

August 1, 2008



Community Development Committee

1. Downtown Blight Study Update

Dating back to 1996 the City has used blight studies for the purposes of identifying blighted properties and targeting those properties for downtown redevelopment. A blight study is required to take advantage of various state tax benefits and related economic development tools. Over the course of the last 12 years the downtown blight study has been periodically updated and we have just completed another update, consistent with recent changes in state blight definitions, that requires Council's consideration and approval. (attachment)

Administrative Recommendation

The blight designation is an important part of the City's continued efforts to stimulate revitalization of downtown properties that are in decline and I would encourage Council's acceptance and approval of the most recent blight study findings. Once the study is adopted we can proceed with the removal of the old diner building.

Council Action

Approve the updated downtown blight study.

Streets, Sidewalks and Utilities Committee Items

2. Ohio Public Works Commission (OPWC) Funds

Jim Bowling reports that we received a notice from the Ohio Public Works Commission (OPWC) advising the City of the potential for additional funding to be available through the Governor's "Building Ohio Jobs" economic initiative. This additional funding availability and the volume of potential requests has led the commission to extend the deadline for submitting applications. We previously requested Council to approve the City submitting to receive funds for the Drainage Area Q - Phase 5 Storm Sewer Project. With this additional funding potential we are requesting Council's authorization to submit a pre-application for another project on the 5-year capital plan, SR 59 Signalization improvements.

Administration Recommendation

The SR 59 Signalization project currently has budgeted \$1.6 million in federal funds and \$0.6 million from the capital improvement program. The project was only partially submitted for funding through AMATS and I would encourage Council's support to proceed with an additional request for OPWC to help fund this important traffic management project.

Council Action

Authorize staff to apply for additional OPWC funds for SR 59 signalization improvements as described in the City's 5 Year CAP plan.



Streets, Sidewalks and Utilities Committee

3. Citizens Committee for Sidewalk Removal Policy

Council requested Committee time to discuss how to proceed with the creation of a citizen's advisory committee for modifying the City's sidewalk clearing policies, including how to select citizen representatives, how to staff the committee, study timeframe, and the mission of the committee. (attachment)

Administration Recommendation

Under the City's existing sidewalk removal policy the primary duties for sidewalk clearing following snow storms rests with the property owners. The assignment of these duties to the property owner has had mixed results. When property owners are not diligent about snow removal the policy authorizes the City to cite the property owner but enforcement capabilities are limited. The question to be posed to the citizens committee is what level of service is desired and what resources could be raised to support a higher level of service for clearing sidewalks.

Council Action

Discuss Council's expectations for the citizen committee and direct staff on next steps.



Finance Committee Items

4. Rollover of City Notes

Barb Rissland has reviewed short and long term financing rates and she is recommending the rollover of \$4,540,000 in various purpose notes. You can see in Barb's spreadsheet that by refunding the bonds each year using short term notes we have **saved over \$600,000** in the last 6 years. (attachments)

Administration Recommendation

Interest rates are still favorable for the rollover strategy, so I recommend Council's authorization of the notes rollover.

Council Actions

Approve the rollover of various City notes.



5. Reclassification of Plans Administrator Position

With the departure of Mike Weddle to the City of Stow, Gary Locke and Liz Zorc have been evaluating Mike's vacant position of Plans Administrator and they are recommending changing the job description and reclassifying the position to a lower pay grade with a revised title of Grants and Neighborhood Services Coordinator. (attachment)

Administration Recommendation

We have been anxious to devote more attention to neighborhood services and this reclassification would give us an opportunity to move forward with some new neighborhood based planning services. Kent neighborhoods are important to our quality of life goals, our economic development goals, and our public safety goals so I would encourage Council's support for the staff recommendation.

Council Action

Authorize the position reclassification.



4. Income, Property and Sales Tax Discussion

Council had requested Committee time to discuss matters of income tax, property tax and sales tax related to the Blue Ribbon Panel recommendations.

Administration Recommendation

Discuss the issues and direct staff accordingly.

Council Action

Discuss the issues and direct staff accordingly.



