



City of Kent
Wednesday, October 4, 2023
City Council Committee Meetings
320 S. Depeyster Street, Kent, OH 44240

MINUTES

Democracy Day Public Hearing

At 6:00 p.m. Mayor Fiala called the Democracy Day Public Hearing to order.

Present: Mr. Jack Amrhein, Mr. Michael DeLeone, Mr. John Kuhar, Ms. Gwen Rosenberg, Ms. Heidi Shaffer Bish (6:16 p.m.), Mr. Roger Sidoti, Mr. Robin Turner

Also Present: Mr. Jerry T. Fiala, Mayor, and President of Council; 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; Ms. Suzanne Sternnock, Director of Human Resources; Ms. Amy Wilkens, Clerk of Council

Absent: Mr. Garret Ferrara, Ms. Tracy Wallach

MOTION TO TO EXCUSE MR. FERRARA AND MS. WALLACH FROM THE DEMOCRACY DAY PUBLIC HEARING MADE BY Ms. Gwen Rosenberg, **SECONDED** by Mr. Roger Sidoti and **CARRIED** by a voice vote of 7-0-0.

Mayor Fiala welcomed everyone to the Democracy Day Public Hearing being held by Kent City Council. The purpose of this hearing is to examine the impact of political influence resulting from campaign contributions by corporate entities. He instructed participants to provide their names and addresses for the record and to speak clearly. Each speaker is allowed five minutes to express their concerns and are encouraged to submit their concerns in writing if available.

Before the first speaker, Mr. Bill Wilen thanked City Council for the opportunity to speak on the topic this evening and introduced the first speaker, Mr. Greg Coleridge.

Mr. Greg Coleridge, Summerton Road in Cleveland Hts. Ohio, is the co-director of "Move to Amend," introduces his role in the national campaign. The campaign's goal is to enact an amendment called the "We the People" amendment, currently in the House of Representatives. This amendment aims to abolish two constitutional doctrines: the notion that political money spent on elections equals free speech and the concept that a corporation is a legal person. **(Attachment #1)**

Mr. Bill Wilen of Stonewater Street, Kent, was the next speaker. One of his main concerns is the significant influence of large corporations in the political arena. These corporations not only financially support candidates running for office but also use their financial resources to influence the decisions made by those elected officials. He provides specific examples, mentioning big oil and gas companies like Exxon Mobil and Shell, who pour substantial amounts of money into elections to

achieve their policy goals. **(Attachment #2)**

Ms. Barb Hipsman Springer of Gardenview Street, Kent was next to speak. She shifts the focus to honoring Tim Smith, a lawyer and professor who had a significant role as an open records authority both nationally and locally. She expressed deep respect and fondness for Tim Smith, highlighting his contributions. She then mentions that their message differs from the previous speaker's and is more locally oriented. She emphasized that the issues of democracy and control by big money extend to various parts of society. She has a background in journalism, starting by covering small villages and towns, moving to the state house, and serving as a judiciary official for 28 years. She also taught public affairs, and some of her students had interactions with current council members. Ms. Hipsman Springer underscores the importance of considering the impact of big business and dark money on local democracy and the transparency of democracy within their town. She said these factors may have adverse effects on the community's democratic processes. **(Attachment #3)**

The final speaker came to the microphone. Mr. Andrew Rome, the Director of Haymaker Farmers Market in Kent, introduced himself and expressed gratitude to the city council, organizers, and advocates for Democracy Day for providing an opportunity to address local government on community issues. Rome clarifies that Haymaker Farmers Market's focus isn't on the issue of big corporations influencing government. Instead, they emphasize that Haymaker is a 501(c)(3) federal nonprofit public charity with a mission to connect local food producers and consumers in a vibrant, sustainable community gathering place. They aim to provide direct access to food, education, and the arts. Rome sees this connection between people in Kent as essential and highlights their commitment to fostering relationships, which contrasts with a big corporate model that prioritizes profits over people. **(Attachment#4)**

MOTION TO ADJOURN THE PUBLIC HEARING WAS MADE BY Mr. Michael DeLeone, SECONDED by Ms. Gwen Rosenberg and CARRIED by a voice vote of 7-0-0.

After the public hearing adjourned at 6:22 p.m., Mr. Sidoti expressed curiosity about what people have taken away from these discussions over the years and questioned whether they should consider taking their efforts to a higher level or a different platform.

Ms. Shaffer Bish acknowledges missing most of a presentation but highlights the importance of creating alternatives and empowering citizens, emphasizing the value of citizen participation.

Mr. Sidoti discussed the need to differentiate between supporting small businesses and being critical of large corporations. He believes there should be a shift in the conversation to support pro-business policies while opposing corporate influence in politics.

Another participant mentions the challenges of discussing being pro-business while opposing corporate influence, stressing that small businesses are vital and often negatively affected by corporate control of politics.

The conversation continued, touching on retirement investments in corporations, the complexity of tracking financial investments, and the idea that big money should not be treated as a voting entity.

Committee of the Whole

Mayor Fiala opened the Committee of the Whole meeting at 6:28 p.m.

New City Hall Construction Update

Mr. Ruller mentioned some positive news. He said that for those who attend this event regularly, there will be a much-improved facility for Democracy Day next year. Specifically,

council chambers will be used for Democracy Day, and he expressed hope for a positive experience without any feedback with the microphones they were currently experiencing.

