

**THE CITY OF KENT, OHIO
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE
WED., JANUARY 6, 2010**

This meeting of the Community Development Committee of Kent City Council was called to order at 7:34 p.m. on Wed., January 6, 2010 by Erik Valenta, Chair.

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

ALSO PRESENT: J. FIALA, MAYOR; D. RULLER, CITY MANAGER; J. SILVER, LAW DIRECTOR; GARY LOCKE, DIR. OF COMM. DEV.; B. SUSEL, GRANTS ADMINISTRATOR; G. ROBERTS, SERV. DIR.; AND L. COPLEY, CLERK OF COUNCIL

ABSENT: MR. TURNER, COUNCIL

Chair Valenta said the first issue on their agenda dealt with the position of Neighborhood Liaison. **Dave Ruller, City Manager**, explained that some staff members have been involved in this job description, adding that **Gary Locke, Community Development Director and Bridget Susel, Grants Administrator**, having been working with the HR Manager.

He said they previously discussed this as a potential joint position with the University on a trial basis. He said they have some of the basic job description parameters, and wanted their opinion over the work done over the last five to six months. He said this is part of their neighborhood improvement/community relations umbrella, where they are doing what they can to restore their neighborhoods. He said that much of the inspiration behind the position is to have someone who has more time than their officers. He said their police force is too small and too busy to walk the beat, getting to know everyone. He said he researched other university communities who have done this, and they are touting this as a positive step. He said it would fill a gap, and may help with issues they have struggled within the past.

Mr. Ruller said Mr. Locke would present where they are and where they are planning to be. He said if they bless this, the staff will wrestle with how to fund it. He said they need a decision for inclusion in the 2010 budget, but they are not holding up the budget for this position.

Mr. Locke said Mr. Ruller did a good summary. He said they previously presented the Neighborhood Enhancement Program that had a lot of different elements; with a lot dealing with communication and to lessen the gap with residents of the neighborhood and those who are students and non students. He said they have had issues and will continue to have issues in neighborhoods, as people have different things they value. He said some of those issues emanate from the university situation with students.

Mr. Locke said they also had discussions on conflict management and conflict resolution. He said this position has the potential to do that as well. He said they need a sense from Council whether they want to continue with this position or not, adding they need a decision.

Mr. Locke said this is something worth trying, adding they would try to have some goals for the person so they could measure whether they have done what was expected. He said there is no magic potion, adding they were present to find out what they want to do with this position.

Mr. Kuhar asked if this is the same position discussed in the paper earlier in the day, and Mr. Locke said that was correct. Mr. Kuhar asked the total funding from the City, and whether this is a joint venture, and Mr. Locke said it is a joint venture with the University. He said they are discussing \$20,000 for each of the two years from both the City and the University. Mr. Kuhar asked what the hours would be, and what would be done, and Mr. Locke said it would not quite be a full-time position, adding it would be 20-30 hours per week. Mr. Ruller said the general discussions are to see how it works. He said it would be close to a full time job, adding the University embraced this and are anxious to do it. He said the

University would do the hiring, etc., and they would have an agreement with the University where the City would pay their share. He said the employee would not be in the City's hierarchy. He said it would be simpler, administratively, if the University picks that up. He said it is intended to be a field position, and not someone sitting in an office. Mr. Ruller said he talked with the University the previous week, and their HR people have not finalized the pay grade or classification of the position. He said that he asked Greg Jarvie if \$40,000 was a good number, and Mr. Jarvie felt it was a good number.

Mr. Kuhar asked what the person would do for that amount of hours, and Mr. Locke said there were a few areas they would focus on initially, including creating programs for students as they come to Kent for their first year. He said most are from out of town, and live on campus.

Mr. Locke said they have two situations. He said they have the people coming in initially as a new student. He said they also have the students who can move off campus after their second year, which is when most come into the community. He said there is a need for an orientation and/or a program for the students. He said it gives them the City's expectations for them as they live in the community. He said they would review the rules and laws, and explain who is responsible for things like trash removal. He said he is not sure they get that information when they are making the transition. He said another issue would be cleaning of the sidewalks. He said they would focus on the more important issues initially.

