

January 16, 2009



Finance Committee Items

1. Portage Area Fire and EMS Research Study Committee

For the last 18 months Bill Lillich and Fire Chief Williams have been working with neighboring Fire departments to review opportunities to reduce redundant fire services, save money, and improve fire service capabilities through possible collaborative programs. You may recall that this fire service study group applied for state funds to finance a more detailed analysis of collaborative opportunities last year. Unfortunately the grant was not awarded so the individual fire departments are now proposing to pool their resources to fund the study using local funds. Chief Williams reports that the proposed study is estimated at \$61,000 with the City of Kent contribution likely to be between \$25,000 and \$30,000. (attachments)

Administrative Recommendation

The City has been a strong advocate for exploring collaborations that create opportunities to save money and improve services, and fire services are one of the leading candidates for consideration. The staff and I recognize that given the state of our finances any unplanned expenditure has to be reviewed very carefully. We believe that this is an important investment and we are not asking to increase the budget to fund it; we will find a way to re-allocate dollars within our existing budget to pay the City's share. I would encourage Council's support of this project.

Council Action

Authorize staff to proceed with a regionally collaborative fire services study.

Unauthorized Items

1. Vacancy Appointments

Council interviewed prospective candidates for a slate of vacancies on City Commissions and Boards and the votes will be taken at the beginning of the Regular Council meeting. Vacancies include: Civil Service Commission, Board of Health, Planning Commission, Parks and Recreation Board, and Architectural Advisory Board.

Administrative Recommendation

Vote your preferred candidates into the vacant slots.

Council Action

Appoint the new members to the respective City Boards and Commissions.

2. Clean Ohio Grant Application

Parks and Recreation staff have prepared an application for Clean Ohio Grant funds in the amount of \$150,000 to be used for the extension of the Portage Hike and Bike Trail through Fred Fuller Park. The grant has a 25% match that John Idone has Park funds allocated for. The Parks Board authorized submitting the application and the staff is now requesting Council's support.

Administrative Recommendation

I would recommend Council's support of the grant application submission.

Council Action

Authorize the submission of the grant application for Clean Ohio funds.



Unauthorized Items (continued)

3. Adopt A Spot Donation

City Council is being asked to accept a donation in the amount of \$1,000 from the Henry V. & Frances W. Christenson Foundation for the Adopt A Spot program. (attachment)

Administrative Recommendation

I recommend Council's authorization to accept the donation.

Council Action

Authorize the acceptance of the donation.

Streets, Sidewalks and Utilities Committee Items

1. Economic Stimulus Project Listing

On December 29th staff at the Northeast Ohio Four County Regional Planning and Development Organization (NEFCO) sent a notice advising cities that the Federal Office of Economic Development in Chicago was compiling a list of economic development projects that could be considered for funding under the new administration's economic stimulus program. The list was due January 9th and after working with Gene Roberts and Jim Bowling, Dan Smith submitted what amounts to a wish list for possible Kent projects. I have attached that list for your information.

It's important to note that there are no details yet on the economic stimulus program so it is unclear how any of the projects will eventually be evaluated. The only guidance provided indicated that the projects should be shovel-ready (ready for construction) in 2009. NEFCO asked for a single sentence description of the prospective projects with an accompanying cost estimate which is what we provided in the summary list.

With the City of Akron submitting a wish list of 473 projects and Cleveland asking for \$780,000,000 in project funding our goal was to put as much on the list as possible that met the minimum criteria. Our project list does not commit us to anything at this point but failure to include a project on the list could prevent us from seeking funds later on for that project so we preferred to err on the side of more projects than less at this time.

In total the Kent staff came up with 16 projects with a total need of \$23,150,000. We will review the list in greater detail at our January 21st special committee meeting. I have also attached a recent summary of the American Recovery and Reinvestment program that Congress is planning to consider in the next month.

Administrative Recommendation

Review and approve the project list presented by staff.

Council Action

Endorse the project funding request list.

Information Items

1. Letter in Support of Kent State University College of Public Health

Mayor Fender and I met with representatives from Kent State University to discuss the University's effort to create a new college of public health. After the meeting John and I felt it would be appropriate to send a letter of support from the City that they could add to their proposal package. I have included a copy of their presentation and our letter for your information. (attachment)



Information Items

2. January 20th Planning Commission Agenda

Gary Locke has provided a copy of the January 20th Planning Commission meeting for Council's information. There is one regular business item (Whitehall East Town-home Conversion) that will be followed by the joint Council-Commission zoning review discussions. (attachment)

3. City Operations Statistical Reports

I have provided copies of the monthly reports for Fire, Police, Health and Code Enforcement. You may note in the attachments that:

- Fire and EMS calls were up 11% for 2008 from 2007, and 17% from 2006.
- Police calls for service were up 21% and arrests for 2008 were up 13%.
- Health Department inspections were up 24%
- Building permits were down 11%
- Building fee revenues were down 12%

4. Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Applications

Gary Locke and Bridget Susel (our new grants/neighborhood employee) have announced that they are seeking proposals from area agencies for possible projects that may be eligible for CDBG funding. Proposals need to be submitted by February 18, 2009. I have included a copy of the CDBG project application packet for your information. (attachment)

5. Copy of Gene Roberts Snow Presentation

I have provided a copy of Gene's snow operations presentation from our last committee meeting for your information. (attachment)

6. End of Year Income Tax Report

Barb has provided a summary of income tax collections thru December 2008. This report is the year end summary and for the year we ended up 1.98% over our 2007 income tax receipts. Fortunately income taxes received from Kent State rose 5.71% while most of the remainder of our income tax sources declined along with the economic decline in our region. With inflation running at 3% to 4% for the year a 1.98% increase in income taxes means we have lost ground financially. (attachment)

7. 2009 Budget Brief

Given all the attention and discussion on the City's finances, I have prepared a summary of our 2009 Approved City Budget that I thought would be helpful to offer to our residents who have questions about our financial condition. I have included a few copies in each of your packets but if you have ward meetings or would just like more copies to hand out to residents just let Suzanne know and we'll be happy to make more. We plan to make these available for residents at the library, city hall, and other public locations. (attachment)