



CITY OF KENT, OHIO

CITY COUNCIL ■ 320 S. DEPEYSTER STREET ■ KENT, OHIO 44240 ■ 330-678-8007

Committee of the Whole Meeting Wednesday, August 4, 2021

Mayor Fiala called the Committee of the Whole of Kent City Council to order at 7:13 p.m.

PRESENT: Mr. Jack Amrhein; Mr. Michael DeLeone; Mr. Garret Ferrara; Mr. John Kuhar; Ms. Gwen Rosenberg; Ms. Heidi Shaffer Bish; Mr. Roger Sidoti; Ms. 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; Ms. Bridget Susel, Community Development Director; Mr. Jim Bowling, City Engineer; Ms. Joan Seidel, Health Commissioner; Ms. Rhonda Hall, Budget and Finance Director; Mr. Gary Bishop, IT Manager; Ms. Angela Manley, Parks and Recreation Director; Mr. Nick Shearer, Chief of Police; Mr. Bill Myers, Fire Chief; Ms. Amy Wilkens, Clerk of Council

ABSENT: Mr. Robin Turner

There was one (1) item on the Agenda.

1) State Representative Gail Pavliga

Mayor Fiala introduced State Representative Gail Pavliga to the audience and welcomed her to the meeting.

Dr. Gail Pavliga, from Atwater Ohio, addressed City Council and said it has been her mission to learn how the communities in her district work and to get to know everyone. The 75th District goes into Streetsboro, Brimfield, and extends into Palmyra. She is here to give Council an update on bills she is working on.

She continued by reviewing eight bills that are in the works. She has been working on the following:

- 1) Presented a bill to honor a fallen hero and have a highway dedicated in his name
- 2) Working on the issue of opioid addiction; Working on Bill 193 to require certain prescriptions be sent electronically
- 3) Working with Judge Smith regarding juvenile courts on Bill 226 which gives protection for Guardian Ad Litem and CASA (Court Appointed Special Advocates) workers

- 4) Looking at Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) and how to cut back on trauma
- 5) She is working on implementing a 988-call hotline for mental health, addiction and overdoes situations. This is to help in certain situations where a hospital visit is not needed.
- 6) Higher education- passing a bill allowing for school district to decide if they want to rate AP classes higher than College Credit Plus which, she added, is a huge drain on local school district budgets.
- 7) Working on a rehabilitation program to help at juvenile court and recidivism in teens.
- 8) She has fought for Health Department to remain in Kent.

Ms. Wallach asked if she is going to support the income tax bill for those working from home. Dr. Pavliga said the bill is still in the Senate and is looking at a specific time period. Ms. Wallach asked if she would vote for this to be permanent and Dr. Pavliga said that is not in the discussion. She said it would need to be reviewed in each situation.

Ms. Wallach asked if Dr. Pavliga supports the bill that does not allow businesses to require vaccinations if they want to. Dr. Pavliga said Ms. Wallach is referring to HB 248 which is a very vast bill that has been continually changing. She said until she sees the final language of the bill as it comes out on the house floor, she keeps an open mind about things. Ms. Wallach asked if Kent State could still require students and staff to get vaccinated. Dr. Pavliga said she did not believe so, that it would become a constitutional issue.

Dr. Pavliga encouraged those who wanted to continue a discussion on issues to visit her at Honey Baked Ham on August 25, 2021 and to email rep75@ohiohouse.gov to make a reservation.

There were no questions from City Council members and no questions from the public.

Seeing no further business, the Committee of the Whole adjourned at 7:31 p.m.

Amy Wilkens
Clerk of Council

ACTION RECOMMENDED:

- 1) None

Council Committee Meeting
Committee of the Whole
August 4, 2021



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Community Development Committee Meeting Wednesday, August 4, 2021

Chair Kuhar called the Community Development Committee of Kent City Council to order at 7:31p.m.