Mr. Locke said the person would work in the specific neighborhoods where they have problems, meeting with residents who are students and non students. He said they would identify the issues, adding that people may not be as intimidated and/or threatened by a person not carrying a badge. He said they would have that person assess what is going on, having them talk with the staff and/or the university. He said the way it is set up keeps the university heavily involved, along with Greg Jarvie. He said he would expect someone from the Police Department giving a lot of input also. Mr. Locke said others may have a fair amount of interaction, adding that someone dealing with the conflict issues is important.

Mr. Locke said the person would do communication, in general, adding they would see if it can be supplemented by information on the websites, making them more accessible. He said they would get into neighborhood planning also. Mr. Locke said they did not want too much done at one time, so it gives the person the opportunity to focus on the primary objectives.

Mr. Kuhar said that since the University is doing the hiring and drawing up the job description, it almost looks like a University employee. He asked if they would also handle the individual's PERS and insurance, and Mr. Locke said it is being set up to be a contractual position. He said with respect to the job description, 90% of it was done by City employees. He said that Kent State tweaked it, but mostly it was developed by City staff.

Ms. Wallach asked if this contractual position would be eligible for overtime and comp time, and Mr. Locke said he did not think they would get overtime, but there may be some arrangement for comp time if they exceed the required hours by working on a Saturday.

Ms. Wallach said she would think the schedule would be flexible. She asked if they were committed to \$20,000 total, and Mr. Locke said there may be some in-kind, such as office supplies, etc. He said they may have an office at the City and at Kent State, adding he cannot imagine any other cost.

Ms. Wallach said when she suggested this the previous year, she thought of the position like a neighborhood RA. She noted this has expanded, which is great, but a big part of the responsibility is to work on controlling critical times when students get out of hand, such as evenings and weekends. She said the language speaks of "occasionally," adding that she thought about 50% of the time would be spent on evenings or weekends. She said she did not want to misguide someone.

Mr. Ruller said they did not anticipate a typical 8-5 or 9-5 job, nor are they anticipating Monday through Fridays. She said they were talking about Thursdays, Fridays, Saturdays, and Sundays, with start times being around 3:00 p.m. so the person is out there in the early evening hours when the parties may form and/or evolve. He said they talked about the position doing things like supplying "party packs," containing

things like identification bracelets for underage drinkers. He said that other universities have done those sort of thing. He said they do not want underage drinking, and want to keep people out that do not belong there. He said they have not solidified any specific hours, but noted he shares Ms. Wallach's thought. Ms. Wallach suggested they can change some of the wording, as the position can have a lot of time spent during the weekends. Mr. Locke said they can amend the wording.

Ms. Wallach said they have done a great job, adding she is excited that the University and the City have gotten together to institutionalize this position.

Ms. Shaffer said she looked through the job description to see how the individual would work with City officials. She said she saw how they may work with City staff, but asked if there was some thought as to how they would work with the elected officials. Ms. Shaffer said she does a lot of development work, and hoped there would be some way they could work together. She said she was very excited about the position, as it is way too much work for a Council member. She said there is always more to be done, and she was grateful they were reviewing this possibility. She asked if there was any thought on institutionalizing the connection, and Mr. Locke said they can do that, if Council wishes. He said it is no different from any other program in the City, adding any time they have input, whether it is minimal or extensive, they can call Mr. Ruller or one of the staff, who tries to accommodate their concerns. He said he suspected this position would be one of the better-known people, adding he would expect someone from the Police Department needing to talk to them. He said it is reasonable with respect to a Council member. Mr. Locke expressed concern that the position is not deluged with ten million ideas, adding he did not want the position overwhelmed to the point of affecting their ability. He said it is a way to create a process for different entities.

Ms. Shaffer asked if this position would be up and running by Spring, and Mr. Locke said they believe the scenario is to have someone in by May, so they have the summer to set up things and are ready to work with the group in the fall when people return to campus. He said the timing gives the position the opportunity to meet people and get a feel for the environment. He said it may be someone that is already familiar. He said the timing is such that it fits in well with the school year. Mr. Locke said they may be able to experience some of the things that occur at the end of spring semester.

