

## **Kent to get funding for kayak, canoe park: State gives tentative OK for \$250,000**

**By Colin McEwen** Record-Courier staff writer

The city of Kent was tentatively approved for a \$250,000 grant from the Ohio Department of Natural Resources on Monday to host a canoe and kayak staging ground along the banks of the Cuyahoga River.

The project is expected to receive final approval next week from the State Controlling Board.

Kent Parks and Recreation Department Director John Idone said while he has not received official word from Columbus, he is optimistic about the process moving forward.

He said the city will contribute \$42,000, bringing the total project to about \$292,000 in funding.

Plans for the six-acre city park north of the downtown area, near the River Bend subdivision, would be developed to include a canoe and kayak launching ramp providing additional access to the river, as well as a 20-car parking lot. Steps would be installed leading to the river's edge, along with a rail to guide kayaks and canoes to the shore.

“Because the plan is conceptual, once we get the funding we’ll go forward with a detailed design process,” he said. “The community has overwhelmingly supported this.”

Idone said there has been some concern expressed from River Bend residents, and he hopes to meet with neighbors to discuss the plans.

He said — should the final step be approved Monday — plans will begin this fall, and completion of the river access would be sometime in the summer of 2010.

The ODNR approved 10 agencies around the state for similar projects for a total of \$1,633,403. Kent was approved for the second largest amount of funding in the state for boating facility grants, next to the Medina County Parks District to build a boat launch at Chippewa Lake for \$439,000.

In 2008, the city of Kent sought \$1.5 million from the program to construct a whitewater park downtown in and along the Cuyahoga River, but that request was denied.

Councilman Rick Hawksley praised the efforts of the parks department for its work on the project.

“The river is our greatest asset,” he said. “Given the interest we had in the Black Squirrel Triathlon, this is another step in developing the asset that is uniquely Kent. To bring people to the river recreationally is just wonderful.”

He said the city was not discouraged when it did not receive the funds for the \$1.5 million project last year. Instead, he said the city may still consider the project as a whole, but break it into “small chunks.”

“We know it’s a great project,” he said. “You have to go for what you can get.

“This is good for economy, good for quality of life for the city, and will attract young people — which is what every city wants.”