PRESENT: Mr. Jack Amrhein; Mr. Michael DeLeone; Mr. Garret Ferrara; Mr. John Kuhar; Ms. Gwen Rosenberg; Ms. Heidi Shaffer Bish; Mr. Roger Sidoti; Ms. 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; Ms. Bridget Susel, Community Development Director; Mr. Jim Bowling, City Engineer; Ms. Joan Seidel, Health Commissioner; Ms. Rhonda Hall, Budget and Finance Director; Mr. Gary Bishop, IT Manager; Ms. Angela Manley, Parks and Recreation Director; Mr. Nick Shearer, Chief of Police; Mr. Bill Myers, Fire Chief; Ms. Amy Wilkens, Clerk of Council

ABSENT: Mr. Robin Turner

There was one (1) item on the Agenda.

1) Shared Sign Approval for Portage Hike & Bike Trail

Chair Kuhar introduced Ms. Bridget Susel, Community Development Director, to address the topic of tonight's discussion.

Ms. Susel said the owners of the property of 315 Gougler have constructed a sign but it is located on a municipal lot. Since it is a private sign on a public lot it posed a bit of a challenge. The owners approached the City to do a public/private shared use sign that would allow advertisement of the business and the Bike and Hike Trail. It is outside the purview of the Architectural Review Board but it seemed like a circumstance that Council should authorize.

Ms. Rosenberg asked the reason why it was before Council. Ms. Susel said they have never had a situation as this and has not seen any instance of this occurring before in the City, so it seemed the best way to handle the situation.

Mr. Sidoti asked about funding and Ms. Susel confirmed the business is paying for the sign.

There were no further questions from City Council members and no questions from the public.

MOTION TO APPROVE THE SHARED SIGN made by Ms. Shaffer Bish **SECONDED** by Ms. Rosenberg and **CARRIED** by a voice vote of 8-0-0.

Seeing no further business, the Community Development Committee Meeting adjourned at 7:36 p.m.

Amy Wilkens
Clerk of Council

ACTION RECOMMENDED:

- 1) Approve the private/public sign proposal for the Portage Hike and Bike trailhead and the ONUS water bottling plant on Gougler Avenue.



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Health and Safety Committee Meeting Wednesday, August 4, 2021

Chair Amrhein called the Health and Public Safety Committee of Kent City Council to order at 7:36 p.m.

PRESENT: Mr. Jack Amrhein; Mr. Michael DeLeone; Mr. Garret Ferrara; Mr. John Kuhar; Ms. Gwen Rosenberg; Ms. Heidi Shaffer Bish; Mr. Roger Sidoti; Ms. 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; Ms. Bridget Susel, Community Development Director; Mr. Jim Bowling, City Engineer; Ms. Joan Seidel, Health Commissioner; Ms. Rhonda Hall, Budget and Finance Director; Mr. Gary Bishop, IT Manager; Ms. Angela Manley, Parks and Recreation Director; Mr. Nick Shearer, Chief of Police; Mr. Bill Myers, Fire Chief; Ms. Amy Wilkens, Clerk of Council

ABSENT: Mr. Robin Turner

There was one (1) item on the Agenda.

1) Kent Police Department Update

Chair Amrhein introduced Police Chief, Nicholas Shearer to address the topic of tonight's discussion.

Chief Shearer thanked City Council for the opportunity to speak this evening and provide an update. He has been in his position for year and the past year has been a little different than expected. Some of what he wanted to accomplish was interrupted a little by the COVID pandemic but added it is important to speak about some things they have accomplished.

A big accomplishment this past year has been updating their Policies and Procedures, contracting with Lexipol, which is the largest policy writing company for city governments. Lexipol researches best practices working with the Ohio Collaborative, the Attorney General's Office and many other professional organizations around the country to get the best industry standard. Kent Police have worked to convert all policies to this new system, one by one, which was quite an undertaking. This process helped refine procedures in

the department and resulted in changes. All of the policies and procedures have been moved to the website which helps with transparency.

Lexipol also provides Daily Training Bulletins which are scenario-based testing of officer knowledge on policies. There are thirty of these distributed per month. Every time a policy is issued or updated, officers are now required to read and sign them. Lexipol tracks the log in, and that the officer looked at it and checked and signed they have read it.

