

**THE CITY OF KENT, OHIO
FINANCE COMMITTEE
WED., NOV. 4, 2009**

This meeting of the Finance Committee of Kent City Council was called to order by Wayne Wilson, Chair, at 7:11 p.m. on Wed., Nov. 4, 2009.

PRESENT: MR. AMRHEIN, MR. DELEONE, MR. FERRARA, MR. HAWKSLEY, MR. KUHAR, MS. SHAFFER, MR. TURNER, MS. WALLACH, & MR. WILSON

ALSO PRESENT: J. FENDER, MAYOR; D. RULLER, CITY MANAGER; J. SILVER, LAW DIRECTOR; L. COPLEY, CLERK OF COUNCIL; J. IDONE, PARKS & RECREATION DIRECTOR; D. COFFEE, DIR. OF BUDGET & FINANCE; B. SUSEL, GRANTS ADMINISTRATOR; G. ROBERTS, SERVICE DIRECTOR; J. WILLIAMS, FIRE CHIEF; AND W. LILLICH, SAFETY DIRECTOR

Chair Wilson said the first item on the agenda dealt with the Admore Skate Park grant, and introduced **John Idone, Director of Parks and Recreation**, at this time.

Mr. Idone explained this was a formality to accept the grant through the Natureworks Program of the Ohio Department of Natural Resources. He said they received almost \$15,000 for the development of a skate park at a new park, to be located where the old compost site was located. He said although they currently call it "Admore Park," the name would probably be changing to the "Stonewater Park."

Ms. Shaffer asked if the neighborhood was aware, and Mr. Idone said they previously had public meetings. He said the site plan was approved about 1.5 to 2 years earlier. He said with the development of the Lakes at Franklin Mills, there was a conceptual plan available to the neighborhood.

Mr. Kuhar asked how the structures would be designed, and Mr. Idone said they are looking at a prefabricated concrete skate park. He said there are number of styles available, and this is a prefabricated concrete.

Mr. Kuhar said Ravenna had a tremendous problem with vandalism, adding he wanted to make sure there were minimal ways the equipment can be damaged. Mr. Idone said Ravenna put their skate park on an old tennis court. He said they are planning to build the skate park into a landscape. Mr. Kuhar asked if there would be benches, and Mr. Idone said that was correct.

There were no further questions nor audience comment at this time.

MOTION TO AUTHORIZE ACCEPTANCE OF THE ADMORE SKATE PARK GRANT.

Motion made by Mr. Ferrara, seconded by Mr. Kuhar, and carried by a voice vote of 8-0-1, with Mr. Wilson abstaining.

Mr. Idone said they would like to sign the agreement quickly, and requested the inclusion of the emergency clause.

MOTION TO INCLUDE THE EMERGENCY CLAUSE.

Motion made by Mr. Ferrara, seconded by Ms. Shaffer, and carried by a voice vote of 8-0-1, with Mr. Wilson abstaining.

Mr. Wilson said the next issue dealt with the 2010 Temporary Budget Appropriation. **Dave Ruller, City Manager**, said they are asking the Committee to consider passage of a temporary budget appropriation. He said they are in difficult financial times, and the budget is usually built on a forecast done in May and June. He said some of that can be updated.

Mr. Ruller said the less they speculate, the tighter the budget. He said for their point of view, it is better to take their time instead of forcing it through. He said they have until March 31, but generally try to do it before the end of the year.

Mr. Ruller said they still can do it, if Council desires, but may need some extra meetings in late November or early December. He said they wanted to bring this forward early, to give them the flexibility if they do not get the budget finished. He said he did not want to wait until the eleventh hour, and where trying to plan ahead while they still had time to choose.

Mr. Ruller said the staff thinks there is merit and value into waiting. He said there have been some late modifications in recent weeks, such as monies for the solar heat and sidewalks. He said it seems like it makes more sense to take their time, adding that some members of Council have also asked for a two-week review period, prior to discussion. Mr. Ruller said he would prefer the extra time to do those sorts of things. He said it was not just his decision, adding that his senior staff debated the merits. He said they can present a stronger, tighter budget with the extra time, allowing more citizen input and allowing them more time to get it done. He asked **Dave Coffee, Director of Budget & Finance**, to speak to the issue at this time.