Ms. Baker said while it may not appear as though much is happening from the outside, significant progress is being made internally, with various inspections and preparations underway. The second and third floors have completed the rough-in electrical inspection. Water mains for the building have been tested and inspected, ensuring that water is running smoothly. Brickwork is ongoing, with the north side of the building and the back side showing progress. The curtain wall, which includes the large atrium areas, is in the fabrication process. The roof is nearly complete, with only stairwell B remaining to be finished. The installation of a gas main is scheduled for the end of the following week to provide heating options as the weather gets colder. Once the curtain walls are ready, measurements of the windows will be taken to install them on both the back and front sides of the building.

Action Recommended: NONE

Health and Public Safety Committee

Chair Amrhein opened the Health and Public Safety Committee Meeting at 6:30 p.m.

Local Preparations for the 2024 Solar Eclipse

Mr. Ruller started first by saying that Ms. Joan Seidel, Health Commissioner, has been emphasizing the importance of preparing for the solar eclipse event, and he humorously suggested that it's time to wear out the council members with these concerns. He said that there is significant activity focused on emergency preparation due to the potential influx of a large number of people for the eclipse. While some friends and family might initially dismiss the idea of many people attending the event, he noted that projections suggest hundreds of thousands of visitors may come to the area. Concerns revolve around logistical challenges such as traffic, restroom facilities, accommodations, emergency care, food supply, and shopping availability. Hotels are already fully booked or close to it, and local businesses are worried about running out of food. Mr. Ruller said that this event presents more complexities than initially anticipated and acknowledges the importance of addressing these concerns.

Ms. Joan Seidel began her presentation (**Attachment #1**) by stressing the significance of the event, given its rarity and the potential for a large influx of visitors, and underscored the need for careful planning and preparation to ensure its success. She said the importance of safety and preparedness for the solar eclipse event, stating that the focus is on ensuring a safe and seamless experience for participants.

During her presentation, Ms. Seidel shared some basic information about the eclipse:

- The eclipse is scheduled for April 8, 2024, and will have a 124-mile-wide path.
- The event is expected to offer a view of totality in Kent, covering around 98% to 100% of the sun.
- The eclipse is considered a once-in-a-lifetime experience, with the next one not expected until 2099.
- Totality will occur between 12:00 PM and 4:00 PM, with the eclipse in Kent estimated to occur around 3:13 PM, lasting about three minutes.
- The eclipse's path is wider than the one in 2017, has a longer duration, and covers a larger portion of the U.S. population.

Ms. Seidel said that planning is already underway, with the Kent Area Chamber of Commerce, Main Street Kent, and local businesses organizing activities over a four-day weekend leading up to the eclipse. She said that Ohio has been preparing for the eclipse for about 18 months, and the City of Kent is actively discussing safety and logistics for the event. She offered to provide more resources and updates as plans are confirmed and potential concerns arise.

Mr. Kuhar asked if people will be coming to see the eclipse or if they will be coming for the party. Ms. Seidel said that people will likely come to the area for various reasons related to the solar eclipse event. She anticipates a diverse mix of attendees: Some may come primarily to observe the eclipse itself, and these individuals could be considered "serious scholar types" interested in the astronomical aspect. Others may be attracted by the festive atmosphere and the party-like celebrations that Kent is planning. There will also be those who come for the events and activities that Kent will organize in connection with the eclipse.

Ms. Shaffer Bish asked if we would be distributing safety glasses. Ms. Seidel said individuals will be responsible for obtaining their own safety glasses, just as they were asked to do for the partial eclipse in 2017. Ms. Melanie Baker has ordered some safety glasses for city workers, but it's clarified that these glasses are for city employees and not their families. Therefore, attendees who wish to view the eclipse safely will need to acquire their own protective eyewear.

Mayor Fiala asked about the accessibility of these glasses and whether they could be purchased or obtained for the general public. It's mentioned that there will be a set of NASA-approved glasses available, but for additional needs, the general public may need to acquire them independently. Suggestions are provided about what to look for when purchasing safety glasses to ensure they meet the necessary safety standards.

Mr. Amrhein said this presentation was informational and thanked Ms. Joan Seidel. She emphasized the importance of raising awareness about the upcoming solar eclipse event, recognizing that people have varying levels of awareness regarding it. She specifically wants to ensure that the council is informed about the event and its planned activities.

Additionally, Ms. Seidel said that there may be vendors selling safety glasses for the eclipse event, and humorously mentioned the possibility of vendors selling alcohol as well. There will be a festive atmosphere during the eclipse event.

Actions Recommended: NONE

Proposed Idling Cars Regulation Update

This item has been moved to the November 2023 Agenda.

Overnight Parking Restriction Change Request

Mr. Ruller said the request came from Melissa Celko, who will be a future member of City Council. Melissa had initially made the request at a council meeting, and the council referred it to staff for further consideration. The staff, particularly the transportation, engineering, and safety group, examined the request and had concerns about implementing a full city-wide, no-parking, or parking-anytime rule. As a result, they decided to modify the proposal. He said that despite Melissa's absence from the current meeting, they have been in communication with her, both in person and through email, to collaborate on finding a suitable solution, as she is strongly committed to the matter.

Mr. Bowling said there was a request to revise the city-wide requirement and that this was a

request to revise or investigate revising a city-wide time limit regulation in section 351.13. He clarified that this particular section deals with the storage of vehicles in public spaces. He pointed out that this section is distinct from others because it primarily focuses on the concept of storing vehicles in public spaces rather than overnight parking, and it pertains to spots that have already been deemed permissible for parking. Additionally, he mentioned that this regulation was passed in 1964. He discussed the review conducted by the Traffic Engineering Safety Committee regarding a potential change to a city-wide time limit regulation (section 351.13). He clarified that this regulation focuses on the storage of private vehicles within the right-of-way and does not pertain to safety issues.

