

**THE CITY OF KENT, OHIO
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE
WED., MAY 5, 2010**

This meeting of the Community Development Committee of Kent City Council was called to order on Wed., May 5, 2010 at 8:09 p.m., by Erik Valenta, Chair. Mr. Valenta explained the only item on their agenda dealt with an agreement with Kent State University for an electronic community/campus message board.

PRESENT: MR. AMRHEIN, MR. DeLEONE, MR. FERRARA, MR. KUCHAR, MS. SHAFFER, MR. TURNER, MR. VALENTA, MS. WALLACH, AND MR. WILSON

ALSO PRESENT: J. FIALA, MAYOR; D. RULLER, CITY MANAGER; J. BOWLING, CITY ENGINEER; J. SILVER, LAW DIRECTOR; AND L. COPLEY, CLERK OF COUNCIL

Dave Ruller, City Manager, explained this item has been on the City's pending list for a while. He said that Mayor Fiala was agreeing, as he was laughing. He said the Mayor told him he thought **William Lillich, Safety Director**, had started working on that during his first year with the City.

Mr. Ruller said this has appeared on a "desired" list. He said they all get feedback from people that want to know what is going on around town. Mr. Ruller said that not everyone subscribes to the Record Courier or has internet access.

Mr. Ruller said the prices have gone down enough on these signs that churches and the high school have purchased them. He said their collaborative work with Kent State University led to this discussion, as they shared the same frustration. He said the University does not have a great venue to let people know when they have a free lecture or art program, or something at the fashion school. He said one of the greatest things about being in Kent is there are great things going on as long as one knows about them. He said they do not have the hassles of the big cities.

Mr. Ruller said that is their philosophy behind the desire to pursue this effort. He said they approached the University, and asked them to split the price. Mr. Ruller said everyone nodded their heads after a thoughtful process. He said they are about 90% done with what it would look like and where it would go. He said they are doing a lot with street lights, traffic signals, etc., and may have to push things around to get the right location. He said it is important to get it right, much like they discussed with the fencing, so it becomes an initial signature monument, and not a simple board. Mr. Ruller said that Tom Euclide's office at Kent State has done a mock up for the mounting that would recognize the City of Kent and the University as a partnership.

Mr. Ruller asked **Jim Bowling, City Engineer**, to present further information. Mr. Bowling said he did not have much to add, other than the fact they are splitting the cost 50/50. He said they are trying to complete it by the start of the Fall semester, and it will be managed jointly by Kent State and the City.

Mr. Bowling said that Mr. Lillich has been working on this, and is getting a management committee together to manage it. He said they will specifically exclude commercial and quasi commercial advertising. He said they may need a future amendment to hammer out the details, such as long term costs. Mr. Bowling said the commitment is strong enough to move forward. He said they want to put it in the limited access area, and need ODOT's permission. He said they are requesting that Council authorize an amendment to the appropriations ordinance of \$50,000 with the emergency clause and authorize the agreement.

Ms. Shaffer said she read the paragraph about programming and management many times, adding it seems vague. She asked if two people would put the content on the board, and Mr. Ruller said the chief point of access would be through his office. He said they need to develop guidelines for what is eligible, adding the intent is to keep it to City-sanctioned events, such as festivals, ice carvings, etc. He said they have a fairly broad criteria, but will not include drink sales at the bars, which is not the intention of the sign.

Mr. Ruller said it is fairly user friendly, and Kent State has a higher skill level. He said the board will not be the leading edge of technology, but will have enough bells and whistles, including full color. He said that University said they would help with the expertise, as they have people in marketing, graphics arts, and IT. He said the City will help with the point of entry, adding some of the higher end stuff will be done by the

University.

Mr. DeLeone said Ms. Wallach had a question that he would ask, and wanted to know if they only come in red. He said it would be neat if they had green for the City, and blue for Kent State. He said some of the red signs stick out, adding it can blind a person.

Mr. Lillich said the red signs are common, and on the low end. He said some of those have a much coarser look because of larger pixels and they are cheaper. He said they are contemplating full color, full motion, with good pixel quality. He said they do not want to have one with everyone wishing they spent a little more.

Ms. Shaffer asked where they are thinking of putting the sign, and Mr. Bowling said it would be at the northeast corner of Haymaker and Water Street. He said they will probably install a mock up to see how it fits in, with the signal heads. He said they want to be sure it works well. Mr. Bowling said they will be looking at that.

Mr. Ruller said they have looked at this long and hard, and there is no perfect spot. He said the location they are looking at seems to be the most visible when people are coming in. He said he likes the fact it plays into the new development, adding it gives them the sense there is something neat. He said they have trees in the right-of-way, and need space for the pedestrian signs. Mr. Ruller said that both Mr. Euclide and President Lefton had suggestions, but there were some obstacles. He said it may not be perfect, but will be functional and will work good. He said the proof will be in Mr. Bowling's test, when they get the mock up, to see its visibility.

Mr. Bowling noted that the Ohio Department of Transportation will have to grant them permission to put it in the limited access area.

Ms. Wallach asked if all of the mock up expenses are included in the request for \$50,000, and Mr. Bowling said that was correct.

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

MOTION TO AUTHORIZE THE AGREEMENT AND \$50,000 ADDITIONAL APPROPRIATION FOR THE COMMUNITY SIGN, TO BE DONE IN CONJUNCTION WITH KENT STATE UNIVERSITY.

Motion made by Mr. Ferrara, seconded by Mr. Amrhein.

Ms. Shaffer said it is really critical they focus on communications, and need to open up lots of channels. She said she appreciated the University coming on board, adding she has missed many events at the University, and wished there was a better way to learn about them.

Mr. Kuhar said he thought it was great, too, adding he can almost envision it in his head. He said he wished they would do it after the development is completed in about four years. He said he will abstain as he cannot support the expenditure.

Mr. Wilson said it has been twenty years since they first began discussing it, adding he has been against it for nineteen years. He said if they were not finally doing the project, he would say it would be a target. He said it will be a pleasant area to locate it, adding it will be safer also. Mr. Wilson said he would support it, and noted on the mock up, it should be Saturday, July 3.

The motion carried by a voice vote of 7-0-2, with Mr. Kuhar and Mr. Valenta abstaining.

Hearing no further business before this Committee, Chair Valenta adjourned this meeting at 8:25 p.m.

Linda M. Copley, Clerk of Council

ACTION RECOMMENDED:

- 1) TO AUTHORIZE THE AGREEMENT AND \$50,000 ADDITIONAL APPROPRIATION FOR THE COMMUNITY SIGN, TO BE DONE IN CONJUNCTION WITH KENT STATE UNIVERSITY.**