Mr. Coffee said Mr. Ruller summarized it well. He said there are a number of valid factors, including this would create a more credible and viable full budget. He said one factor is his relatively short time in the position as Director, and the challenges that go with it. He said Kent's budget is complicated for a new set of eyes, adding an additional element of challenge. He said they may be able to meet the full budget by the end of the year, but are not absolutely certain. He said this is a safety net, adding their approval of a temporary budget would be helpful.

Mr. Ruller asked him to explain the method being used for calculating the temporary budget, and Mr. Coffee said the temporary budget is for three months, which is the state's limit for a temporary budget. He said they would use the most current 2009 budget numbers, taking 25% of that amount as a base line. He said they are soliciting additional input from department heads for major variances that must be taken into consideration that would have to be added and adjusted to the base line to make sure they do not adversely impact city operations.

Mr. Ruller said as they come back with the full budget, the temporary appropriations would be built in. He said it is more work, as they are actually doing three budgets. He said they would do the temporary budget, a budget with a 1% increase and a budget with a 2% reduction. He said it took some deliberation, internally, because they are going to be double handling their numbers. He said it may sound simple, but a lot of numbers must be entered.

Mr. Ruller said it is not without a great deal of thought that they got to this point. He said the numbers will be built in, and they will reincorporate the numbers. He said they may wrap most of it up in December, finishing it in January. He said the temporary budget is a safety net, adding they need to know they have the ability to keep the officers and firefighters available for work.

Mr. Kuhar said it sounds like that approval of the temporary budget gives them lead time to prepare a complete budget in March. He said if they approve the temporary budget now, what happens if there is something they do not want to approve in the regular budget, and the expenditure already came out. Mr. Ruller said that is always a potential. He said they are using the current 2009, adding he is anticipating about a one month expense. Mr. Ruller said the alternative is to go line by line, adding they do not usually do that. He said what they are doing is taking 25% of the current budget, making a few adjustments, like rock salt, for an example. He said there is not going to be anything new that is not already approved. He said he is comfortable with it, adding he hoped they are comfortable with the staff. Mr. Ruller said as they look at the last six to nine months, they have had savings with health care, administrative changes, Mr. Robert's street maintenance work, saving about \$300,000. He said it was closer to \$400,000, but they used \$95,000 to do more street work. He said he hoped they can trust that staff will continue to work toward saving money. He said they saved \$300,000 without Council setting the target. He said he did not think they had time to go line by line, and suggested if there was something problematic, it can be pulled out. He said his intention was to put this one the agenda, without committee time. He said if they want committee time, it could be done in December.

Mr. Coffee said they have envisioned a document looking like the amendment to the appropriations passed in October. He said the numbers would be based on current operations, not new programs. He said unless they were contemplating a reduction in service levels, he did not think it was much of a risk factor.

Mr. Kuhar asked if they have looked at the temporary appropriation budget, and Mr. Wilson said the Manager is saying they would be using the current 2009 as a benchmark.

Mr. Kuhar asked if they start using 2010 funds on January 1, why they have until March to get it together. **Jim Silver, Law Director**, said the Ohio Revised Code gives them that time. He said there is some benefit, as the County Auditor updates those numbers after the first of the year. He said that was the thinking behind that section of the Code allowing for a three-month temporary budget. Mr. Kuhar asked if the regular budget has to be done by March 31, and Mr. Silver said it must be in place by April 1, 2009.

Ms. Wallach said if they are basing this on the 2009 budget, revenues are significantly down. She said they could be burning through revenues they do not have in the first three months. She said by postponing the budget, they are losing opportunities to make adjustments. Mr. Coffee said this closes the window for subsequent adjustments. He said they have to work within the confines of the Certificate of Resources. He said that is based on what is submitted in May and June, adding there is no way to further revise that until after Jan 1. He said that by being able to close out the year end, they will be able to update it for a more accurate revenue figure.

Ms. Wallach asked what they are going to do if they burn through their funds, adding they are screwed basically. Mr. Coffee said that would be the Administration's responsibility to figure out how to revise and adjust it accordingly. He said they do not see any dramatic change from the current fiscal year to next year, adding they have no reason to believe there would be a precipitous fall off in revenues in 2010. He said it is a relatively low risk factor.

Mr. Fender said he has faith in the Administration, adding they have done well financially. He said they are looking at no new programs, adding they will handle a temporary budget well. He said he knows he does not vote, but it is something they should ponder.