Chief Shearer continued by highlighting another goal of youth engagement. The School Resource Office is very helpful at the middle and high school age, but they struggle with engagement at a younger age. A goal is to reach out to younger children. There are now community engagement officers on every shift. Outreach has begun in Elementary Schools, working with principals and teachers to have police come into the classroom, working them into different lessons and teaching points. They have also gotten involved in the Parks and Recreations Summer Day Camps, playing sport with those enrolled. They are also working on a program called The Police Explorer Program which is through the Boy Scouts, using career surveys to match up those with the skill set in law enforcement.

He transitioned to talking about body camera usage, which officers are embracing. They believe it is a tool to protect them. They selected a vendor, have a product list and quote. They will purchase the equipment but have been waiting on a body cam grant program. Chief Shearer has submitted a Federal Grant Application for \$83,000. If they are awarded this grant they will be ready to go.

Chief Shearer highlighted training that has been occurring. He said there is a huge discrepancy in police training, even within the State of Ohio. The State requires a police candidate complete a Police Academy, conduct annual firearms qualification and when promoted to Chief there is a one-week training. The police academy is 600 hours of training. The City of Kent then requires every new officer to go through a field training program, regardless of their past experience. This program is sixteen weeks. Veteran officers can struggle with this program but come to realize they have to change mentality and embrace training. There is also a forty-hour annual in service training every year which cover firearms, use of force, defensive tactics, taser training, de-escalation training, scenario-based training and investigations. This year, Kent has the highest percentage of CIT (Crisis Intervention Team) trained officers of any department in the County. Promotions also require supervisor training and a newly promoted sergeant to go through a two-and-a-half-week management/leadership course. These training programs focus on leadership, management and are reading and writing intensive. The State of Ohio laid off police officer trainers last year and Chief Shearer is now on a state-wide Committee on training programs.

Ms. Shaffer Bish asked how officers have been trained in cultivating a deeper cultural sensitivity in officers. Chief Shearer said they are in discussions with Kent State who is

working on a training program specific to law enforcement on cultural competencies. Once the course is developed, Kent Police Officers will be attending the course. He added Lieutenant Lewis and the Chief have met on a regular basis with Black United Students, community members, NAACP and also the CCC- Collaborative Community Coalition.

Mr. Ferrara asked what they could do to help dispel rumors that not much is changing. Chief Shearer said communicating what is being done is important. Platforms such as Council meetings and building relationships throughout the community is vitally important.

There were no further questions from City Council members and no questions from the public.

Seeing no further business, the Health and Public Safety Committee Meeting adjourned at 8:03 p.m.

Amy Wilkens
Clerk of Council

ACTION RECOMMENDED:

- 1) None



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Streets, Sidewalks and Utilities Committee Meeting Wednesday, August 4, 2021

Chair Sidoti called the Streets, Sidewalks and Utilities Committee of Kent City Council to order at 8:03 p.m.

PRESENT: Mr. Jack Amrhein; Mr. Michael DeLeone; Mr. Garret Ferrara; Mr. John Kuhar; Ms. Gwen Rosenberg; Ms. Heidi Shaffer Bish; Mr. Roger Sidoti; Ms. 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; Ms. Bridget Susel, Community Development Director; Mr. Jim Bowling, City Engineer; Ms. Joan Seidel, Health Commissioner; Ms. Rhonda Hall, Budget and Finance Director; Mr. Gary Bishop, IT Manager; Ms. Angela Manley, Parks and Recreation Director; Mr. Nick Shearer, Chief of Police; Mr. Bill Myers, Fire Chief; Ms. Amy Wilkens, Clerk of Council

ABSENT: Mr. Robin Turner

There were five (5) items on the Agenda.

1) **Proposed County Recycling Service Changes**

Chair Sidoti introduced Ms. Melanie Baker to speak to Council on behalf of the agenda item on changes to recycling services. Ms. Baker introduced Mr. Bill Steiner from Portage County Recycling. There has been a list of issues that have affected this industry and Mr. Steiner approached the City requesting collection be changed from weekly recycling to every other week.