Mr. Bowling then proceeded to outline the potential benefits and consequences of making changes to this regulation. The benefits: Providing additional land for parking or storing private vehicles within the right-of-way. Consequences: The consequences are subjective and based on individual perceptions. Changes could vary from maintaining the existing 24-hour limit to eliminating it entirely.

Mr. Bowling emphasized that the discussion centers on whether the city wants to allow people to store cars within the right-of-way and that the consequences are subjective and may differ depending on the neighborhood and individual preferences.

He also discussed potential problems associated with changing the city-wide time limit regulation for on-street parking (section 351.13). Key points include:

Concerns in Specific Neighborhoods: Mr. Bowling highlighted concerns in neighborhoods around Kent State University, particularly with first-year students. Students are often instructed to park in designated areas but may find it more convenient to park on the street in residential neighborhoods, which could lead to congestion and parking issues.

High-Density Housing Areas: Mr. Bowling mentioned that in areas with higher-density student housing, the availability of on-street parking can affect the viability of rental housing options. Allowing on-street vehicle storage may make it more feasible for such uses to fit into residential neighborhoods.

Minor Citywide Issues: Mr. Bowling acknowledged that extending the time limit for on-street parking could result in abandoned or broken-down vehicles staying in the right-of-way longer. Additionally, it may pose challenges for snow removal and street cleaning operations, even during minor snowfall events.

Mr. Bowling said that the Traffic Engineering Safety Committee does not recommend changing the city-wide ordinance due to the perceived limited benefits and the potential for complaints and difficulties related to snow removal and vehicle maintenance. He mentioned the low number of parking tickets issued in the area under consideration for a city-wide time limit change, emphasizing that, from a city-wide standpoint, they do not recommend such a change. However, he acknowledged that all neighborhoods are unique.

Mr. Bowling offered an alternative approach (if Council wishes): allowing flexibility for neighborhoods to decide their parking regulations. He said that residents in specific neighborhoods, such as Forest Lakes or University Heights, could have the opportunity to petition for changes to the parking regulations that suit their unique circumstances. This would require a certain percentage of neighbors to sign off on a petition for the change to be considered. He mentioned that further investigation and discussions with relevant parties, such as the City's code officials, would be needed to explore this option. Additionally, he said that proper signage would be required to inform residents of different parking regulations in different areas.

Ms. Shaffer Bish expressed appreciation for raising the issue of neighborhood protection and the potential for rental property expansion due to parking regulations. She notes that

landlords are currently required to provide adequate parking for their residents, but they often face challenges with guest parking in areas with time-limited parking restrictions. She asked a question about the potential for property owners in neighborhoods that are predominantly rentals to bring a petition for changes in parking regulations. Specifically, she inquired about the rules and requirements for such petitions. She is concerned about neighborhoods where a significant portion of the properties are rented and whether property owners in those areas can initiate petitions for changes in parking regulations.

Mr. Bowling explained the current rules and process for property owners to initiate a petition for changes in parking regulations. Property owners who wish to change parking regulations, typically related to parking time limits and locations, can contact the relevant city assistant, Patty. They would need to specify the requested changes, including the area affected. The city would then draw a map outlining the limits within which signatures would be required for the petition. The property owners would need to gather signatures within those limits to demonstrate serious community support for the change. Once the city receives the petition and verifies its authenticity, the Traffic Engineering and Safety Committee will review the request and make a recommendation to the council. Ultimately, City Council will decide whether to approve or reject the proposed parking regulation changes. Mr. Bowling suggests that this process would likely remain the same for neighborhoods where property owners, particularly in areas with a significant rental population, want to initiate petitions for parking regulation changes.

Mr. Kuhar suggested a potential solution where all streets with parking would have a default two-hour parking limit. Residents who live within a block of a specific area could obtain a permit to park on the street for up to 23 hours, thereby allowing them more flexibility in parking. This proposal aims to balance the needs of residents and visitors while ensuring that parking regulations are fair and functional.

Mr. Bowling responded to John's proposal, emphasizing the importance of neighborhood-specific parking regulations. He said that neighborhoods could request changes in parking regulations tailored to their needs. Mr. Kuhar suggests implementing a default two-hour parking limit on all streets with the option for residents to obtain permits allowing them to park for longer durations. Mr. Bowling expressed concerns about oversight related to issuing permits but acknowledged that different neighborhoods may require different parking solutions.

Chief Shearer approached the microphone to explain the enforcement standpoint. The discussion focused on the feasibility of implementing a 23-hour parking limit on certain streets, with the option for residents to obtain permits for longer durations. Chief Shearer and others expressed concerns about enforcement difficulties in determining whether a vehicle has been parked in the same spot for an extended period. The chief mentioned the challenges of proving this in court if the vehicle has moved at all, as they rely on the location of the valve stems for enforcement.

Mayor Fiala mentioned that the concerns raised were about residents receiving parking tickets and not being aware of the specific parking ordinances. Mr. Bowling said it's noted that the issue may relate to angled parking downtown and parking head-in. Council members express a desire to ensure that residents are informed about parking regulations and suggest that greater communication and education might be needed regarding parking rules.

Mr. Turner voiced concerns about doing this by neighborhood. express concerns about changing neighborhoods, owner-occupied properties versus rental properties, and the potential for conflicts over parking issues, especially in areas undergoing transition. He acknowledged the need for clear and enforceable parking regulations to avoid potential conflicts among residents. The balance between flexibility and maintaining order in neighborhoods is discussed. Challenges of enforcement related to parking regulations and

express concerns about not being able to determine how long a vehicle has been parked in the right-of-way. He asked why certain methods of assessment are not allowed and how to address enforcement challenges effectively.