Mr. Hawksley said that abased on their discussions in the last six or eight weeks, if they have any big ideas for the budget in December, they should get those to him in the next few weeks, and Mr. Ruller said that would be preferred. He said they are not going to hold up the budget process and do nothing until the end-of-the-year numbers are in. He said they are going to keep wrapping it up, so when they get the year end actual figures, they only need minor modifications. He said he would prefer to have those done within the next few weeks, so they can get the document in its final stage in December. He said they can have some preliminary meetings, so that all they are waiting on deals with final numbers from them and the County to see if what they are anticipating as resources are true. He said they do track their income tax, adding it varies by $\frac{1}{2}$ of 1 percent so they are figuring 0% growth. He said they do not get a lot of property tax, so that is not a major resource for the City. He said there are other items in the budget that amount to something. Mr. Ruller said the budget is on a fine line, adding they think it is prudent to allow them to wait for those final numbers.

Mr. Wilson told Mr. Hawksley if he has items they want to add to the budget, they need to return them to Council, adding it is up to Council to decide if they should be added.

Ms. Wallach said they are talking about final numbers, and asked if it was the numbers for the final quarter of year, and Mr. Coffee said it is the appropriation amendment done in October, which represents the most current budget for 2009. Ms. Wallach asked which time period it covered, and asked if it was the last quarter, and Mr. Coffee said he was not clear. Mr. Ruller said they passed a budget for 2009, adding they amended it in October, with the approval of the Committee and the Council.

Ms. Wallach said that they are saying they will get a new set of numbers, and asked what that included and whether it included the figures from the last quarter of the year, and Mr. Coffee said they mean the Certificate of Resources on the revenue side. He said a process was undertaken in May or June to provide the County Auditor with required information to determine the fund balances and a variety of components for available resources. He said it was due in July. He said the County Auditor gives them a Certificate of Available Resources, which are the monies they are legally able to spend. He said the full budget has to use those revenue figures, as the basis for balancing the budget. He said the additional time will give them six or seven months of real data, and will further refine and/or update the accuracy of their figures. Ms. Wallach asked if they were figures since July, and Mr. Coffee said he understood the numbers were put together in May or June.

Mr. Kuhar said if he understands it, the budget is based on fact and speculation, and Mr. Coffee said that was correct. He said it is their best estimate of their expenditures for the next year and their guidelines.

There was no further questions nor audience comment at this time.

MOTION TO APPROVE THE 2010 TEMPORARY APPROPRIATION.

Motion made by Mr. Ferrara, seconded by Mr. DeLeone, and carried by a voice vote of 7-0-2, with Mr. Wilson and Mr. Kuhar abstaining.

Chair Wilson said the next issue dealt with the Storm Water Utility budget allocation change.

Mr. Ruller said there are continuing efforts underway, internally, to look at the budget to make sure what they are budgeting is appropriate. He said they need to make sure everything balances. Mr. Ruller said one recommendation of the Blue Ribbon Panel was to make sure staff reviewed each enterprise fund to be sure that the appropriate allocations are being made. He was each enterprise fund, to see if appropriate allocations are being made. He said from the beginning, the Storm Water Fund was set up so that the actual fees paid were not enough to cover all of the activities. He said **Gene Roberts, Service Director**, has completed more work activity assessments, and looked at the balances in the appropriate funds. He said Mr. Roberts is recommending a reduction in the current subsidy by about \$200,000. He said the General Fund would still contribute. Mr. Ruller said it is a good practice, adding that enterprise funds are to be self sustaining, paying for activities intended. He said it is hard to do that overnight, but they are making incremental steps toward full cost accounting efforts.

Mr. Roberts said this is a continuation of what was before Council with the position of the Engineering Aide I. He said because of the job description, 25% of the personnel costs were funded from the Storm Water fund. He said the original ordinance calls for management, maintenance, and repairs of the storm water system. He said one of the primary reasons for the current fund balances is because of the City's success in receiving grant funds. He said the money stayed in the storm water fund. He said they will need an increase in the fee. He said he did not know if it would be in ten years or in thirty years. Mr. Roberts said they will not ask for an increase in the next eight to ten years, adding that based on the current projects, they will be able to fund those projects.

