



City of Kent
Wednesday, May 1, 2024
City Council Committee Meetings
320 S. Depeyster Street, Kent, OH 44240

MINUTES

Present: Mr. Jack Amrhein, Ms. Melissa Celko, Mr. Jeff Clapper, Mr. Michael DeLeone, Mr. Chris Hook, Ms. Gwen Rosenberg, Ms. Heidi Shaffer Bish, 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. Rhonda Hall, Budget and Finance Director; Mr. Nick Shearer, Chief of Police; Mr. Jamie Samels, Fire Chief; Ms. Dominique Bollenbacher, Community Engagement Coordinator; Ms. Angela Manley, Parks and Recreation Director; Ms. Karen Magiavy, Parks and Recreation; Mr. Oliver Wuensch, Marketing and Special Events; Ms. Megan Johns, Recreation Supervisor; Ms. Amy Wilkens, Clerk of Council

Committee of the Whole

Mayor Fiala opened the Committee of the Whole meeting at 7:27 p.m.

Parks and Recreation Update

Ms. Angela Manley, Parks and Recreation Director, introduced the Kent Parks and Recreation master plan for the next 10 years, emphasizing that it's long overdue since the last plan was in 1995. She reviewed the extensive process of collecting community input through meetings, focus groups, surveys, and open houses involving key stakeholders like City Council members, Park Board staff, Kent City Schools representatives, Kent State University members, and parents of participants. The master plan, developed with the assistance of Brandsetter Carol, spans over 400 pages, but she offered a condensed version for the presentation. Keith Rodenhauser from Brandsetter Carol then presented the condensed highlights of the master plan, expressing appreciation for Angela and her staff's cooperation throughout the process.

Mr. Keith Rodenhauser went through his PowerPoint presentation (**Attachment #1**). Mr. Rodenhauser's presentation outlined the purpose of the Parks and Recreation master plan, emphasizing the need for alignment with community desires, addressing service gaps, and ensuring fiscal responsibility. He highlighted the importance of community involvement and outlines the four-phase process of creating the plan, including learning about the community, engaging with stakeholders, and formulating a vision for the future.

Key findings from the plan include the current state of park services, facilities, staffing, and budgets compared to benchmark communities. Community feedback indicates a desire for improved connectivity, more amenities like pickleball courts and dog parks, and enhanced programming for all ages. The plan proposes various recommendations, such as upgrading

existing facilities, adding new amenities, improving accessibility, and increasing engagement and marketing efforts.

To achieve these goals, Mr. Rodenhauser suggested strategies like maintaining sufficient staffing, fostering partnerships, exploring funding options like bonds, and implementing an action plan with clear priorities and timelines. The presentation concludes with an executive summary and an action plan for implementation.

Mayor Fiala asked if there were any questions from City Council.

Ms. Shaffer Bish commended the effort put into the master plan and acknowledged the extensive community participation. She raised a question about the potential redundancy of offering more music and community activities, considering the vibrant downtown scene. Mr. Rodenhauser explained that while there might be some overlap, there are opportunities to offer different types of events at different times and locations. He emphasized the possibility of larger events and daytime activities in parks, complementing the downtown offerings without duplicating them. Heidi agreed, suggesting that both types of events could coexist and complement each other without redundancy.

During the discussion, Mr. Sidoti addressed the issue of staffing limitations and how bond dollars cannot be used for staffing. He mentioned potential funding sources such as the general fund, sponsorships, program fees, and increased rental fees.

Mr. Hook asked about exploring partnerships with Kent State University for access to the university recreation center at subsidized rates for residents.

There was agreement that ongoing updates to the council on the progress of the plan implementation would be valuable.

Mr. Sidoti emphasized the fiduciary role of the council regarding parks and recreation, suggesting that further discussion on funding and the role of parks in the community is warranted.

Ms. Shaffer Bish also highlighted the need for strategic planning based on community needs and available resources.

Mr. Sidoti emphasized the importance of recognizing the council's responsibility for parks and recreation as outlined in the city charter.

Finally, Mayor Fiala concluded the discussion, thanking everyone for the update on the parks and recreation plan.

City/KSU Partnership Update

Dr. Dana Lawless- Andric from Kent State University introduced herself to the new members of council. She began her overview of all the activities currently going on at Kent State University. She provided an update to the city council on various activities at Kent State University and the collaboration between the university and the town. She mentioned the Flash Fest, an event aimed at graduating seniors to ensure they know Kent State and the city is always their home. The fest featured attractions like a ferris wheel. She also highlighted recent events like the chief's retirement after 42 years of service, May 4th events including a conference on democracy and civic engagement, and various construction projects on campus. Dr. Lawless- Andric discussed challenges facing higher education, including fiscal constraints and the need for strategic planning. She also mentioned initiatives to support local businesses and efforts to prepare for potential protests on May 4th. The university has implemented policies to balance freedom of speech with safety, with collaboration between university and safety forces to ensure preparedness.

Ms. Celko expressed gratitude to Dr. Lawless- Andric for her efforts in keeping the university and the city connected and informed. Having worked in both student affairs and technology monitoring, she highlighted the role of student affairs directors in expanding the safety forces' eyes and ears. She emphasized the importance of safety and openness as key objectives for a public institution like Kent State University.

New City Hall Construction Update

Ms. Melanie Baker provided updates on the progress of the new city hall construction. She mentioned the closure of Franklin Street starting the first Saturday of May due to increased downtown activity related to university finals and graduation.

