

**THE CITY OF KENT, OHIO
KENT CITY COUNCIL
WORK SESSION
WED., APRIL 23, 2008**

This work session of Kent City Council was called to order by John Fender, Mayor and President of Council, on Wed., April 23, 2008, at 7:00 p.m. The purpose of this meeting was for further discussion on strategic planning.

PRESENT: MR. AMRHEIN, MR. DELEONE, MR. FERRARA, MR. HAWKSLEY, MR. KUHAR, MS. SHAFFER (arr. @ 7:04 P.M.), MR. TURNER, MS. WALLACH, AND MR. WILSON

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

Mayor Fender explained he would like to have three or four questions answered, as the result of this meeting. He said they need to discuss the location of future meetings. He said they need to decide on whether they need a facilitator. Mayor Fender said they needed to decide on dates and times for future strategic planning meetings.

Mayor Fender said it was suggested that the Administration take the night off, adding that with the consent of Council, he would rather that not happen. He said the City Manager has been involved in strategic planning previously, and asked if the consensus was to let the Manager stay. Hearing no dissent, Mayor Fender said the Manager would stay.

Mayor Fender asked if they said they wanted staff at their strategic planning sessions, or just some of the times.

Mr. Hawksley said they had previous discussion, adding they should have a two-part process, without staff at the first meetings. He said the staff could be included as they view their current goals, with proposed revisions, and what to do with them.

Mr. DeLeone said he was curious, adding the Manager has done this type of exercise before. He said they are supposed to set the policy, as Council members. He asked the Manager what he thinks is the best method, as they are just a bunch of people voted on by the public.

Mr. Ruller told Mr. DeLeone he wished there was an easy answer. He said he reviewed his notes from the previous week from Jim Bennett. He said Mr. Bennett said there are all kinds of choices and no right answers. He said Mr. Bennett said they need to do what fits their reality, only doing what they can do well.

Mr. Ruller said different cities have used different approaches, and there is no one right answer. He said the "make or break" approach was new, adding he liked that approach. He said it would be a good way to get things started. He said he wished he knew that in other cities. Mr. Ruller said the vision and core values are important, but asked that they not lose track of the fact that they have already done a lot of those issues. He said it is in the form of the Sustainability Goals, the Bicentennial Goals, their vision, and other examples. He said they probably had more than one hundred meetings. Mr. Ruller said they are not starting from scratch. He said Mr. Bennett told them to not try to do more than they think they can do well. He suggested the staff can help by going back to those documents, and cull out an abbreviated version of the mission, the vision, and the values. He said they have to start with those, adding he felt they have them already.

Mr. Ruller said he has seen a lot of the processes get tied up in those discussions, adding it can take a long time to get through those values. He said it is important, but not as important as the end result. He said they need those conversations, but at the end, they need an action list. He said that many times, people get stuck on the first part, and never get to the list.

Mr. Ruller suggested they can help by bringing the information forward, letting them chew on it, and build from there.

Mr. DeLeone noted that he and Mr. Wilson have been through this before. He said he liked Mr. Ferrara's comments in his email. He said they do not want to go over things already done, wasting time. He acknowledged they have new people, adding he would like to hear what they have to say. He said they need to come to a consensus and move forward. He said he has been through eight-hour long sessions at the Top of the Inn and the Bottom of the Inn, and with microphones. He said he is unsure anything came from those meetings. Mr. DeLeone said he did not want to go through that if nothing comes from it.

Mr. Fender told Mr. DeLeone that he felt staff should be present all of the time. He said they are the part timers, and the staff is the professionals who have the answers and have been through a lot of things. He said their staff does a reality check, and can tell them, at appropriate times, that they have information already or whether something has been done. Mayor Fender said the staff is part of the team, adding they have to implement their strategic plan. He said they may not say anything, but they will have the chance to understand where Council is coming from.

Mr. Wilson agreed with Mr. DeLeone, adding if they pull out previous documents, they will see they are almost identical. He said if they do this again, even with the new people, they will still come out with the top four or five being the same as before.

Mr. Wilson agreed with the Manager, Mayor and Mr. DeLeone, that they allow the staff to go through all of the past information, and bring the information back. He said they should look at previous goals, making revisions as necessary, adding they do not need to reinvent the wheel.