Mr. Steiner said his industry is struggling finding qualified workers. They have been hit over the past two years by the pandemic by removing a lot of workers out of the work force who have not returned. They are getting many short notice resignations due to people leaving for higher pay and better benefits. They are down 50% of their drivers.

He added they are hoping to make this request a temporary change and nothing permanent. Drivers right now are working 60+ hours a week. By changing to every other week service, the rate will be adjusted accordingly.

Mr. Kuhar asked if by going to every other week it will help get the job done, reduce vehicle maintenance and the cost will be reduced to the citizens. Mr. Steiner said that was correct. They still want to provide the service and the main drive behind this change is the safety of the drivers. They cannot continue to work week after week for more than 60 + hours. A discussion continued on how the routes would be distributed and work load reduced for drivers throughout the county. These changes are needed as soon as possible and they will work hard to get the word out to residents. He added that hiring and training of new drivers is time consuming.

Ms. Shaffer Bish asked about duplexes and student households which is a concern, and asked if there are extra containers. Mr. Steiner said there are very few extra containers, but each side of a duplex gets its own container. They are also working on educating customers on contamination by placing stickers on the outside of containers.

Mr. Ferrara asked if the cost will be reduced. Mr. Steiner confirmed this.

Ms. Baker interrupted voting and stated there is no request for approval and authorization and has received good information on how she should move forward, which will require an amendment to the contract. Ms. Baker would like to make sure they have all of the changes in writing and available for Council review.

Mr. Sidoti asked if this would be before Council in two weeks (at the Regular Council Meeting). She said she would try to but it has a few steps to go through.

Mr. Ferrara added the last time they did this, they ran into problems with billing and cost and said the more definitive information that could be given to residents would help everyone. He said if service is cut in half, people are going to expect their bill to be cut in half.

Ms. Wallach asked if phones could be used to notified residents. Ms. Baker said phones, billboard, social media and a note in the utility bill will all be employed to get the message out.

Ms. Shaffer Bish asked about moving out of committee and the next steps. Ms. Jones said it can be brought forward as an unauthorized piece of legislation if it is ready by next week.

2) **Oktoberfest Road Closure Request**

Mr. Wilke introduced Heather Malarcik from Main Street Kent and the topic of the road closure of September 25, 2021. The footprint of the road closure is different this year, not closing a portion of Franklin Ave, but adding Hometown Plaza to the railroad tracks. This will allow for a free stage versus a rented stage and allow for a third beer truck. This will also bring visibility to the event.

Ms. Wallach asked if residents will be notified sooner due to a main intersection being closed. Ms. Malarcik said they do a press release 45-60 days prior to events. Ms. Wallach asked if there are some way residents can be informed of this street closure. Mr. Wilke said he can work with Central Maintenance on signage.

Mayor Fiala asked if there is any concern with closing the street has any effect on Fire and Police. Ms. Malarcik said it will be completely accessible for Fire and Police to get through the area.

Mr. Kuhar said there really aren't any businesses other than bars that will be affected by this road closure. Mr. Wilke confirmed this is true.

MOTION TO APPROVE THE STREET CLOSURE FOR OKTOBERFEST made by Ms. Rosenberg, SECONDED by Ms. Heidi Shaffer Bish and CARRIED by a voice vote of 8-0-0.

3) **Oktoberfest DORA Suspension Request**

Mr. Wilke is before Council to make a request to suspend the Designated Outdoor Refreshment Area (DORA) on the night of Oktoberfest. Mr. Wilke informed City Council they have the authority to make changes to the terms of the DORA at any time. This request is being made for fundraising event for Main Street Kent who has been tremendously affected from the COVID Pandemic. They are counting on this event to offset losses experienced over the past year and a half. A twist to the request has been added though as Mr. Wilke said he got a phone call from the Kent Hotel and Conference Center regarding an event being held the same day as Oktoberfest. They were planning on having an outdoor tent to serve alcohol beverages as DORA drinks. Due to this, they are modifying the request to suspend the DORA for the downtown area except for the Hotel property.