Mr. Roberts said when this began in 1998, the intent was to relieve the cost burden with the capital component, taking away from street maintenance. He said with the advent of the Storm water utility, they had a pool of money to pay for capital projects. He said this included Elm/Mae/Morris, followed by Area Q, on the west side of town, which is now in its fifth phase. He said they also spent \$4 million in storm water improvements, on the capital side. He said they spent about 10% on the cost to set up a storm water program, adding the balance meets the EPA requirements.

Mr. Roberts recommended a transfer of 10% of the personal service costs in the Engineering, Service Administration, and Central Maintenance Division for the work done in storm water. He said that would generate about \$220,000 savings in General Government and Income tax funds, and would save about \$30,000 in the Sanitary and water funds. Mr. Roberts recommended they start the process. He said the one year of data from Central Maintenance shows the need to do this, adding they will probably eat up all of the money if they did that tomorrow. He said he would like to see a few more years of data. He said if it is a larger percentage, they will make adjustments after reviewing 2009 and 2010 figures.

Mr. Hawksley asked if the engineering and maintenance personnel account for their work by fund, and Mr. Roberts said they have a data base in the Engineering Division that tracks by project. He said they can do analysis to see how much time is spent on a project. He said they know how much time Central Maintenance has spent. He said it is plus or minus thirty minutes, adding it is not totally accurate, but is relatively accurate.

Ms. Wallach asked if it was all staff in Engineering, Central Maintenance, and the Service Administration, and Mr. Roberts said that Central Maintenance has 25% of personal service costs coming from Water and 25% from Sanitary, with 50% from SCMR. He said on any given day, the tasks averaged out to be 25/25/50.

Ms. Wallach told Mr. Roberts that is not what she is asking, and asked if it was all staff. Ms. Wallach

noted that some staff just does paper shuffling, and asked if they were included. Mr. Roberts said it would be all staff in those three divisions.

Ms. Wallach said Mr. Roberts is asking for \$303,000, with the Storm Water having revenue of \$550,000. She said they are asking that 55% of the fund is spent on personnel. Ms. Wallach asked if that much time is spent on storm water issues, why it was not done that way originally. Mr. Roberts said he cannot answer that with 100% certainty, adding he can only go back to conversations with then-City Engineer, Al Brubaker. He said there was a backlog of major capital improvements, such as Elm/Mae/Morris and Area Q, with no funding source. He said the Engineering Division is reevaluating all needs at this time to prioritize what needs to be done. He said if they noticed in the Capital Plan, there was nothing listed for Storm Water in 2013 and 2014. He said they have paid what they need to pay and could not afford previously. He said their capital component has been met, and they project about \$3 million available in 2014. He said if they pay the associated costs of payroll from this fund, they will run out of money in 2020 to 2022.

Ms. Wallach said what she understood Mr. Roberts to say is that they originally set up this fund to cover capital improvements, and not to pay salaries. Mr. Roberts said that by ordinance, that is not correct, but by conversations with people who worked there, that was correct. Ms. Wallach asked if that was also correct in conversations with the citizens of Kent, and Mr. Roberts said he did not know about those conversations. He said he read through the minutes, back to 1998, when this started, and maintenance was always referred to as part of the component. He said he did not know if individuals employed by the City talked to the residents.

Ms. Wallach said in the Capital Plan, \$164,000 was spent on Storm Water. She said they spent \$318,000 in 2008, with \$77,000 in 2009. She said projects for the next five years only go up to about \$80,000. She questioned how they can spend \$303,000 on personnel, and questioned if it would cost that much to manage an \$80,000 project.

Mr. Roberts said the Engineering and Central Maintenance are evaluating the storm water needs. He said one driving force behind setting up the storm water utility was the future pending requirements for their Storm Water Management NPDES permit. He said they are in their second five-year permit. He said they have an ongoing educational and outreach component. He said those have been covered in previous years' expenditures for the consultant. He said they will see that decrease when the Engineering Aide I position picks it up in-house. He said they have \$300,000 being spent out of the General Government Fund component. He said they are not adding \$300,000 worth of work.

Ms. Wallach said she understood, adding they are just changing funds. Chair Wilson said they are recouping the costs they have spent out of other funds. Ms. Wallach said they are changing it from a fund where the constituents vote on the increases to a fund where constituents do not vote on increases.