Chief Shearer discussed the legality of physically touching a vehicle for parking enforcement purposes and the use of parking tablets to document violations.

Mr. DeLeone said all of the current regulations were put into law for different reasons. He said there are reasons behind the parking regulations on different streets, particularly in areas with college students. He expressed his support for evaluating and potentially changing parking regulations on a street-by-street basis, taking into account the unique needs and concerns of each neighborhood. The idea of flexibility and community input in the process is emphasized.

Mr. Sidoti asked if something comes up and overnight parking is allowed, about the potential consequences of allowing overnight parking on public streets and the scenario where a neighbor parks a vehicle with a car cover for an extended period. He asked about the recourse available in such situations and whether there would be an appeal process. Mr. Bowling said that would not be allowed by TE &S. Time limits would need to be defined. The key will be finding out what fits well in each neighborhood and being reviewed by TE&S.

Mr. Ruller discussed the potential approach of refining the parking regulations on a neighborhood-by-neighborhood or street-by-street basis to address the concerns raised by residents. This approach allows for more customized solutions and may be less problematic than a citywide change. Jim emphasizes that the decision ultimately rests with the council members.

Ms. Shaffer Bish expressed her concerns about allowing neighborhood-specific changes to parking regulations. She emphasized the need to consider the potential consequences, such as incentivizing parking for rental properties or businesses, and the impact on residents. She highlighted the importance of enforcing regulations for rental housing to ensure that there is enough parking available for both residents and businesses. She expresses her uncertainty about this approach and the need for careful consideration.

Ms. Susel provided clarification on parking requirements for rental properties. She explained that rooming houses or properties with three or more unrelated tenants are required to have parking on-site, but this doesn't account for guests. She said that in single-family rental properties with no more than two unrelated tenants, parking can become an issue due to the lack of space for guests. She mentioned that while the code requires on-site parking for certain rental properties, it may not be sufficient to address parking issues in smaller rentals or certain neighborhoods. The issue of parking may be more pronounced in areas with single-family rentals located near owner-occupied homes, such as in neighborhoods like Columbus or Willow. These neighborhoods may experience parking challenges due to the mix of single-family rentals and owner-occupied homes.

Mr. Ruller clarified the point and suggested that while the code regulations should be sufficient if followed, allowing overnight parking could potentially create enforcement challenges, making it harder to prove violations, as described by Chief Shearer. Ms. Susel said correct, saying that their Code Enforcement Officers currently monitor cars in the morning to track potential violations related to illegal rooming houses and residency status. She said that adding overnight parking could make enforcement more challenging, particularly in certain neighborhoods.

Mr. Kuhar suggested the approach of addressing issues on a case-by-case basis when petitions arise, rather than investing a significant amount of time and effort into analyzing every neighborhood and street in the city. This approach would aim to find solutions that

prevent the creation of storage facilities for vehicles on public streets. Mr. Bowling said yes, that is exactly what they meant.

Ms. Rosenberg asked if there have been requests from other parts of the city to modify parking regulations similar to the current request. Mr. Bowling said that in his 15 years of experience, this is the first time he recalls hearing a request to change the specific parking regulation in question. He also discusses the process of neighborhood petitions and mentions that such changes are generally not requested frequently. He emphasized the importance of residents' dedication to the process, indicating that if it's not a top priority for them, it's unlikely to proceed. He notes that the existing regulation has been in place since 1964.

Mr. Turner expressed his concerns and observations regarding the changing demographics of the city and the impact on parking. He mentioned that the transition from owner-occupied homes to more rental properties has led to increased concerns about non-resident parking in neighborhoods. He is supportive of the idea of exploring possibilities and experimentation but raises concerns about the process of undoing any changes if they become problematic. He also mentioned the negative implications of vehicles parked on streets for extended periods and how it can affect the appearance and perception of neighborhoods. Despite his concerns, he acknowledged that the proposal could potentially benefit neighborhoods in transition.

Mr. Amrhein reminded Council to frame their thoughts into comments for the speaker.

Mr. Sidoti asked for clarification on the percentage of neighbors needed to support a petition for parking changes in a neighborhood.

Mr. Bowling explained that they haven't determined a specific percentage yet and would only explore this further if the council expressed interest in doing so. He suggests that the council can provide guidance on how much consensus they would like to see in a neighborhood before considering changes. Roger asks if there is a specific percentage that has been used in the past for similar petitions and suggests that Jim could provide that information later. Mr. Bowling said that traffic calming petitions have been around 70 percent consensus in the past.

MOTION TO REFER TO ADMINISTRATION FURTHER RESEARCH ON A RECOMMENDATION REGARDING PARKING LIMITS MADE BY Mr. John Kuhar, SECONDED by Mr. Turner and CARRIED by a voice vote of 6-1-0. Ms. Shaffer Bish voted "No".

Action Recommended:

1. Refer to the Administration to further research the parking limits in the city and report back to Council.

Streets, Sidewalks & Utilities Committee

Chair Sidoti opened the Streets, Sidewalks and Utilities Committee at 7:17 p.m.

Authorization of a Permanent Access and Utility Easement

Ms. Susel said she is speaking this evening in place of Tim Sahr, Development Engineer and the information provided is about a property owned by Hometown Bank, formerly owned by David Drill. Hometown Bank is preparing the parcel for sale and has discovered

that the City has a roadway and utilities that cross over the property. Hometown Bank is offering the City a perpetual road and public utility easement to ensure access. They are requesting approval with an emergency for the acceptance of this easement.