Mr. Kuhar said it did not make sense to be bringing in beer trucks for an event but then tell local bar owners they cannot continue the DORA. Mr. Wilke said he reached out to a sampling of the bar owners who indicated their revenue has been higher on this day from the overflow of the event. They all expressed their appreciation of Main Street Kent and are willing to do this to make Main Street Kent stronger. Ms. Malarcik added there are three reasons for MSK events: 1) to support businesses 2) lift up community 3) to make money to continue doing their work. Mr. Wilke said many DORA communities in Ohio have this same clause for reasons just as this.

Mayor Fiala asked why the two cannot work together. He said the DORA was established to help the downtown businesses. He said he has spoken to downtown businesses and has been asked why they can't both occur together. He doesn't understand why they cannot work together and have both.

Ms. Malarcik added having DORA may affect sponsorship. She said it is not a matter of not working together, rather a matter of this being a fundraising event. Mayor Fiala said they are supposed to be helping each other but doesn't understand why a sponsor would pull out.

Ms. Malarcik said it is due to sponsors wanting exclusivity. Ms. Malarcik added the businesses that use the most DORA cups are the businesses on Franklin Ave.

Ms. Rosenberg asked if the DORA is not suspended, if Main Street Kent would lose the sponsor and the event completely. Ms. Malarcik responded that she is 90% sure they would not get the sponsor if they do not have exclusivity. Ms. Rosenberg asked if this event were to be cancelled if MSK would need to increase fees to businesses downtown or have the potential to have to come back to Council and ask for financial support. Ms. Malarcik said one fund raising event after a two-year hiatus will really help. Ms. Rosenberg asked if Oktoberfest is a very important fund-raising event for the future success of Main Street Kent which would ultimately help businesses. Ms. Malarcik and Tom Wilke said it would.

Ms. Shaffer Bish asked if the event gets crowded would it be too late to block off a portion of Franklin Avenue. Ms. Malarcik said it would be too late, as the liquor permit is based on the footprint which is due thirty days before the event. Ms. Shaffer Bish thanked them for expanding the footprint as she knows how popular the event is.

MOTION TO NOT SUSPEND THE DORA made by Mr. Ferrara SECONDED by Mr. DeLeone and CARRIED by a voice vote of 5-4, with the following members voting YES: Mr. Ferrara, Mr. Kuhar, Mr. DeLeone and Mr. Sidoti. Voting NO: Mr. Amrhein, Ms. Shaffer Bish, Ms. Wallach and Ms. Rosenberg. Due to the vote ending in a tie, Mayor Fiala cast the deciding vote in favor of the motion.

Council Comments:

Mr. Ferrara said he is the biggest supporter of Main Street Kent and the work Ms. Malarcik has done has been phenomenal but at the same time have to consider businesses and what they are going through. He thinks the two can coexist together and having extra beer stations will help with beer sales. He said there is a risk of more confusion and the animosity of downtown businesses and thinks it will work out fine.

Mr. DeLeone said he thinks people who come down for the DORA are going to come down for the DORA and the same for the Oktoberfest. He believes they can coexist together.

Mr. Amrhein said he is not thrilled with closing DORA but wants to support Main Street Kent.

Ms. Wallach is supporting closing DORA because businesses are willing to support this event.

Mr. Kuhar supports the motion on the floor. He said there will be beer trucks and crowds. It will give the festival more width. He doesn't think it will hurt Main Street Kent.

Ms. Rosenberg does not support the motion, as it jeopardizes the event happening at all. She is voting against the motion.

Ms. Shaffer Bish said she is really on the fence as the reason for DORA is for those to walk around and be safe during COVID. She is concerned about settling a precedent with other events. She is really concerned about Main Street Kent but wishes they could work together. She said if there is any reason this doesn't work out, they will need to evaluate this action. She is going to vote against the motion.

Mr. Ferrara said if it was so important to business owners, they should have come prepared with a list and signatures of people who are ok with this. They are trying to be the most efficient for the greatest number of businesses. He doesn't want to set a precedent.

