracy Wallach and CARRIED by a voice vote of 8-0-0.

2023 City Operating Budget

Mr. Ruller started by saying every year seems to be a little different, which is especially the case after going through a pandemic. He said we have seen a pretty significant increase in income tax, returning to numbers we saw pre-pandemic. He said the revenue growth is being seen outside of Kent State. He said diversification is a good thing, as is growth in other sectors. He said for the first time since he has been here, inflation is outpacing our growth. The message is mixed because income tax is being outpaced. We are honoring our commitments, but it is still a constrained budget. He discussed wages, position changes and utility rates and then handed over the discussion to Ms. Rhonda Hall.

Ms. Hall directed everyone to review page 1.1, which shows the total budget at \$18.3 million, which is a 9.37% increase over 2021. There was not a large increase in 2023 due to the looming recession. She said the line item showing Federal, State and Local Aid was reduced due to the fact the ARPA money will no longer be coming through and the grants listed are the ones they are aware of at this point. There could be more coming in. She then referenced page 1-5 which is an explanation of the detailed expenditures, with expenses in 2023 increasing to \$58 million, which is affected by the bond issue and the ARPA funding. She said the other increases are due to the increases in union contracts and

increases in the supply and materials due to inflation. On page 1-7, she said there was a little more detail about those expenditures by function or area of the City. She said she changed the format on some pages to make the book a little easier to read, highlighting pages 2-11 and 2-12 to be a facing financial statement.

Ms. Wallach asked about the increase in water and sewer and if it is based on the average person's usage. Ms. Hall said it was and that they are reviewing the rates we currently have and increasing them by nine percent, which is the average. Ms. Wallach said for low-income households, an increase of \$7 a month could be a lot. She said she has talked to many people about the increase and that she cannot support it. Ms. Hall replied that there are many projects within the city that are needed to keep the water and sewer running up and running. Mr. Ruller interjected, saying we spent a lot of time at a previous meeting where Ms. Wallach did not attend, talking about ARPA and prior discussions of rate increases. A lot of that funding was directed to sewer projects, which was a huge help. Mr. Bowling, City Engineer, said during the Capital Plan meeting that the water is now the issue. He said we can't increase rates enough to cover the capital and knows we can't increase rates enough to get us through until next year. This is not an effort to do everything all at once.

Mrs. Sidoti asked about the reduction in water consumption in the city which ended up being a reduction in the amount of dollars brought in. Mr. Ruller said this was still the case and that KSU has made a significant reduction in water usage. In normal inflationary years, Council would grant a 3% increase, but the revenue never reaches that rate.

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

MOTION TO APPROVE THE 2023 CITY OPERATING BUDGET MADE BY Mr. Roger Sidoti, **SECONDED** by Ms. Gwen Rosenberg and **CARRIED** by a voice vote of 7-1-0. Ms. Wallach voted 'No'.

2022 Budget Appropriation Amendments, Transfers and Advances

Ms. Hall said that normally her memo for a budget amendment would contain more detailed information, but that December is a cleanup month and she would come back to the next meeting to show all the dollars that are necessary to get us through the end of the year.

Mr. Sidoti clarified for the audience that this is a normal housekeeping item we do at the end of the year to reconcile our accounts. Ms. Hall concurred, stating that another change is that we are on a cash basis for RITA collections, instead of doing a "true up" next year, we will do a final appropriation transfer this year. Mr. Ruller said this will bring it all to the new baseline and move forward. Ms. Hall said we were always waiting until January to record December receipts, but now we will be reporting what we actually receive.

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

MOTION TO AUTHORIZE THE 2022 BUDGET APPROPRIATION AMENDMENTS, TRANSFERS AND ADVANCES MADE BY Ms. Gwen Rosenberg, **SECONDED** by Mr. Roger Sidoti and **CARRIED** by a voice vote of 8-0-0.

Then and Now Purchase Orders

The last item on the agenda was the then and now purchase orders that were done throughout the year where approval is needed according to ORC 5705.541 (d). She was asking for approval on those presented.

There were no questions from Council or the audience.

MOTION TO APPROVE THEN AND NOW PURCHASE ORDERS MADE BY Mr. Garret Ferrara, SECONDED by Ms. Tracy Wallach and CARRIED by a voice vote of 8-0-0.

Executive Session- Position Allocation and General Comp. Plan

MOTION TO ENTER EXECUTIVE SESSION TO DISCUSS THE POSITION ALLOCATION AND GENERAL COMPENSATION PLAN MADE BY Mr. Jack Amrhein, SECONDED by Mr. Garret Ferrara and CARRIED by a voice vote of 8-0-0.

Present: Mr. Jack Amrhein, Mr. Michael DeLeone, Mr. Garret Ferrara, Ms. Gwen Rosenberg, Ms. Heidi Shaffer Bish, Mr. Roger Sidoti, Mr. Robin Turner, Ms. Tracy Wallach

Absent: Mayor Fiala, Mr. John Kuhar

MOTION TO RETURN TO THE REGULAR COUNCIL MEETING MADE BY Mr. Roger Sidoti, SECONDED by Mr. Garret Ferrara and CARRIED by a voice vote of 8-0-0.

MOTION TO APPROVE AMENDMENTS TO THE POSITION ALLOCATION AND GENERAL COMPENSATION PLAN AS PRESENTED, WITH THE EMERGENCY CLAUSE, MADE BY Ms. Heidi Shaffer Bish, SECONDED by Ms. Tracy Wallach and CARRIED by a voice vote of 8-0-0.

There was no further business and the committee meeting adjourned at 9:05 p.m.

Amy Wilkens
Clerk of Council

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