The building construction is progressing well, with power washing completed on the exterior. The elevator is scheduled to be delivered soon, addressing previous delays. While the windows and glass installation have faced temperature-related delays, the lightweight stone installation on the exterior is almost complete. Site work is set to begin in June, with completion expected by the end of the month. Melanie expressed dissatisfaction with the tentative schedule provided and scheduled a meeting to discuss it further. She proposed a walk through for council members in June to view the progress firsthand, particularly focusing on the almost-finished council chambers. Finally, she addressed a question about the appearance of one pane of glass, suggesting it may be due to sunlight or perspective, and promised to investigate further.

Streets, Sidewalks & Utilities Committee

At 8:30 pm, Mayor Fiala said he would like a motion to move the Streets, Sidewalks and Utilities Committee Meeting to the second on the agenda.

MOTION TO AMEND THE AGENDA AND MOVE STREETS, SIDEWALKS & UTILITIES COMMITTEE UP NEXT MADE BY Mr. Chris Hook, **SECONDED** by Michael DeLeone and **CARRIED** by a voice vote of 9-0-0.

Semi Truck Parking in Neighborhoods

Ms. Hope Jones, the Law Director, led a discussion regarding a complaint about a semi-truck parking in a residential neighborhood. The initial problem involved a driver parking just the tractor in his driveway, causing disturbances due to idling. The proposed ordinance would prohibit parking commercial tractors, trailers, or semi-trailers on public or private property adjacent to residential areas, addressing the specific issue raised. Concerns were raised about defining the vehicles covered by the ordinance, with suggestions to focus on semi-trucks initially and address other vehicles later if needed. The discussion also touched on weight classifications and potential unintended consequences. Ultimately, the focus remained on addressing the immediate problem while leaving room for adjustments in the future. Public feedback highlighted the impact on quality of life and the need for a focused approach to address the specific issue at hand.

MOTION TO APPROVE CHANGES PRESENTED TO NOT ALLOW SEMI TRUCKS TO PARK IN NEIGHBORHOODS MADE BY Mr. Robin Turner, **SECONDED** by Mr. Jack Amrhein and **CARRIED** by a voice vote of 9-0-0.

Community Development Committee

Chair Rosenberg opened the Community Development Committee meeting at 8:52 PM.

Continuation of Davey Tree Enterprise Zone Agreement

Ms. Bridget Susel discussed the Enterprise Zone agreement with Davey Tree, explaining its purpose to provide tax exemptions for significant investments in real property by companies committing to payroll and employment. The agreement with Davey, initiated in 2021 for their expansion, has seen them exceed their payroll commitment and steadily increase employment. As per Ohio Revised Code, the Tax Incentive Review Council annually reviews and votes on Enterprise Zones, with the city's representatives involved. Bridget requested Council's affirmation of the recommendation to continue the Enterprise Zone agreement with Davey Tree, seeking approval with emergency status.

There were no questions from Council or the public.

MOTION TO APPROVE THE CONTINUATION OF DAVEY TREE ENTERPRISE ZONE AGREEMENT MADE BY Ms. Heidi Shaffer Bish, **SECONDED** by Mr. Jeff Clapper and **CARRIED** by a voice vote of 9-0-0.

Finance Committee

Chair DeLeone opened the Finance Committee meeting at 8:55 p.m.

Proposed Operating Levy Renewal

Ms. Rhonda Hall introduced the topic to Council with the discussion revolving around renewing a 1.16 general fund Levy, set to expire, with the goal of getting it passed in the upcoming November election. The renewal brings in approximately \$340,000, while a replacement Levy would generate around \$570,000, albeit with higher costs for residents. The recommendation was to opt for renewal rather than replacement. Concerns were raised about tying the Levy to specific operations, like Parks and Recreation, but it was deemed premature as the latter wasn't fully ready, allowing for future consideration.

MOTION TO APPROVE PROPOSED OPERATING LEVY RENEWAL MADE BY Ms. Gwen Rosenberg, **SECONDED** by Mr. Roger Sidoti and **CARRIED** by a voice vote of 9-0-0.

Permission to Create New Funds

Ms. Hall said the Health Department receives a lot of Federal Grant money and it would be easier to manage. Two new funds are proposed: a Health Department Fund and a Bonds and Deposits Fund. The Health Department Fund aims to streamline federal funding received by the Health Department by creating a separate special revenue fund, facilitating clearer tracking of funds. The Bonds and Deposits Fund is intended to comply with governmental accounting standards, specifically related to fiduciary funds like agency funds. This fund would separate deposits and bonds from agency funds for better financial reporting. Approval from both the council and the State Auditor's office is required for these funds.

MOTION TO APPROVE THE CREATION OF TWO NEW FUNDS MADE BY Ms. Heidi Shaffer Bish, **SECONDED** by Mr. Chris Hook and **CARRIED** by a voice vote of 9-0-0.

Budget Appropriation Amendment

The final item on the agenda is an Appropriation Amendment request, the second of the year. While it's described as light, there's a list of proposed amendments available for review. If there are any questions regarding these amendments, she asked for questions or

comments.

There were no comments or questions from Council or the public.

MOTION TO APPROVE BUDGET APPROPRIATION AMENDMENT MADE BY Mr. Jack Amrhein, **SECONDED** by Ms. Gwen Rosenberg and **CARRIED** by a voice vote of 9-0-0.

Hearing no further business, the meeting adjourned at 9:05 p.m.

Amy Wilkens, CMC
Clerk of Council

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