After asking council members to vote again, Mayor Fiala said he understands both sides of the issue but is concerned about setting a precedent. He wondered if Council would be asked multiple times throughout the year to turn the DORA "on" or "off" like a light switch. He still thinks they can coexist and votes in favor of the motion.

4) **Updates to City Trash and Recycling Accounts**

Melanie Baker presented the amendments to Chapters 933, 935 and 936 of Kent Codified Ordinances, which addresses refuse, solid waste and recycling. The discrepancy was due to trash covering three or less in the household and recycling covering four or more, so there was confusion over who was covered. The multi family program will be continued to be monitored for future changes.

MOTION to APPROVE UPDATES TO CITY TRASH AND RECYCLING ACCOUNT made by Ms. Shaffer Bish SECONDED by Ms. Wallach and CARRIED by a voice vote of 8-0-0.

5) **Temporary Outdoor Ice Rink Agreement**

Ms. Melanie Baker and Mr. Jim Bowling presented to Council the Memorandum of Understanding with Kent State University for a temporary outdoor ice rink. The agreement establishes the responsibilities of both parties to make it happen. The major elements of

the agreement include Kent State running operations, a new electrical service, and KSU operating through the 2021-2022 season.

Mr. Kuhar asked who would pay for the electricity.

Mr. Bowling replied that the City of Kent and KSU would pay the electricity during hours of operation.

Mr. Kuhar asked approximately how much it would cost.

Mr. Bowling replied they are unsure of exact costs, as much of the cost will depend on the weather and how cold the winter is. The electric service would be exclusively for the chiller of the ice rink.

Ms. Shaffer Bish asked if Kent State will be renting out skates. Mr. Bowling said the plans for skate rental and food and beverages will all be handled by Kent State in its operating plan.

Mr. DeLeone asked if any sign approval is going to be needed. Mr. Bowling said it should not be an issue.

Mr. Kuhar asked about liability issues with injuries. Mr. Bowling said Kent State General Counsel is reviewing waivers people would sign to use the facility. Mr. Ruller added one of the first courses of action when deciding on this project was to reach out to Cuyahoga Falls and other communities with rinks. They said it is one of the most popular things that cities do all year and have worked through all of these issues. Ms. Jones said is anything happen that is so reckless of wanton on the City's part, there is always a possibility of law suits. She said they never had any issues with this in Cuyahoga Falls.

There were no further questions from City Council members and no questions from the public.

MOTION TO APPROVE THE MOU with KENT STATE UNIVERSITY FOR THE TEMPORARY ICE RINK made by Ms. Shaffer Bish **SECONDED** by Ms. Rosenberg and **CARRIED** by a voice vote of 8-0-0.

Ms. Shaffer Bish said this is a great partnership and she is very happy to see Kent State stepping up to do this and would like to do our part to make it happen. It will be a great amenity for residents and will draw people to visit.

Mr. Kuhar added that this will be a good thing as it will bring both young and old people downtown to have something fun to do.

Seeing no further business, the Streets, Sidewalks and Utilities Committee Meeting adjourned at 9:06 p.m.

Amy Wilkens
Clerk of Council

ACTION RECOMMENDED:

- 1) Authorize the amended street closure plan for Main Street Kent's Oktoberfest event.
- 2) Authorize the updates and clarification for City trash and recycling accounts.
- 3) Authorize the MOU with Kent State University for the community ice rink project.

DRAFT



CITY OF KENT, OHIO

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Finance Committee Meeting Wednesday, August 4, 2021

Chair DeLeone called the Finance Committee of Kent City Council to order at 9:06 p.m.