MOTION TO APPROVE PERMANENT ACCESS AND UTILITY EASEMENT MADE BY Mr. Jack Amrhein, SECONDED by Ms. Heidi Shaffer Bish and CARRIED by a voice vote of 7-0-0.

Action Recommended:

1. Accept the perpetual road and public utility easement at the property located at 200 West Williams Street, with the emergency clause.

24" Water Line Relocation - MOU with Kent State University

Mr. Jim Bowling said there is an existing 24-inch water line parallel to Summit Street, but a portion extends beyond Summit Street's right-of-way and onto Kent State University's campus. Kent State needs to relocate this water line for a construction project, and the memorandum outlines the framework for this relocation. The agreement states that the cost will be split 50-50 between the city and Kent State, with Kent State managing the relocation. In return, the city will receive an easement for the new water line location. Mr. Bowling requested approval to execute this agreement.

MOTION TO AUTHORIZE 24" WATER LINE RELOCATION - MOU WITH KENT STATE UNIVERSITY MADE BY Mr. John Kuhar, SECONDED by Mr. Michael DeLeone and CARRIED by a voice vote of 7-0-0.

Action Recommended:

1. Authorize the memorandum of understanding with Kent State University to allow relocation of the City's 24" waterline, with the emergency clause.

Finance Committee

Chair DeLeone opened the Finance Committee meeting at 7:20 p.m.

Public Entities Pool (PEP) Grant

Ms. Joan Seidel said she was seeking approval to accept additional funding of \$1,000 from the Public Entities Pool, their insurance company. They plan to use this funding to purchase an AED (Automated External Defibrillator) with a bleed head box and a sign for the clinic space, where they currently do not have one. The request is made to enhance the clinic's facilities and improve safety.

MOTION TO APPROVE PUBLIC ENTITIES POOL (PEP) GRANT MADE BY Mr. Jack Amrhein, SECONDED by Ms. Heidi Shaffer Bish and CARRIED by a voice vote of 7-0-0.

Action Recommended:

1. Authorize the PEP grant application in the amount of \$1,000 and, if approved, authorize the acceptance and allocation of the funds to the Health Department as presented with the emergency clause.

Healthy Eating and Active Living Grant (HEAL)

Ms. Joan Seidel said the Health Department has received an extension and additional funding for the Healthy Eating and Active Living (HEAL) Grant 2024. The grant amount has increased from \$10,000 to \$25,000. She expressed enthusiasm about the opportunity to do more with this funding and seeks the Council's approval to accept the grant

Ms. Shaffer Bish expressed her excitement and appreciation for the funding that Ms. Seidel and her department have secured for the benefit of the city's citizens. She notes that not too long ago, the existence of the city's Health Department was threatened, and she commends Ms. Seidel and her staff for their hard work in securing these grants and making a positive impact on the community.

MOTION TO APPROVE HEALTHY EATING AND ACTIVE LIVING GRANT (HEAL) MADE BY Ms. Heidi Shaffer Bish, SECONDED by Ms. Gwen Rosenberg and CARRIED by a voice vote of 7-0-0.

Action Recommended:

1. Authorize the HEAL grant application in the amount of \$25,000 and if approved, authorize the acceptance and allocation of the funds to the Health Department as presented,

Executive Session

MOTION TO ENTER EXECUTIVE SESSION TO DISCUSS 1.) PREPARING FOR CONDUCTING OR REVIEWING NEGOTIATIONS OR BARGAINING SESSIONS WITH PUBLIC EMPLOYEES CONCERNING THEIR COMPENSATION OR OTHER TERMS AND CONDITIONS OF THEIR EMPLOYMENT 2.) CONFERENCES WITH AN ATTORNEY FOR THE PUBLIC BODY CONCERNING DISPUTES INVOLVING THE PUBLIC BODY THAT ARE THE SUBJECT OF PENDING OR IMMINENT COURT ACTION AND 3.) TO CONSIDER THE PURCHASE OF PROPERTY FOR PUBLIC PURPOSES SALE OF PROPERTY AT COMPETITIVE BIDDING OR THE SALE OR OTHER DISPOSITION OF UNNEEDED OBSOLETE OR UNFIT FOR USE PROPERTY MADE BY Mr. Jack Amrhein, SECONDED by Mr. Michael DeLeone and CARRIED by a voice vote of 7-0-0.

MOTION TO EXCUSE MR. FERRARA AND MS. WALLACH FROM THE EXECUTIVE SESSION MADE BY Ms. Gwen Rosenberg, SECONDED by Mr. Michael DeLeone and CARRIED by a voice vote of 7-0-0.

MOTION TO RETURN TO REGULAR COUNCIL MEETING MADE BY Mr. Roger Sidoti, SECONDED by Mr. Michael DeLeone and CARRIED by a voice vote of 7-0-0.

MOTION TO APPROVE ZONING CODE MAP AMENDMENT MADE BY Ms. Gwen Rosenberg, SECONDED by Mr. Jack Amrhein and CARRIED by a voice vote of 7-0-0.

MOTION TO APPROVE OPBA CONTRACT NEGOTIATION TERMS MADE BY Mr. Roger Sidoti, SECONDED by Mr. Jack Amrhein and CARRIED by a voice vote of 7-0-0.

Hearing no further business, the meeting adjourned at 9:15 p.m.



Amy Wilkens, CMC Clerk of Council

Testimony of Greg Coleridge Kent "Democracy Day" Public Hearing | October 4, 2023

Good evening.