Ms. Shaffer asked how closely they are working with the University on a deal, and questioned whether they are on board, and Mr. Locke said it is on the City at this time. He said they need to find out if Council wants to go forward, adding if they get the "go ahead," they can put on the final touch. He said they can get it going at that point.

Mr. Ferrara asked how they would measure their success at the end of the day, and Mr. Locke said there would be specific goals, adding that some have to be qualitative similar with the success with the snow. He said he was unsure they can measure the sidewalks, and may do just a visual assessment. He said the question is whether programs were created that they are looking for, and has the position been successful developing relationships with the neighborhoods. He said if they get positive feedback, and some of the issues decrease, they can say it had some success. He said they cannot quantify it, but they can evaluate it.

There were no further questions from the Committee, nor audience comment.

MOTION TO AUTHORIZE THE NEIGHBORHOOD LIAISON POSITION.

Motion made by Ms. Wallach, seconded by Ms. Shaffer.

Ms. Wallach said she does not have a problem with paying \$20,000 per year, adding they paid more than that the previous year with extra police officers patrolling. She said it would be cheaper for them.

Ms. Shaffer said they are trying to improve poor relationships, embracing the fact they are a university town, and trying to bring people together. She said they need to improve the outlook, and it could have direct benefits on their citizenship. She said they are establishing a physical connection between the City and the University, as they are on board. She said they need to work on the human connection.

Mr. DeLeone asked if she meant \$20,000 totally for two years, and Ms. Wallach said it was \$20,000 per year.

Mr. Wilson said he did not support this previously, and would not support it at this meeting. He said this was the result of things that occurred on College Street the previous year. He said they had a few weekends where things occurred in the fall, and some City and KSU people talked to people, and calmed it down. He said it worked out fairly well. Mr. Wilson said with their economic times, they need to watch that \$20,000. He said they may have to explain, some day, why they need to cut the programs while adding other people. He said he would not be against this during good economic times, but this was not the time to add the staff.

Mr. Ferrara said he would support the motion, but cautioned them that they need some measurement at the end of two years. He said they cannot just say that everyone feels better and continue with the program, adding that is how some programs become entitlement. He said the concept is good, and probably cheaper than some of the alternatives. He said they need some way to measure their success or failure in two years.

Mr. Amrhein agreed with Mr. Ferrara, adding that an important aspect is that they are fostering a sense of community. He said once the students feel like they are part of the community, they might see some changes. He said when he attended the University, he never saw Kent as part of his responsibilities, and viewed Parma as his home. He said that fostering a sense of community is very important, but agreed with Mr. Ferrara that they need to look at those results.

Mr. Kuhar said he would not support the motion. He said as mentioned by a lot of members, there would be a lot of repercussions in the community. He said it is another case of solving problems caused by a group of people generated from the University. He said he feels the University brings in a certain element. He said the University is on track as they are trying to do something about it. Mr. Kuhar said the community has to clean up the mess, adding he felt the University should fund this to see how it works. He said if it does something good, the City might want to jump on the bandwagon. Mr. Kuhar said they have a new group of people annually, with some unpleasant events. He said some are from out of town and/or underage people who will not be contacted by the liaison. He said they had more success with the Mayor, Student Senate, and a handful of people going door-to-door. Mr. Kuhar said this is to control a problem directly related to the University, and he cannot support it. He said the residents of Kent are paying quite a bit for these activities, and he hated to ask them to pay again.

Ms. Shaffer said she supported this motion, as the seconder. She said the students did respond to that personal contact, but it was above and beyond the role of the Mayor and Council who went out and made the contact. She said in many places, they were unable to talk to the people. Ms. Shaffer said she viewed that as a mini pilot study on the effectiveness for making personal connections, reminding the students they are part of the community and to give them information they may not have.

Ms. Shaffer said that many residents are the university-edge neighborhoods who talk about student behavior. She said they need to address the issue head on. She said the University being on board is a major step forward.

There was no further discussion at this time. The motion carried by a voice vote of 5-2-1, with Mr. Kuhar and Mr. Wilson dissenting. Mr. Valenta abstained.