PRESENT: Mr. Jack Amrhein; Mr. Michael DeLeone; Mr. Garret Ferrara; Mr. John Kuhar; Ms. Gwen Rosenberg; Ms. Heidi Shaffer Bish; Mr. Roger Sidoti; Ms. 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; Ms. Bridget Susel, Community Development Director; Mr. Jim Bowling, City Engineer; Ms. Joan Seidel, Health Commissioner; Ms. Rhonda Hall, Budget and Finance Director; Mr. Gary Bishop, IT Manager; Ms. Angela Manley, Parks and Recreation Director; Mr. Nick Shearer, Chief of Police; Mr. Bill Myers, Fire Chief; Ms. Amy Wilkens, Clerk of Council

ABSENT: Mr. Robin Turner

There were six (6) items on the Agenda.

1) Council Review of Neighborhood Grant Funding

Ms. Susel approached the microphone to answer questions from Ms. Shaffer Bish and City Council regarding the Neighborhood Grant Program. She reviewed past funding and requirements of using the grant for block parties, which had only been utilized two times, once in 2014 and 2015. This grant was for reimbursement only. Ms. Susel said there have been fifteen block party road closures since 2014 and only one was funded through the grant.

Ms. Shaffer Bish asked if there was a window to apply for the grant. Ms. Susel replied that applications were taken on a rolling basis. The grant supported community enrichment programs such as neighborhood signage and trees. The neighborhood would need to define the project, develop a budget, get the required signatures to receive reimbursement. It was not getting a lot of buy in, so 2 years ago the program switched to assisting resident who cannot afford to comply with changes needed for code violations.

Ms. Shaffer Bish asked what it would take to bring the Neighborhood Grant Program back and wondered if it was not well utilized because it was not known about. Ms. Susel replied

it was promoted heavily but the problem seemed to be neighborhood buy in and the funding being on a reimbursement basis. Neighborhoods in the South End gave feedback saying the grant program was difficult to use and have gone to a strictly volunteer/potluck model of event.

Mr. Sidoti asked what year the grant program began and Ms. Susel replied "2014". It ran through 2018 when it transitioned to being a program to help low income households with code enforcement issues. It took affect in 2020 but due to COVID, there were no code enforcement issues.

Mr. Sidoti asked how neighborhoods were defined. Ms. Susel said the neighborhood had to define themselves. The petition would need to be signed by 70 % of the residents in the area defined.

Mr. Kuhar said he approached residents on his street to place a sign and thought the residents were required to participate in its construction. Ms. Susel replied that the Neighborhood Grant program only required buy in, pricing and proof of payment to receive reimbursement.

Ms. Shaffer Bish asked if the program was changed due to being underutilized. Ms. Susel said that is the reason as many people were under the impression they would receive a check up front, but instead they were required to invest time in petitioning, estimates and paying up front.

Ms. Shaffer Bish asked if there is any program to assist with defining neighborhoods with signage. Ms. Susel said there currently is not due to the changes made to the program, but Council could change it back if they wish. Ms. Susel said two homeowners have been working to use the fund for code violations in 2021. She would like some of the funding to remain in use for code violations as there is a need.

Ms. Shaffer Bish said street festivals are a draw and asked if this Neighborhood Grant program could be made flexible to accommodate requests from the community and this tool would be available to use.

Ms. Susel said options would be to either switch the program back to its previous setup or a portion allotted for community enrichment and a portion for code enforcement.

Ms. Wallach asked if the program be expanded to cover both. Ms. Susel said that right now it is only approved for code enforcement. She said if tonight a change is requested, Ms. Susel would like to review the details.

Mr. Sidoti suggested splitting the funding between the two for a specific amount of time. Ms. Susel said she would consider this and could be updated in 2021 and run through 2022. He asked if 50% of the money be used for one portion and 50% to the other. Ms.

Susel said she believes this seems reasonable but would appreciate flexibility of managing as it is needed. Ms. Susel clarified in response to a question posed by Ms. Rosenberg that it will be important to define the split of funding to make sure there be enough funding in each.

Mayor Fiala said his neighborhood has block parties and the only thing that is asked for is road closures. He does not understand why funding is needed for these parties. Mr. Sidoti said he was inspired by the activities in the South End with its signage and Community Garden and believes this could inspire other areas in the City to follow suit.