I'm Greg Coleridge, from Cleveland Heights. I'm the Co-Director of Move to Amend, the national campaign seeking to enact the We the People Amendment (HJR54 in the current House of Representatives) to abolish the twin constitutional doctrines that political money spent in elections equals free speech and that a corporation is not a legal person.

Questions to everyone here:

Do you feel your voices to federal and state public offices are authentically heard, your needs met, your community served? Do you believe that the governing rules of our society are fair and just? That the interests of the wealthy elites and major corporations are no more responded to than your interests and those of local businesses? Should the super rich and corporate entities be allowed to spend as much money as they want lobbying and donating to political candidates? Should fossil fuel corporations have the fundamental decision to mine, frack and burn fossil fuels that threaten a livable world? Should insurance corporations have the final word on the health care you receive rather than your doctor? Should banking corporations have the ultimate power to decide how much money is created (as debt) in our society and where it's distributed? Should agricultural corporations be able to avoid labeling potentially harmful ingredients on consumer products?

When asking these questions to people across the country where I've made presentations, the answer by well over 90% is a resounding NO.

It doesn't take a PhD in political science to know that our political system isn't broken, but rather is fixed. One doesn't have to be a constitutional scholar to understand that a corporation is not a person and that money is not speech. More local public officials like you here in Kent are increasingly opposed to more fundamental decisions that in the past you've made to protect the health, safety and welfare of residents are now being preempted, usurped or, dare I say, trumped to benefit the super rich and corporate behemoths.

It's not surprising that ending all corporate constitutional rights and money as speech is gaining support:

- 70 House co-sponsors of HJR54

- Nearly 500,000 individual petition signers

- 749 organizational endorsers

- 8 states and over 700 communities that have passed municipal resolutions or citizen-driven ballot initiatives, like Kent.

The fundamental rights of people and the rights of communities directly decrease as the rights of big money in politics and corporations increase. It's an inverse relationship. It's like oil and water. People power and corporate power simply don't go together – never have and never will.

Corporations aren't mentioned in the U.S. Constitution. Corporate entities were originally chartered or licenced one-at-a-time by state legislatures, including here in Ohio, to provide a useful good or service. The terms of their actions were defined in their charter. If the corporation violated the terms or broke the law, the state legislature or state courts revoked their charter with the company going out of business. Those are the actions of self-governing people – individuals who understood the appropriate relationship between We the People and corporate entities: that of superior vs subordinate.

In a 1900 ruling to dissolve a dairy company, the Ohio Supreme Court said, *The time has not yet arrived when the created is greater than the creator, and it still remains the duty of the courts to perform their office in the enforcement of the laws, no matter how ingenious the pretexts for their violation may be, nor the power of the violators in the commercial world.*

Corporate constitutional rights and money as free speech were not intended. They're not inevitable or irreversible, but rather, creations by activists Supreme Court Justices working with the wealthy class and corporate attorneys.

What's been done can be undone. It's up to us. We all have a role to play, residents, citizens, public officials. It begins with not accepting the legitimacy of corporate personhood and money as speech – despite the fact that we live in a corporate culture.

But even that culture is changing.

I end with an apt quote from the first 10 minutes in the recent film, *Barbie*.

"In Barbieland, corporations are not people and money is not speech."

Indeed the culture is changing. It's up to us as part of a larger democracy movement to affirm that only people are human persons and that money in elections can be regulated. Changing the culture goes hand in hand with changing our governing institutions. That includes Amending the Constitution.

Thank you.

DEMOCRACY DAY TALK (2023) – Taking Action Against Non-Renewable Energy Corporations

Bill Wilen, Kent

Thank you Kent City Council for your continuing approval of our yearly one-hour public hearing called Democracy Day. I should also thank the Ohio Supreme Court for its 7-0 vote on our DD petition 8 years ago.

One of my main targets of all the large number of corporations that use their money to support their candidates running for office and further use their money to influence decisions made by their politicians is big oil and gas companies - Exxon Mobil, Shell and Chevron, for example. The money they pour into elections to get their way is legal because corporations have the status of personhood according to the Citizens United Supreme Court decision in 2010. And money is a form of speech. A democracy should not legalize corporations as persons speaking with their dark money.

“Corporate campaign donations through super PACS not only increase the total amount of money politicians raise in each election – but/ dilutes everyone else’s voice....If a corporation can give a politician millions of dollars through a super PAC, the self-interested politician is certainly going to prioritize that company and its views more than the constituents the politician represents. This undermines our democracy....If we want to change corporate money in politics and keep this trend going, we’ve got to impact what corporations focus on the most: their bottom lines.” (Amy Jo Miller and Ian Woods. “Op-ed: The surest way to end corporate America’s love affair with money in politics.” Our New Future, 2021). Their bottom line is the money they make especially when their stock prices keep rising.

How can I become active and try to impact oil and gas corporations' bottom lines? I am a member of a local National Association of Investors stock club called Wampum. Obviously our focus is making money from buying and selling stocks. We meet monthly in Stow and small groups of us recommend a stock to buy each month and we decide by listening to the information and data presented and vote. We currently have about 25 stocks.

But each time an oil stock is presented by one of our committees, I vote against it regardless if its investment numbers look good. My reasoning which I tell our group is that purchasing any oil and gas stocks helps sustain greenhouse gases and hurts science's research supportive effort to reduce CO2 and save our earth from extinction. I am a strong supporter of renewable energy. Our current climate emergency is primarily caused by fossil fuel corporations.

I'm thinking about making a greater contribution to try to reduce big oil's bottom line by contacting all 64 of the stock chapters in the United States and present my green position against big oil and try to persuade them to not purchase oil and gas stocks, and to sell those that they may have in their portfolios.