Mr. Roberts said he did not know the constituents ever voted on the storm water utility, and Ms. Wallach agreed. She said that increases in the Storm Water do not have to be approved by the constituents. She said they are taking revenue from a fund that has to be voted on for an increase, and putting it into a fund that does not have to be voted on. Mr. Roberts said he would agree with that statement.

Mr. Hawksley said they are not increasing the rates, adding they are making an accounting adjustment. Ms. Wallach said they will be, and Mr. Hawksley asked Mr. Roberts when he expected a rate increase. Mr. Roberts said ten to fifteen years. He said they are experiencing about \$100,000 annually in interest that is not included. He said they did not include the decrease in the operating capital, nor the assessment revenue stream. He said they kept it relative to revenue and the reserve in the fund. He said that project took them to 2020.

Ms. Wallach said they would be asking for increases just for water, and Mr. Wilson said it would be both the water and sanitary funds.

Mr. Kuhar asked if they will have more revenues for infrastructure repair and road repair, and Mr. Roberts said Council could transfer that pool of money in General Government and apply it to transportation.

MOTION TO AUTHORIZE THE STORM WATER BUDGET ALLOCATION CHANGE AS PRESENTED.

Motion made by Mr. Kuhar, seconded by Mr. DeLeone, and carried by a voice vote of 7-1-1, with Ms. Wallach dissenting and Mr. Wilson abstaining.

Chair Wilson said the next issue dealt with the Energy Conservation Grant application. Mr. Roberts introduced **Bridget Susel, Grant Administrator**, adding it is nice to look and apply for funds that fit their priorities.

Ms. Susel said the State of Ohio just put out the Energy Efficient Block Grant, which is part of the Recovery Act in March, and is based on an entity's population. He said the size of Kent was not included in the first round, and they had to wait for the State to get their application approved. She said the RFP came out on October 20, and is due on Nov. 30.

Ms. Susel said the program is set up with five activities, adding one is to retrofit government buildings, which is similar to what they approved in their Energy Conservation Program. She said if they get it, they can cover the cost for those services. She said that the Water Plant and Water Reclamation Plant changes would be delayed. She said there is a forum in 1 ½ weeks where they can ask. She said she is not sure they would allow those buildings, or if it is just government buildings, such as City Hall. She said the minimum award is \$150,000. She said they are in a pool of 96 entities, but because of the short window, there will not be 96 applications. She said this was already approved, with allocated funding, adding that gives them more points. She said it is not a sure bet, but she felt they had a fairly good opportunity to pursue this grant. She requested the inclusion of the emergency clause.

There were no questions nor comments at this time.

MOTION TO AUTHORIZE THE GRANT APPLICATION FOR THE ENERGY EFFICIENT BLOCK GRANT, WITH THEIR INCLUSION OF THE EMERGENCY CLAUSE.

Motion made by Mr. Ferrara, seconded by Ms. Shaffer, and carried by a voice vote of 8-0-1, with Mr. Wilson abstaining.

Mr. Wilson said the final item on their agenda was the Phase 2 Regional Fire Service Study. Mr. Ruller said that Mr. Wilson attended the Phase I briefing with some staff, as well as most of the meetings. He said they have been participating in a real regional collaborative effort, adding there has been a lot of talk and not a lot of action. He said the purpose of this is to see where they can drive better efficiencies. Mr. Ruller said this has been a two-prong process, adding there are no deep pockets to afford levels of service by themselves. He said this is an area where they already share services and apparatus. He said they have some natural partnerships already. Mr. Ruller said as they watched what happened, they saw more efforts pushing toward a collaborative approach. Mr. Ruller stressed the study was not recommending a fire district. He said it was meant to come up with a list of opportunities available to them and their sister cities to save money and elevate levels of service. He said Phase I is done, and they need to look at Phase II, which is \$16,000.

William Lillich, Safety Director, said they received a thick document at the end of September, filled with information, recommendations, and suggestions. He said some of the departments have taken advantage of some of the suggestions. He said the Manager mentioned \$16,000, but they are looking for authorization of \$19,200. He said this does not mean their end expense is that much, but efficiency sake, they would from the money. He introduced **Jim Williams, Fire Chief**, at this time.

Chief Williams said that one of the most important things for any committee is to have a mission statement, which helps keep their focus. He said their mission statements included maintaining a high standard of service, care for citizens, and to provide delivery of the highest level of services in a safe, efficient, and an economical manner. He said it is important to stay focused on that, as that is what they are trying to accomplish.