MOTION TO BRING BACK COMMUNITY ENHANCEMENT/ENGAGEMENT TO THE NEIGHBORHOOD GRANT PROGRAM AND DIVIDE IT 50/50 WITH CODE VIOLATION ASSISTANCE THROUGH 2022 made by Ms. Shaffer Bish SECONDED by Mr. Sidoti and CARRIED by a voice vote of 8-0-0.

2) Renewal of the School Resource Officer Position

Chief Shearer requested renewal of the contract with Kent City Schools for the School Resource Officer. The terms of the contract have been discussed and the only change from last year's contract are the dates.

Mr. Sidoti asked if the officers have been selected. Chief Shearer said it would be the same officers.

Mr. Kuhar asked if Federal money has been given for this program. Chief Shearer is not aware if this is the case. Mr. Ruller confirmed this.

MOTION TO APPROVE RENEWAL of the SCHOOL RESOURCE OFFICER POSITION made by Mr. Kuhar SECONDED by Mr. Amrhein and CARRIED by a voice vote of 8-0-0.

3) Certified Liens to the County for Outstanding Payments

Ms. Rhonda Hall referenced the list of debtors being released to Portage County for utilities, unpaid concrete sidewalk repair bills and non-utility debtors.

MOTION to CERTIFY LIENS TO THE COUNTY FOR OUTSTANDING PAYMENTS MADE by Ms. Rosenberg SECONDED by Mr. Amrhein and CARRIED by a voice vote of 7-0-1 with Mr. Kuhar abstaining.

4) Release of EDA's Federal Interest in EDA Revolving Loan Fund

Mr. Wilke referenced the memo to the City Manager in regards to the release of EDA's Federal interest in the EDA Revolving Loan Fund. The government passed the

Reinventing Lending for the Future Act which allows cities to request the release of the federal interest, relinquishing administrative oversight to the city. The City RLF Committee voted unanimously to recommend to City Council the release from this program. Records would still need to be kept in the same fashion they currently are for auditing purposes.

MOVE TO ALLOW CITY TO SUBMIT A REQUEST TO RELEASE THE EDA FEDERAL INTEREST IN THE EDA REVOLVING LOAN FUND made by Mr. Sidoti SECONDED BY Ms. Rosenberg AND CARRIED by a voice vote of 8-0-0.

5) Amendments to the City's EDA RLF Plan

Mr. Wilke said staff has reviewed the current RLF Plan and developed three amendments they would like to make to the RLF Plan which include: raising allowable amount of loan from \$10,000 to \$25,000, allowing jobs to be retained by owner or a tenant of the owner, and formalizing interest only payments during economic hardships for up to six months. The City RLF Committee voted unanimously to recommend to City Council these amendments

MOVE TO APPROVE AMENDMENT TO THE CITY'S EDA RLF PLAN MADE BY Mr. Amrhein SECONDED BY Ms. Rosenberg and CARRIED by a voice vote of 8-0-0.

6) Budget Appropriation Amendment

Ms. Rhonda Hall introduced the fourth budget appropriation amendment for the year.

MOTION TO APPROVE THE BUDGET APPROPRIATION AMENDMENT MADE BY Ms. Rosenberg SECONDED BY Mr. Amrhein and CARRIED by a voice vote of 8-0-0.

There were no questions from City Council members and no questions from the public.

Seeing no further business, the Finance Committee Meeting adjourned at 10:00 p.m.

Mayor Fiala announce the Executive Session will be moved to August 18, 2021.

Amy Wilkens
Clerk of Council

ACTION RECOMMENDED:

- 1) Approve community enhancement usage in the Neighborhood Grant program and authorize dividing the funding amount 50% between the subset of community Enhancement and assisting with code violations until end of 2022.
- 2) Authorize the renewal of the School Resource Officer position.
- 3) Certify and authorize the submission of the proposed property tax liens to Portage County.
- 4) Authorize the release and repurposing of the Federal interest in the City's revolving loan fund.
- 5) Approve the proposed RLF Plan Amendments.
- 6) Approve the 2021 budget appropriations amendments.

DRAFT