This obviously is much more idealistic than realistic but I know I will feel better because I am doing something to try to reduce the monied influence that big oil and gas have. We need to ACT! Afterall, the gas and oil industries have been playing us for fools.

So, what kind of Democracy Day ACTION do you want to consider to transition from our corporatocracy back to a democracy?

Barbara Hipsman Springer
978 Gardenview St.
Kent, Ohio

Here tonight to honor Tim Smith a lawyer/professor in our school who was an open records authority nationally and locally. And a dear friend and colleague

And so, as we all know, the issues of democracy *control by big money* extend to many parts of our society. As you all know from years of seeing me around, my background is in journalism.

First, I covered small villages and towns. Eventually I moved to the statehouse and judiciary. For 28 years, I taught public affairs reporting at Kent.

I look around us today and realize that when we talk about big business or talk about how dark money is affecting politics, we really should be taking into consideration what big business is doing to democracy in a different way. *It's affecting transparency of democracy*

Nearly every newspaper in the country has been bought out by a bigger business and not necessarily a newspaper business or a News Group.

What's happening is we have hedge fund operators, huge monopolies and unknown trusts buying up small papers like the record Courier and the beacon journal and driving them into the ground for profit. And then, and walking away. While they aren't extinct in our county, it's pretty close. Hence why some journalists started ThePortager.com. Which is, by the way, printing THE VOTERS GUIDE in cooperation with the League. It will be out in time for early voting. *VH1 is lives of this of*

But it occurs to me that without common knowledge, like the voters guide – now both online at VOTE411 – and in print and the RC's coverage. democracy can't thrive even in a city the size of Kent. ~~Why? Because there's no common knowledge. The RC has gone to under 3000 countywide. We have many more subscribers, but not nearly 100000 or even one per household. No information breeds an insecure public.~~

But that's the problem. What are some solutions? I recently suggested to city manager Dave Ruller that the city consider a newsletter that comes out more than just quarterly, perhaps at least monthly!

In fact, each council person should maybe have a little section of that newsletter or at least be shown how to have an e-mail newsletter from each council ward.

That would solve a lot of problems at the city level because you could update people. You could offer solutions to neighborhood problems or answer whatever questions they have more quickly and rumors could be squelched.

I'll finish my democracy thoughts with this *very local* as journalism goes so goes democracy.

Right now we're on a very thin line that may cost us segments of democracy. Thank you very much

Kent Democracy Day – 10/4/2023

Speaker: Andrew Rome
Director, Haymaker Farmers' Market

Topic: Supporting local food

Hello, my name is Andrew Rome and I'm the Director of Haymaker Farmers' Market in Kent. I'd like to thank City Council and the organizers and advocates for Democracy Day in Kent for offering this opportunity to address local government officials about the issues that matter to the people right here in our community. Haymaker Farmers' Market does not work on the issue of big corporations influencing government – rather we're part of an alternative. Haymaker is a 501(c)3 federal non-profit, public charity whose mission is to connect producers and consumers of local food and agriculture in a vibrant and sustainable gathering place with direct access to food, agricultural and environmental education, and the arts. We see this "connection" between people in Kent as essential in our community – and focusing on these relationships is very different than a "big corporate" model that prioritizes profits over people. Customers at the Market can talk with their farmers and learn about how carefully they steward the land, and then customers make the choice to pay a slightly higher price at the market because they see those dollars reinvested in our community and they know that farmers deserve to be paid fairly for their work. Or maybe they just love delicious food.

Our model that focuses on local foods and local people has been working. In 2022, Haymaker Farmers' Market saw our highest ever customer attendance, with over 39,000 people counted at our year-round markets. Last year we saw a dramatic increase in the food assistance distributed through Haymaker, with over \$90,000 of local foods provided to local people who need them, with our food producers paid fairly for their work. Everyone deserves healthy, fresh, local food. We also saw the highest ever sales, with over \$800,000 of vendor sales in 2022, based on weekly vendor survey results. I think that is just an incredible sales figure, especially given that the Market is only open 3-4 hours per week. The numbers are important to show success – but the real goal is the kind of community we want to create in Kent. It's a great time of year to come to Market – come and see for yourself, bring a friend. This is Kent we want to showcase.

I want to again thank City Council and the City of Kent, for the chance to speak today and for supporting Haymaker Farmers' Market. Other than staffing, our two biggest expenses are rent and music – and the city helps with both. As a year-round Market we move indoors in Winter and rent a church hall for the

season. The 8 months that Haymaker sets up on Franklin Ave. in downtown Kent use the parking lot that the city maintains and leases to Haymaker for \$1 per year. Thank you for that support and that recognition of the value that we bring to downtown and to our city. Haymaker also plans a free, public concert at the Market, every week of the year – supporting local musicians and making local food a celebration. The city’s “Celebrate Kent!” grant program has funded our downtown concert series since 2011 – thank you. I think Haymaker Farmers’ Market is a great example of the kind of positive community that comes from government working for the interests of local people, rather than the interests of big corporations, and I’m proud to be here serving Kent with you. Thank you.

A graphic for the Ohio Total Solar Eclipse. It features a black background with a series of yellow crescent shapes representing the moon's path across the sun. In the center, a total eclipse is shown as a black circle with a bright white ring of light. On the left, the text 'Ohio' is in a large, white, sans-serif font, with 'TOTAL SOLAR ECLIPSE' in a smaller, white, sans-serif font below it. Below that, 'APRIL 8, 2024' is written in a small, white, sans-serif font. Further down, 'Ohio Total Solar Eclipse' is written in a large, white, sans-serif font. At the bottom left, 'April 8th, 2024. Come early, stay late.' is written in a small, white, sans-serif font.