Ms. Wallach asked if the new people can get copies of the previous information, and Mr. Wilson said they would get copies. Ms. Wallach said if staff is included, she would like to include the Planning Commission, as their job is planning. She said the new people learned in the public officials class that most planning commissions have been relegated to "aying or naying" developments. She said they would be like staff, observing and possibly contributing one or two things.

Mr. Wilson said he agreed with the Planning Commission's participation, to an extent, where it is relevant. He said they should tell the Council how to develop the budget. He said on those things affecting them, he agreed they should be present.

Mr. Ferrara said it is a great point, especially during discussion on the downtown redevelopment project. He said there may be variances, and if they are present in Council's sessions, the conversations they have may help them with the process and help them understand what Council wants.

Mr. Amrhein said they are going to have a vision, which must be shared by the Planning Commission, or they may do things the Council disagrees with. He said it is very important that the Planning Commission be present during their discussions on economic development.

Mr. Kuhar said as far as the staff being present, he agreed that the Manager should be present. He said certain staff and certain commissions should be present as needed. He said the first thing they need to do is crystalize their five-year goal, ten-year goal, fifteen-year goal, and twenty-year goals, so they know what they are trying to accomplish so they can incorporate the other bodies. He said they need to know how to finance them, and need more than one plan of action to achieve each of those items. He said when they come to the plans of actions that is when all of the minds are utilized. He said he felt there was part of the process that would just be using people's time, when they may not need to.

Mr. Wilson told Mr. Ferrara that he mentioned variances, and that is the role of the Board of Zoning Appeals. He suggested the variances may be needed.

Mr. Turner said he supports what Mr. Kuhar was saying. He said the use of staff should be strategic. He said they need to look at the times, and where to get them involved and engaged. He said that first and

foremost, this is Council's responsibility, not the staff. He said it is great to have their assistance and availability, when it is appropriate or when their input is needed. He said they can then develop the plan, adding it would be nice to let them in, show them where they are, and ask if they see any weaknesses. He said he does not want to get too far away from things. He said it is very important when structuring the process they remember it is Council's plan. He said while they can get input and information made available, the Council must come up with something, as they are going to be held accountable. He said staff needs some time off, adding they do not need to be present every night doing what Council needs to do.

Mayor Fender said he hoped they did not have a lot of strategic planning meetings. He said when planning, they try to get as much information as possible. He said the staff has the overall picture and knows the City much better. He said they, as Council members, may get complaints, but the staff gets more complaints and sees the big picture. He said it is important to include them. He said they may not saying anything at all, but they need to pick the brains of those living daily on the grounds.

Mr. Hawksley said he did not wish to skin the cat. He said they are talking about are two different things. He said the role of the Council is the end, which is where they want the City to go. Mr. Hawksley said in the governance process, the role of the staff is the means of how to get there. He said if the staff wants to watch, that is fine. He said when they are talking about the ends, they do not require talking about the means until you know where you want to go. He said in the basic process, they want to bring resources to the table. He said when they are trying to determine those ends, those are policy ends. He said the generic strategic plan process is, they start with getting to know who is making the plan, adding that is known as team building and they have not done that. He said it is a short 1.5 hour process. He said the next 1.5 hour process is spent looking at what was done before. He said they look at the previous goals. He said then they decide where it is deficient. He said they need to know what ends they are not talking about. He said after that is done, they come up with a short list, prioritize them, and bring in the resources of staff and strategic partners.

Mr. Hawksley said if a goal is to make the city more peaceful, with less confrontation between the students and the police, it is not just involving Council and the police. He said it might include TownHall II or conflict management people from the University. He said if they are thinking about the City in terms of just the staff, that's not strategic planning. He said it is management.

Ms. Shaffer said she wanted to give an argument for a strategic planning session, adding she apologized for being late. She said she was unsure what they were discussing at this time. Mayor Fender said they needed to make a decision about the staff.

Mayor Fender said if he is hearing them, they need to clarify their strategic plan, then bring in the staff, utilizing them when appropriate to use their knowledge. Mr. DeLeone agreed with Mr. Hawksley that one-half of the Council is new. He said they need to reaffirm their goals. He said it can probably be done in about one hour. He said they need the new members' input and they need to know what the new members think. He said they need to figure out their wants and needs, and figure out how to pay for it, taking that to the staff to see if it is reasonable.