Chair Valenta said the next issue dealt with the Revolving Loan Fund agreement with the Department of Development. Mr. Ruller introduced **Bridget Susel, Grants Administrator**, who explained this was some administrative housekeeping they needed to do. She said the City has received funds from CHIP, adding those are some of their rehab funds. She said as the loans are repaid, they go into a revolving loan fund. She said this agreement gives them the ability to continue to control the funding and put out new loans.

Mr. Kuhar asked what is needed to get this moving, and Ms. Susel said they need to approve the agreement by Jan. 30, with the emergency clause.

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

MOTION TO APPROVE THE REVOLVING LOAN FUND AGREEMENT WITH THE OHIO DEPARTMENT OF DEVELOPMENT, WITH THE EMERGENCY CLAUSE.

Motion made by Mr. Ferrara, seconded by Mr. Kuhar, and carried by a voice vote of 7-0-1, with Mr. Valenta abstaining.

Chair Valenta said they would discuss the Flag Policy next. Mr. Ruller said this may seem unusual, as they have never brought this forth before. He said a few years ago, when a police officer lost her battle from cancer, they lowered the flag in her honor. He said a fair number of people called to complain the next day. He said it was not that they did not want to honor the loss of a police officer, but felt the ability to raise or lower the flag is well regulated. He said as the result of those calls, **Gene Roberts, Service Director**, began looking into a policy. He said he has looked into the intent of the national procedures and policies, and came back with a recommendation that the City could adopt a policy so they would not be in violation.

Mr. Roberts said there is a group of people who are against lowering the flag without a Presidential order or an order from the governor. He said the US Code that covers the American Flag is specific about the process followed by the Feds, passed down to the State. Mr. Roberts said that one section speaks about the process being "in accordance with recognized customs or practices not inconsistent with the law." He said this is back to local policies. Mr. Roberts said a few other communities set their own policy. Mr. Roberts said they are asking for approval of a policy, which would follow all recognized occurrences. He said two are set by law (Memorial Day and National Police Officers Day), while all the rest are by presidential proclamation. He said they would follow those, and any passed by the governor. He said the others would be issues that come before Council. He said one group feels they should honor their local heroes, while the others feel it should be by presidential order. He said he felt it is a policy best adopted by Council.

Ms. Shaffer asked if they have a City flag, and Mr. Roberts said they do, somewhat. He said there is some recollection of a flag that mimicked the Tree City logo, but he has not seen it for a long time. Ms. Shaffer asked if it had its own separate pole, and Mr. Roberts said it flew below the American flag on the same pole.

Ms. Shaffer asked if they adopt this policy if they are beholden to follow all of the events, and Mr. Roberts said the events listed by date are currently being followed. He said they are either in the US Code or by presidential proclamation. He said one example is the Korean Veterans Day, which is by presidential order. Ms. Shaffer asked if they already do them, and Mr. Roberts said that was correct. Ms. Shaffer asked if this would be an addendum, and Mr. Roberts said it would be an additional policy.

Ms. Shaffer asked who is in charge of the flag, and Mr. DeLeone indicated Mr. Wilson was in charge. Mr. Roberts said it falls to the Service Department, and Gerald Shanley, their arborist. He said Mr. Shanley has made it his persona mission to be sure they are raised and lowered, which comes from his strong military background.

Ms. Wallach said she liked the idea where they would lower the City flag, except no one knows where the City flag is and it does not have its own pole. She said that takes care of it. Mr. Roberts said they would have to resurrect the City flag, and erect a pole. Ms. Wallach commented it is not an alternative.

Mr. Kuhar asked how they can live in a free country, and not have the right to honor their heroes or exemplary people by lowering the flag, and noted he did not expect an answer.

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

MOTION TO APPROVE THE FLAG POLICY AS PRESENTED.

Motion made by Mr. Wilson, seconded by Mr. Kuhar, and carried by a voice vote of 7-0-1, with Mr. Valenta abstaining.

Chair Valenta said the next issue was the sublet of Central School Parking Lot. (Ms. Shaffer sat in the audience at this time).

Mr. Ruller explained that those on Council remember when they reviewed the agreement to rent spaces from the School District in the West River Neighborhood. He said they continued to do that. He said they now have a request, and Mr. Locke will explain it. He said the Unitarian Church wishing to sublease on the days of their services.