Ohio
TOTAL SOLAR ECLIPSE
APRIL 8, 2024

**Ohio Total Solar
Eclipse**

April 8th, 2024. Come early, stay late.

**2024 Solar
Eclipse**

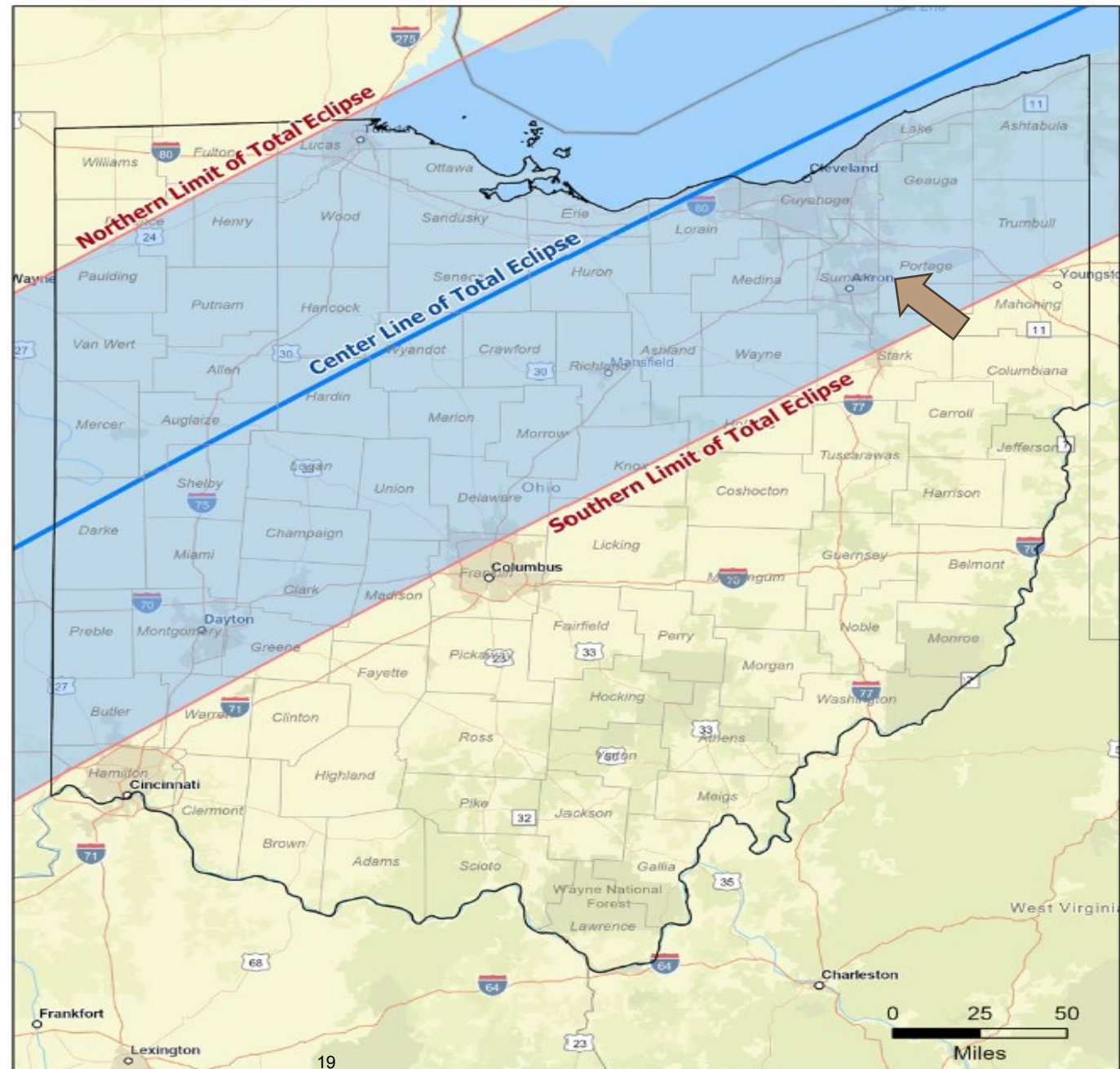
INFORMATION FOR
KENT CITY COUNCIL MEMBERS

OCTOBER 6, 2023

JOAN C. SEIDEL
HEALTH COMMISSIONER

2024 Total Solar Eclipse Path Through Ohio

Areas of Ohio outside of this 124-mile path will experience a partial viewing.



A few facts

- 187 days Away!
- Last Total Eclipse in Ohio was in 1806
- Next Solar Eclipse will be in 2099
- Totality occurs between 1200 and 1600 hours on April 8, 2024
- Maximum eclipse 1417, for Kent 1513 (~3minutes)
- Wider path, Longer duration, Greater population in path (70% of the US population lives within a one-day drive of totality), and more awareness than the eclipse in 2017



It's so far away...

But it will be here before we know it!

- Kent Chamber of Commerce and MSK are planning an exciting group of activities for April 5-8th
- Ohio has been planning for 18 months
- City of Kent meeting to discuss safety & logistics – as with any event



Basic information sources

[Solar Eclipse 2024 | Ohio Department of Natural Resources \(ohiodnr.gov\)](#)

[Ohio Total Solar Eclipse | Emergency Management Agency](#)

[Total Eclipse Festival 2024 | Great Lakes Science Center \(greatscience.com\)](#)

More information on Kent plans will follow when confirmed