Mayor Fender said what he hears them saying is that they need to come together to know what their goals, aims, or planning will be, and then bring in staff.

Mr. Wilson asked if that means they would not have staff put together what they did previously, and do they plan to reinvent the wheel. Mr. Hawksley said they would start with a list, and Mr. DeLeone said it would be their past goals distributed to everyone. Mr. Wilson said that staff would put that together, and Mr. Hawksley suggested the Clerk could do it.

Mayor Fender said he would make a decision at this time. He said they will utilize staff, when appropriate, but they are invited to all sessions. He said they will now quibble over when the time would be appropriate.

Mr. Kuhar suggested that includes staff and other necessary individuals.

Ms. Wallach said they had talked about a facilitator for the process, and ask if they were not using one now. Mayor Fender said they have not got to that point yet.

Mayor Fender said he has heard Mr. DeLeone, Mr. Hawksley, and Mr. Wilson say they needed to review previous goal sessions. He said staff would assemble that, and asked if it would be appropriate to let the staff add other items. He reminded them that Mr. Bennett said the “make or break” items are critical items. He asked if the staff should add what they think, and Mr. DeLeone said they can make recommendations. Mr. Hawksley agreed.

Mayor Fender said his understanding is that after staff compiles that information, it will be presented to Council. He said at that time, staff can chew on it, add, delete, or talk about it. Mr. DeLeone asked if they would receive that information electronically or through the mail, adding it helps to get the information ahead of time. Mayor Fender agreed, adding they would get the information prior to the next meeting.

Mayor Fender said the next issue was about the need for a facilitator. Ms. Wallach said they should use a facilitator after they get the packets and chew on them. Mr. Amrhein said he has been involved in at least twenty sessions, adding he would urge a facilitator. He said when they do not have one, they cannot stay on task. He said it is difficult to stay organized, adding a facilitator’s job is to keep them focused. He said it is vitally important. Mayor Fender asked if they were talking about when the Manager returned with the recommendations, or were they talking about the Manager and the Mayor trying to cull that information. Mayor Fender said he understood that it would be just a presentation.

Ms. Wallach disagreed, adding they would get a facilitator after they get the information and chew on it. Mayor Fender said that was her thought, adding he was unsure of the others’ thoughts. Ms. Wallach said that after they get the packets, chewed on them, and are discussing the make or break issues, they would have a facilitator. Mayor Fender said that would be after the presentation. Mr. Amrhein said keeping them focused is extremely important.

Ms. Shaffer said they needed to spend some time on vision, looking at the previous visions. She said it is important that they need to be able to speak with one voice. She said they can otherwise become fragmented and bogged down in details. She said she wanted to move forward in a wise way. She said they have to agree on certain principles. She said they do not want to reinvent the Sustainability Goals or the Bicentennial Plan. She said they need to find a consensus around that vision, as a vision for Kent, moving forward to the particular items.

Mr. Kuhar asked who or where would they get a facilitator, and how that person would be tuned into where they are at, and Mr. Hawksley said it should be an unbiased party who should have some knowledge about government. Mr. Kuhar asked how they know how to facilitate, and Mayor Fender said they have done it previously. Mayor Fender said they will extract information from the Council. Mr. Hawksley said they will keep Council from choking each other, gathering the data and putting it on a chart. Mr. Kuhar asked if these people are around, and Mayor Fender said they are around.

Mayor Fender said they would have to decide on whom they would get, adding Ms. Wallach suggested someone. Ms. Wallach suggested Dale Helsel, adding he has had some health issues, and may be fine by the time they get to this portion. Mayor Fender said another name mentioned was Sy Murray. Mr. Ruller said Mr. Murray was willing to do it. He said Mr. Murray has the content knowledge of government, adding they liked his demeanor.

Mr. Amrhein said on the issue of the vision and being focused, this process can become extremely cumbersome and outrageously long if they do not focus on a vision. He said it has to be a fairly quick process. Mr. Amrhein said if it goes on and on, they will accomplish nothing. Mayor Fender said the purpose of a facilitator is to keep them moving.