Chief Williams said in 2008, they developed a committee that included the Fire Chief, a citizen, and a Council member from each community. He said a lot of the research occurred for process and analysis, adding they interviewed potential consultants. He said they had four agencies they interviewed. He said they did a grant proposal, and was unsuccessful. He said from their interviews, they selected John Pruever and Associates.

Chief Williams said in 2009, they looked at the whole study to see what we can get accomplished. He said they decided to break it down over two phases. He said Phase 1 included demographics, overview of departments, blending of services, administration, communications, fire and department operations. He said there were 167 recommendations.

Chief Williams said the Phase 1 study surveyed current delivery systems for all five communities. He said they evaluated mutual aid, staffing, management, review planning, disaster plans, and demographics.

Chief Williams said the recommendation summary for overview of participating fire departments included was to increase the use of the automatic aid system. He said the last three nights, they have had three fires, using a lot of mutual aid. He said automatic aid happens automatically, instead of waiting to call them when arriving on the scene. He said they want to look at expanding their preplan response program. He said they need to look at where to set up the automatic aid and where they have the highest risks. He said they want to strengthen water delivery in non-hydranted areas. He said a lot of the involved communities do not have hydrants, so they need to decide how to provide water to them. He said they have to look at expansion of revenue capabilities and continue to expand grant applications.

Chief Williams said they looked at strategies to improve staffing and how to ensure an adequate response. He said the NFPA says a structure fire should have fifteen people within nine minutes, and if they only use their department, they only have seven people. He said they need to make up the difference.

Ms. Wallach asked if the other people are from other departments, and Chief Williams said that is correct. Ms. Wallach asked if the City pays them, and Chief Williams said they do not pay them. He said it is a collaborative effort. He said the City provides back to them, and does not charge. He said if they had to pay, they could not afford it.

Ms. Shaffer asked if this helps reduce overtime, and Chief Williams said it is too early to tell. He said if they have a structure fire, they still need staffing for other calls. Mr. Lillich said it is important to remember that alternative staffing approaches are not just about finances, but also about the welfare and safety of employees. He said the firefighters are tired after the last four days.

Mr. Turner said they indicated one institution that established certain requirements and levels. He asked if there are any others they look at for competing requirements or adequate staffing levels, and Chief Williams said they use information from other departments and other communities. He said the National Fire Protection Association is the largest in the business.

Mr. Kuhar asked, if they used the automatic aid system, if it was portrayed as a structure fire and was a kitchen stove fire, and Chief Williams said they would turn them around before they get there, adding it is up to the first arriving company. He said if they find out it was food on the stove, and have already called Mutual Aid, they cancel them so they are back in service. Mr. Kuhar asked what they do with Automatic Aid, and Chief Williams said it would be the same process, adding they would be canceled if not needed. Mr. Kuhar said the Mutual Aid would not be called unless assessed, and Chief Williams said that was correct. He said if it is a working structure fire and they need all of those people, they are waiting eight to nine minutes for someone to get there, adding it could be critical. Mr. Kuhar asked how many of those situations are they faced within a calendar year, and Mr. Lillich said that some depend on how they preplan events. He said one example was the way they used to respond to fire alarms at KSU. He said when Centennial Court was built, they put in new fire alarms which were more sensitive, and the Fire Department ran a lot of hot runs. He said the plans are changed now. He said if there is an alarm, depending on the time of day, their response is scaled back until they get additional feedback. He said there is a lot more to the planning than automatic aid on every alarm.

Mr. Kuhar said since they are looking at dual fire districts, he wanted to know how much has been spent on studies, and Chief Williams said they spent \$34,000 on the first phase. He said there were a lot of positive developments without following the recommendation. He said the Fire Chiefs Association has gotten stronger and is getting more accomplished. He said the State of Ohio changed some rules, and decided they need to train their fire inspectors. He said that instead of sending them to Cleveland, Columbus, or Akron, they are doing it within the County.

Chief Williams said they have fifty-one recommendations to enhance Fire Department operations and

procedures. He said they each have their own presently, and this would maximize their efforts and be more efficient, they would standardize all departments' operating procedures. He said they would try to standardize their equipment so they are similar. He said their mutual aid, automatic aid, disaster plans, and review/recommendation of facilities would be reviewed.