Mr. Locke said they were approached by the church, who had a representative present, who had been using the lot over the years, without sanctions and/or blessings. He said they had some issues with people falling in the lot. He said their insurance company told them that without a formal agreement or arrangement, they would not cover people under the policy. He said this caused them to approach the City.

Mr. Locke said they would be willing to pay \$100 a month for use of the lots on Sundays and some week nights. He said they would also be responsible for having the lot cleaned on Sundays. He said the City currently cleans the lot, and it has not gotten a lot of use.

Mr. Locke said before West River was a project and just an idea, there was a concern about a lack of parking. He said the City tried to assist, and ended up leasing three parking lots, helping with the old furniture store and the Kemp building. He said they terminated the lease at the Masonic Temple, as it was not used. He said the lot at the First Christian Church is used extensively. Mr. Locke said this lot, which is the old Central School lot, is used little. He said there is the potential of further use if they have a full lease on the old furniture store.

Mr. Locke said he felt the Church's request was reasonable, and needs Council's authority to execute a sublease, which would run concurrent with their lease with the schools. He said their lease can be terminated at any time, adding the school has told them if they need Central School in the future, they would need the lot. He said if the City's lease ends, so does the church's lease. Mr. Locke said that Jim Soyars said the school board will consider this the next Tuesday. He said they need to know if this is something they would like to do.

Mr. Kuhar asked how many spaces are in the lot; how many are being used; and the annual cost for maintenance and the lease. Mr. Locke said the rent is approximately \$363 per month, going up 2.5% in March, which is part of the lease. He said it is not a lined parking lot, so he is unsure over the count. He said they do lease thirty spaces, although there are more spaces, depending on how people park. He said he never counted the number of spaces, but at one time they lease thirty-eight under the previous lease.

Mr. Kuhar asked how many are being used, and Mr. Locke said he was unsure of one time where there was more than six cars. He said there are some access issues with the lot, and some are not comfortable parking there in the evening. Mr. Locke said that whenever the City thinks of dissolving the lease, they are reminded of their commitment. He said he continues to try and find other options, but has not found any up to this point. He said they are trying to be cognizant of the lease and the cost. He said he is unsure of the cost of plowing, adding it is not as much as the First Christian Church's lot. He said it may be \$2,000 to \$3,000 for plowing annually.

Mr. Kuhar asked if there is any reason why they cannot lease only one-half of the lot, and Mr. Locke said they discussed that previously. He said Council settled on the current arrangement, adding they could revisit it at some point.

Mr. Ferrara asked who was responsible for the shape of the lot, and Mr. Locke said the City is required to maintain the lot, in their lease with the school. He said the church offered to do it, but ultimately, it is the City's responsibility and the schools hold the City accountable. He said he did not see it as prudent to get the church involved with that aspect. He said it is the City's responsibility.

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

MOTION TO APPROVE THE SUBLEASE WITH THE CHURCH FOR THE PARKING LOT LEASED FROM KENT CITY SCHOOLS.

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

Mr. DeLeone asked if they needed the emergency clause, and Mr. Silver suggested it be included. The motion included **THE EMERGENCY CLAUSE.**

Mr. Kuhar said if they are bound to lease that lot, any revenue they get to offset it would be good for the taxpayers. He said if they are only using six to twelve spaces, he would encourage them to renegotiate the lease.

The motion carried by a voice vote of 6-0-2, with Mr. Valenta and Ms. Shaffer 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 BY THIS COMMITTEE:

- 1) **TO AUTHORIZE THE NEIGHBORHOOD LIAISON POSITION.**
- 2) **TO AUTHORIZE THE REVOLVING LOAN FUND AGREEMENT WITH THE OHIO DEPARTMENT OF DEVELOPMENT, WITH THE EMERGENCY CLAUSE.**
- 3) **TO AUTHORIZE THE PROPOSED FLAG POLICY**
- 4) **TO AUTHORIZE THE SUBLET OF THE PARKING LOT LEASED FROM KENT CITY SCHOOLS, WITH THE EMERGENCY CLAUSE.**