Mr. Hawksley said if they prepare the meeting, people know the agenda and the expectations. He said it

can be done in one day. He said they can have four one and one-half hour sessions, with one half hour for breaks or lunch. He said they need to be prepared. Mr. Hawksley said that a few people on Council need to work with the Mayor and the Clerk to lay out the day so it is effective. He said it can be done in one day, adding out of that day, they can set up time in July to discuss the priorities.

Ms. Shaffer said it sounds like Mr. Hawksley and Mr. Amrhein have had this experience. She suggested they would be good choices to work with the Manager and the Mayor.

Mayor Fender said as a facilitator, they were looking at Sy Murray. Ms. Wallach asked if he was willing to do it pro bono, and Mr. Ruller said he did not know. He suggested Mr. Murray probably would not do it pro bono. Mayor Fender said if this is important and they have to pay for it, it should be done.

Mayor Fender said he would sit down with the Clerk and try to plan out a day. Mr. Wilson said he thought he heard Mr. Hawksley say they needed four one and one-half hour sessions. He asked if they had to do it all in one day, and Mr. Hawksley said they can be a Friday night and a Saturday. Mr. Wilson asked about four one and one-half hour meetings, and Mr. Hawksley said it does not work well. Mr. Hawksley said there have been some with a social on Friday evening, where they talk about what they want to accomplish. He said it is a team building exercise, allowing them to get to know each other. He said the next day, they do the three sessions. He said they do not have to start as early, and are done earlier.

Mr. Wilson suggested they hold that decision until they talk to their facilitator. He said the facilitator may have a way they think would work best. Mr. Hawksley said they may, also, have to work around the facilitator's schedule. Mr. Fender said it appeared they were talking about two days and one full day and one and one-half days.

Mayor Fender asked the Manager his thoughts on when they could return, and Mr. Ruller said they have a full committee schedule for May 7. Mayor Fender asked if that included the Blue Ribbon Panel discussion, and Mr. Ruller said they have a financial update report, and that would be included in that discussion. He said the whole night is fairly busy with regular items. He suggested they allow staff to return with an abbreviated version of what has been done. He said they will get them the original reports as requested, but in terms of their summary, he was thinking of either May 14 or May 28.

Mayor Fender asked if May 14 would give the Manager enough time, and he said he would prefer May 28. Ms. Wallach asked if they would cull it down, once they get the raw material, at this meeting, and Mr. Ruller said this would be the staff's presentation of the "make or break" issues. He said they will summarize the vision, values, core values from previous planning work, and then turn it over to the Council. He said they would have the information in advance.

Mr. DeLeone asked the Manager if the staff is going to look at what they have done and add to it, and Mr. Ruller said they can do that as a starting point. Ms. Shaffer agreed.

Ms. Wallach said she thought they would do that at the day long session. Mr. DeLeone said this would be in advance of the day long session, so they are prepared.

Mr. Wilson said they should give the staff until May 28, adding that May 7 is looking awfully heavy. He said he thought some of those items may need to be moved to May 14. Mr. Wilson said this is vitally important to the staff, adding they do not need to rush through this. He said they need to get it right.

Ms. Shaffer asked if Mr. Ferrara got what he wanted regarding downtown development. She said if they put this off until May 28, it does not make sense. She said it is something they can all agree on to place it on the priority list. She suggested it is one of their top items. She said the multi modal facility meeting is the following day, and she encouraged people to see that, as the pieces all fit together.

Mayor Fender said he is hearing Ms. Shaffer say they need discussion on the downtown area. Mr. Ruller said the discussion is the first Wednesday in May.

Mr. Ferrara said he cannot see how they can say economic development is important, agree to choose the developer and the property, and then go back to plan about it. He said it should run parallel to the other planning issues. He said it is a done deal, adding they cannot reassess it. He said he wanted to be sure it would not be thrown back into the strategic plan. Mayor Fender said it was a good point, as clarification is important.

Ms. Wallach said that May 7 is her birthday and asked if she would get something special. Others mentioned they, too, would be having birthdays. Ms. Wallach suggested they can start planning now.