Chief Williams said they had fifteen recommendations for communications. He said the first three are the starting periods where they would enhance operations and procedures, strengthen the administration, and improve service delivery. He said these were proposed while the agencies developed the major implementation strategy, which was a recommendation to blend all communities into one dispatch center. He said this would improve staffing, incorporate new technology, and reduce/contain operating costs.

Ms. Shaffer asked which communities were involved, and Chief Williams said Kent, Brimfield Township, Charleston Township, Ravenna City, Ravenna Township, Franklin Township, and Sugar Bush Knolls.

Chief Williams said the recommendation for department administration included standardizing general administration practices. He said recommendations included consolidating command team guidance. He said they want to improve how they manage their incidents. He said they want to improve the use of personnel, so as to not spend more in overtime. He said they want to have a standard operating procedure for all departments, along with uniform recruitment and selection practices. He said at the present time, each department does their own hiring, spending money to do their own thing. He suggested one test for all departments could save money.

Chief Williams said the last area dealt with recommendations for the blending of services. He said this is meant to control the duplication of costs. He said they want to maintain or reduce their costs, while improving efficiency and effectiveness, with greater staff flexibility.

Chief Williams said with Phase II, Ravenna City and Brimfield have approved Phase 2. He said that since Charleston Twp. had a levy pass that they would approve it also. He said this would be a further in-depth study, with an organizational review of each department, a loss potential survey, a survey of apparatus and equipment replacement programs. He said they are fortunate in Kent, as they have a twenty-year Capital Plan for equipment, adding a lot of other departments do not have that. He said they would study fire prevention and public education programs, adding they would review training programs. He said they would work to improve their response capability and how they work together. Chief Williams said they would evaluate their contract administration, survey blending of services, provide a capital improvement program, and prepare an implementation strategy.

Mr. Kuhar said they spoke about a centralized dispatch. He said he was in the area of Green not long ago, witnessing a drunk driver. He said he called 911, and got transferred to six different police departments. He said that is one concern about centralized dispatching.

Chief Williams said there are changes in the 911 system that most communities are going to so as to enhance the operation of cell phones. He said it will be done by GPS, and would identify within a few feet. He said currently some communities are to call the Sheriff's Department. He said Franklin Township calls go to the Portage County Sheriff, who transfers them back to Kent. He said with the proper training and technology, they can eliminate those issues.

Mr. Kuhar said if someone has a kitchen fire, and it goes to central dispatch in Ravenna, they may not be familiar with every street. Chief Williams said the information comes up on the screen from the 911 call, including the address and City.

Chief Williams said they are looking at moving three generations forward, with new equipment that is more sophisticated. He said it is not too far down the road. He said it would be for all emergency communications, including policy. He said they are developing ways to operate with more synergy.

Chief Williams said the cost of Phase II is \$37,000. He said Kent's portion is \$16,029, with Franklin Township at \$3020 and Sugar Bush Knolls at \$130, for a combined total of \$19,189.

Mr. Lillich said they are asking for a motion or resolution to approve them going forward. He said they have varying types of government bodies involved, and want a formal commitment. He said the other

portion of the motion would be to use undesignated funds so they could move forward this year more quickly.

Ms. Shaffer said Kent is the biggest community, and asked if they have a leadership role. She also asked how the Fire Department staff is responding to the changes. Chief Williams said they have intentionally tried to stay out of the leadership role, adding they have made a lot of effort to stay out. Chief Williams said the Union has been involved from the beginning. He said there were mixed reactions at first, but not they seem a little excited after seeing the recommendations. He said they generally seem excited about moving forward. Mr. Lillich commented that Chief Williams is the leader among the group.

Mr. Hawksley asked if they had any idea what the potential long term savings could be for these joint ventures, and Mr. Lillich said the savings is hard to quantify. He said in the grand scheme of things, they would have more efficient major capital. He said they know their next aerial truck would cost \$1.2 or \$1.3 million. He said in the back of their minds, they are looking at erasing the borders between agencies, and see how they can best provide the services.

Mr. DeLeone asked the possibility of expanding with more departments, and Chief Williams said another group is now interested. He said that as this group is successful in doing more and accomplishing more, he predicted they would see more communities willing to participate.

