

July 27, 2007



Special Council Meeting

1. Area Q Assessments

Engineering staff have been working to get the legislation prepared for filing the assessments for the Area Q project with the County. A Special Council meeting has been requested to approve that legislation so that it can be forwarded to the County in a timely manner.

Administration Recommendation

This legislation is the next step towards implementing the Area Q Assessment project approved by City Council, so I recommend adopting the legislation.

Council Action

Approve the legislation and authorize staff to file the assessment with the County.



Finance Committee Items

2. Public Safety Staffing Recommendations

Given the City's financial challenges, the administration has cut, consolidated and frozen vacant positions. We're saving over \$1 million a year as a result of personnel reductions but as we discussed in our financial study, the reduced staffing measures have reduced service capabilities, and during the course of the last year it's become increasingly apparent that we need to try to restore some of the resources for public safety in order to meet the community's expectations.

At neighborhood and Council meetings residents and Council members have discussed their concerns with declining services resulting from stretching police and fire personnel. In the course of the City's financial review last year, the administration compared Kent police and fire staffing levels with industry standards and in both cases, Kent fell below those standards.

The administration is recommending filling 2 vacant police officer positions and raising the minimum staffing requirements on each shift for the fire department. Both of these efforts will restore some service capabilities, creating more police officers to patrol neighborhoods and more firefighters on duty at any given time to respond to emergency calls. The police positions are already funded in the budget and the fire staffing changes can be funded through the revenues generated by the ambulance fee.

Administration Recommendation

I recommend Council's support for the administration's personnel recommendations for the public safety forces.

Council Action

Approve and authorize the administration's recommendations.





3. Blue Ribbon Panel Recommendation

After completing the last of the ward information meetings earlier this summer, Council will have a chance to deliberate on the Blue Ribbon Panel recommendations in Committee. We have studied the issue in great depth starting back in January 2006. We've been presented with the panel recommendations, and we've shared those recommendations with residents through neighborhood meetings, the Tree City Bulletin, and on-line over the last 6 months. As we approach the 2008 budget season, staff is looking for direction from Council on which, if any, of the recommendations to pursue.

Administration Recommendation

Discuss and deliberate on the financial strategy proposed by the Blue Ribbon Panel.

Council Action

Take action on the recommendation.

4. Hardware Property Purchase

As previously presented, the City has an opportunity to purchase the Kent Hardware property at a price of \$365,000. Staff has reviewed the available sales comps for downtown and has found the price to be right in line with recent sales. Staff supports the purchase as an economic development initiative that first and foremost, keeps a valuable local business in downtown Kent, while also taking another step towards land assemblage in a block targeted for redevelopment.

Administration Recommendation

The purchase and lease arrangements with the Hardware store has been structured so that the City will earn more in rental payments than the interest earnings on the cash equity, so I support the property transaction.

Council Action

Council authorization of the property transaction.

5. Appropriations Amendment

Barb has been working with the departments to make the necessary mid-year budget appropriations amendments. These amendments reflect unexpected budget changes that came up during the first 6 months of 2007. The amendments include: \$74,000 for a lawsuit settlement, \$20,000 for Code Enforcement (part time to full time), \$100,000 economic development loan for Water Street Tavern, \$45,000 for property taxes, \$163,000 for Parks and Recreation, and if approved, \$365,000 for Hardware Store acquisition.

Administration Recommendation

I recommend Council's support for the budgetary amendments as listed.

Council Action

Authorize the mid-year budget appropriations amendment.

Community Development Committee Items

6. Reallocation of CDBG Funds

Gary Locke and John Idone have been working to reprogram surplus CDBG funding (\$11,000) from the Fred Fuller Park Improvement project to the Plum Creek Park Improvement project. (attachment)

Administration Recommendation

I support this request as the use of CDBG funds is consistent for both projects.

Council Action

Authorize staff to reprogram the CDBG funds as requested.



7. Eminent Domain Presentation

Jim Silver has been working with legal staff at Squire, Sanders and Dempsey to initiate the legal proceedings required to move forward with the use of eminent domain for the blighted property located at the corner of Haymaker and Depeyster. Jim suggested inviting the legal expert to provide Council with an overview of the process and comment on the changes to the state statute.

Administration Recommendation

Request Council's support to move forward with the eminent domain action through the passage of a "resolution of necessity."

Council Action

Authorize staff to proceed and approve a "resolution of necessity."

Health and Public Safety Committee Items

8. Traffic and Safety Recommendations for East Main Street

The Traffic and Safety Committee have requested Council authorization to prohibit left turns on East Main Street at Wilson Avenue, and prohibit left turns from Elmwood Drive between 7 am and 7 pm weekdays. (attachment)

Administration Recommendation

I support the Committee's recommendations.

Council Action

Authorize the requested traffic safety recommendations.



Information Items

1. Police Statistics

I've attached the monthly report prepared by the Police Department for crime statistics in Kent through the end of June 2007. You will see that both Police and Fire calls for service are up in 2007 from 2006 (4% Police, 11% Fire). Overall, the crime data indicates that 2007 activity trends are consistent with 2006, so despite the one weekend of high burglary activity, the overall numbers for burglary/robbery are lower in 2007 than in 2006. (attachment)



2. Monthly Statistics

I've attached the monthly reports prepared by Community Development (permit and zoning complaint report) for your information. You will note that the number of permits are down in 2007 (by 7%), and the revenues for 2007 are also trailing 2006 by 13%. 80% of the Nuisance Complaints for May were tall weeds/grass.

3. City of Kent Police and KSU Judicial Affairs

In our continuing effort to improve Kent neighborhoods by reducing nuisance behavior, Chief Peach and Captain Lee report that they have had success working with the University to increase University review of off-campus problems through the Judicial Affairs office. The purpose of this effort is to, where appropriate, combine the enforcement capabilities of the City and the University to deter inappropriate activity. To date, 3 students have been suspended for off campus activity. (attachment)

Information Items (continued)



4. Notification of Rate Increase Request by Dominion East Ohio

The City received notification that Dominion East Ohio is filing for a base rate increase for gas service. The total rate increase will generate \$73 million and will affect 1.2 million customers. The average customer rate is projected to increase \$4.50 per month which would go into effect in the second quarter of 2008. The request is subject to PUCO approval. (attachment)

5. Kent Grocery

For your information, I've attached a copy of the letter received from the owner of University Plaza, JJ Gumberg Company, announcing the lease to Save A Lot. In addition, I wanted to let you know that I have seen a copy of plans that are up for approval in the Franklin Township that have been submitted by ACME to expand and upgrade their store on SR 59, so it looks like the Kent grocery market is on the rebound. (attachment)

6. Portage County Emergency Management Advisory Committee

Portage County is looking for County residents that may be interested in serving on the County's Emergency Management Advisory Committee. As explained in the attached letter from the County Commissioners, they are seeking qualified residents who would be willing to apply for the position by August 15. If you know residents in your ward that would be good please encourage them to apply. (attachment)