Mr. Kuhar said it never ceases to amaze him. He said he tries to look at the calendars. He said May 28 is close to Memorial Day weekend, so he planned to go out of town on May 28, and now something is on the calendar. He said it never fails, adding he cannot assume anything. Mr. Kuhar said it is something he cannot change. He said if it is May 28, instead of May 14, he is out in the cold. Mayor Fender said he asked the President Pro Tem that Council not make any decisions while he was out of town for six weeks, but no one complied.

Mr. DeLeone agreed with Mr. Ferrara. He said he was sure the Manager would not let anything slip through the cracks with anything going on. He said he was sure the Manager would return with anything that he needed. He said they would not push the downtown project back, adding they are going straight forward, as are other items on the table. Mr. Hawksley agreed, adding it is an operative issue rather than a strategic issue.

Mr. Ferrara asked what the problem was with May 28, and some members indicated that Mr. Kuhar would be out of town. Mr. Ferrara pointed out it is the fourth Wednesday.

Ms. Wallach said it would be nice to include Mr. Kuhar. She suggested May 21 and asked if it was too soon. Some members said it was a regular Council meeting, and a public hearing was scheduled. Mr. Hawksley suggested a special meeting that night, and asked the Clerk how long the Council meeting would take. The Clerk noted she would not even try to guess.

Mr. Ferrara suggested June 4, and Mr. Hawksley said they are going to need a strategic session sometime. Mayor Fender suggested they stick with May 28. Ms. Wallach asked about May 20, and some members said that was a meeting of Planning Commission.

Mr. Ferrara said if they do it on June 4, and go on summer schedule, they could make up one of those dates. He said if they knew far enough in advance, people could adjust their schedules. He said he did not know what they planned to get out of that night, adding it is not the strategic session. Mr. Hawksley said he was assuming it is whatever the Administration wanted to present.

Mayor Fender said strategic planning is important, but with some of the things on the table, he questioned if it can be delayed until June 4. Mr. Kuhar suggested they could combine in on May 21. Mr. Ferrara said they could do it on June 4, with Mr. Kuhar bringing the late birthday cake for Ms. Wallach.

Ms. Shaffer asked if they could look at the Saturdays in early June for the full day session, while it was still fresh. She suggested June 7, and Mr. Wilson suggested they look at the facilitator's calendar first.

Mr. Amrhein said his son is graduating from high school, adding the whole month is a blur. He said one of the days is graduation, with another day being the party. Mr. Hawksley said his son's graduation is June 1, with the party on June 8. Mr. Amrhein said he thought their party was June 15, a Sunday.

Mayor Fender said they were looking at a Saturday, early in June after talking to the facilitator.

Mr. Kuhar said he feels like he has a fog over his head. He said they are going to put together a strategic plan in one hour. Mr. Hawksley said it would be all day. Mr. Kuhar said whether it is all day, all week, or all month, they are talking about a plan for Kent in 20 years. Ms. Shaffer said they are planning toward that goal. Mr. Kuhar said they have passed resolutions that take years to be enacted. He asked if there is

a magician he does not know about?

Mr. Hawksley said the downtown project is a perfect example. He said it started with strategic planning, although it was not defined that way. He said they have to know what they want.

Ms. Wallach said a strategic plan needs to be reevaluated. Mr. DeLeone said that is why they are going back. Ms. Wallach said they need to reevaluate them every few years.

Mayor Fender said he cannot bring up everything we did, but he will review the minutes and tap into others' brains on things decided.

Mr. Kuhar asked what happens if they bring up past ghosts, and the people in the present do not like it, and Mayor Fender said they would re-prioritize the issues.

MOTION TO AUTHORIZE AN EXECUTIVE SESSION FOR PENDING LITIGATION.

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

Roll call was taken. Voting aye: Mr. Amrhein, Mr. DeLeone, Mr. Ferrara, Mr. Hawksley, Mr. Kuhar, Ms. Shaffer, Mr. Turner, Ms. Wallach, and Mr. Wilson. The motion carried by a voice vote of 9-0.

Mayor Fender recessed at 7:50 p.m. for the Executive Session. Following Executive Session, Mayor Fender reconvened this meeting at 8:15 p.m. Hearing no further business, he adjourned this meeting at 8:16 p.m.

Linda M. Copley, Clerk of Council

John Fender, Mayor & President of Council