Information Items

1. NOPEC Natural Gas Prices

I have attached a notice from NOPEC dated August 27th 2008 that advises of continued favorable pricing for natural gas with NOPEC now having locked in those prices for 50% of the gas needed for the winter which will minimize the impact of last minute seasonal price escalations. (attachment)

2. Police Activity Update

I have provided a copy of a weekend activity report from Chief Peach that provides a snapshot of what turned out to be one of the busiest weekends in recent history coinciding with the start of the new school year. The types of calls that we responded to were not that unusual, e.g., intoxications, property damage, party complaints, but the volume of calls was particularly high this year – to the point where we had to call upon KSU officers to assist us. We've shared this information with Greg Jarvie, Dean of Student Affairs, so that we can continue to work together to keep students and neighborhoods safe. (attachment)

3. City Engineering and Traffic Safety Committee

For informational purposes I have provide a copy of the agenda for the City's engineering and traffic safety committee. Since traffic issues are common questions that citizens may ask you, I wanted to keep you apprised of projects that we're working on. I will share the meeting recommendations as soon as they are available but in the meantime if you have any questions on any of the particular items please feel free to contact Bill Lillich directly. (attachment)

4. Planning Commission Meeting September 2, 2008

I have included a copy of the Community Development staff report for the September 2, 2008 Planning Commission meeting. There are two items on the agenda: 1)121 West College Street, Portage County Parking Lot; and 2) New Sheetz at Fairchild and SR 43. Staff has outlined the conditions by which they would recommend the Planning Commission consider as they deliberate on these items. I have also included a summary of the status of the Sheetz project that I had posted this week on the Kent360 Blog for your general information. (attachment)

5. Planning Commission Invitation to City Council

I received a letter from the Planning Commission inviting City Council to join the Planning Commission during their regularly scheduled meeting at 7 pm on September 16th in Kent City Council Chambers. As noted in the attached letter, the Planning Commission members would like to engage the Council in a joint discussion on land use, zoning codes, Bicentennial Plan and other relevant development issues. It is my understanding from Gary Locke that the Planning Commission wants to be sure that they are working in alignment with City Council and they felt a joint meeting would help serve that purpose. (attachment)

6. Dominion East Ohio Rate Increase

I have attached a notice from Dominion East Ohio advising that they have filed a request for a \$75 million rate increase with the Public Utilities Commission of Ohio (PUCO). The notice explains that the increase is their first request in 14 years and it is needed for meter reading, pipeline repairs and other service requirements. If approved the increase would raise the average monthly bill by \$4.50. (attachment)

Information Items (continued)

7. Monthly Permit and Zoning Report

Gary Locke has enclosed a copy of the monthly zoning and permit violations report thru July 2008. Total construction permits are down by about 20% through July and the fee revenues are down a corresponding 13%. With the growing season in full swing you will see a large number of high grass/weed complaints. Troy Loomis sent 50 high grass/weed violation letters for the month at a rate of roughly 2/day. (attachment)

8. Health Department Agenda, Minutes and Statistics

John Ferlito has shared a copy of his August 19th Health Board meeting, including the agenda, minutes from the July 8th meeting and Health Department statistics for 2008 thru July. For Council's information John has provided a 2nd Quarter Clinical Services report that breaks down the clinical services offered to Kent residents by Ward. Ward 3 had the largest number of participants followed by Ward 6, Ward 4, Ward 2, Ward 1 and Ward 5 respectively.

9. 100 Hours of Power

I have been working with staff at Kent State to follow up on the success of last year's Flash Fixers projects with another community-wide partnership event. This year's event is being promoted as 100 Hours of Power that will be coordinated with the national Make a Difference Day. The event partners Kent State Students with city businesses and residents who join together and volunteer to fix up and clean up our community. The 5 day event is planned to begin on Tuesday October 21st and run thru Saturday October 25th. We would certainly welcome Council participation in the event and I have provided more information on how the program will work. It's another great example of the synergy that's possible in our home town. (attachment)

10. Procex Air Quality Investigation Findings

I have included a copy of a recent letter of violation sent from the Akron Regional Air Quality Management District to the owners of the Procex plant in Kent. This notice of violation outlines the findings of their investigation into air quality concerns raised by area neighbors. Procex is required to respond to the notice of violation by September 15, 2008 with a compliance plan and schedule to achieve all the necessary air quality standards. John Ferlito has been working on this matter and if you have any specific questions I would recommend talking to John directly. (attachment)

11. Cambria Manufacturing Opening In Kent

In case you had not had reason to notice, the new Cambria Manufacturing plant in Kent is open for business. Bringing 35 new jobs, with the hopes to grow that number to 80, this is great economic development news so I wanted to share with you an article about the Kent grand opening that appeared in Cleveland Crain's Business magazine. (attachment)

12. Kent Recycling Number 1 in Portage County

I am pleased to report that the Portage County Solid Waste District has officially thanked the citizens of Kent for recycling 3,127,760 pounds of recyclable materials in 2007. In the attached letter, they note that Kent has achieved a 70% recycling rate which makes us the number 1 recycler in Portage County. Congratulations Kent! (attachment)