Mr. Ruller said the County is trying to facilitate discussion on a more centralized dispatch. He said that Aurora is a key player, and sees the value in regionalism. He said they are an advocate. He said he would not be surprised as the dispatch element continues to see it drive the discussion.

Mr. Turner said he felt it was a great idea to erase artificial boundaries. He said they are setting up a unified approach to dealing with things. He asked if the structure of representation of the communities was proportionate, and asked how that would be dealt with in the future. Mr. Lillich said there is an equal share of voting for all participants. He said in terms of where they end up providing services, they made a guarantee to Council and the community that they would never enter into anything that would diminish the current services in Kent. He said they will do this as long as it continues to provide the same service to the community.

Mr. Kuhar said with that statement, they have a "back out" clause. He said he was glad Mr. Lillich said that. He asked what happens if they are in a partnership with a community having financial issues keeping up, adding they may be counting on someone for a haz mat truck that cannot afford it. Mr. Lillich said by the time they complete this research, they will have talked among the participating groups. He said those kinds of alternatives will have to be addressed. He said the plan is to go back to each elected official to look at, approve, or disapprove the plan. He said they will set milestones in terms of the levels of participation, adding that would give them the protection Mr. Kuhar seems to be alluding to at this time.

Mr. Kuhar asked in the formal agreement, will there be provisions where response time and service goes down, allowing the City to back out, and Mr. Lillich said they would make that commitment.

Chief Williams said when they first presented this, his commitment was that they will not lessen the current quality of service to the residents. He said if the response times go up and there are adverse changes to the quality of service, they will not do it.

Mr. Lillich said on the night of the first presentation, there were several citizens present, and one asked if they were going to do anything with "her" fire station. He said as they find ways for more efficient service, there may be recommendations that are perceived as a reduction of service. He said he would like to prepare them for this, and asked they bring their questions to them. He said they would not agree to anything harmful to the community. Mr. Kuhar commented they have the cream of the crop, and he would like to keep it that way.

Mr. Ruller said they need to be cautious and not over-invest in this, adding it is not a fire district discussion. He said it is an intentionally slow methodical method, meant to be at the Chiefs level as colleagues to identify those areas to achieve goals of better service for less money. He said they are almost avoiding the issue of politics that could occur in 20 years. He said they are not looking at doing this in five to ten years. He said it is their intention to carve those pieces and steps. He said he did not want

them to think they were shutting down fire houses, adding there will be subsequent decisions with a lot more discussion. He said they just want some baby steps.

Mr. Lillich said another term used by the lead consultant is to look for the blending of services, not a total change of services.

Ms. Shaffer asked how they came up with an amount of \$16,000 and Chief Lillich said it was based on population, and was a per capita cost.

There were no further questions nor audience comment at this time.

MOTION TO AUTHORIZE THE CITY'S PARTICIPATION IN PHASE II OF THE REGIONAL FIRE SERVICE STUDY WITH THE INCLUSION OF THE EMERGENCY CLAUSE; AUTHORIZING \$19,189 TO BE ALLOCATED FROM UNDESIGNATED MONIES, WITH REIMBURSEMENT FROM FRANKLIN TOWNSHIP AND SUGAR BUSH KNOLLS.

Motion made by Mr. Hawksley, seconded by Mr. Ferrara, and carried by a voice vote of 8-0-1, with Mr. Wilson abstaining.

Hearing no further business before this Committee, Chair Wilson adjourned this meeting at 8:30 p.m.

Linda M. Copley, Clerk of Council

ACTION RECOMMENDED:

- 1) **TO AUTHORIZE ACCEPTANCE OF THE ADMORE SKATE PARK GRANT, WITH THE EMERGENCY CLAUSE.**
- 2) **TO AUTHORIZE A TEMPORARY 2010 BUDGET APPROPRIATION,**
- 3) **TO AUTHORIZE THE STORM WATER BUDGET ALLOCATION CHANGE AS PRESENTED.**
- 4) **TO AUTHORIZE THE GRANT APPLICATION FOR THE ENERGY EFFICIENT BLOCK GRANT, WITH THEIR INCLUSION OF THE EMERGENCY CLAUSE.**
- 5) **TO AUTHORIZE PHASE II OF THE FIRE STUDY WITH THE INCLUSION OF THE EMERGENCY CLAUSE.**