

**THE CITY OF KENT, OHIO
WORK SESSION
WED., MARCH 26, 2008**

This work session of Kent City Council was called to order at 7:05 p.m. on Wed., March 26, 2008 by John Fender, Mayor and President of Council.

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

ALSO, PRESENT: J. FENDER, MAYOR; D. RULLER, CITY MANAGER; J. SILVER, LAW DIRECTOR; G. LOCKE, DIR. OF COMM. DEV.; J. FERLITO, HEALTH COMMISSIONER; AND L. COPLEY, CLERK OF COUNCIL

ABSENT: MR. KUHAR, COUNCIL

At this time, Mayor Fender explained that work sessions are an opportunity for staff and the Council to discuss issues. He said they try to obtain a consensus at these meetings. He said they do not entertain motions, nor do they permit public comment.

Dave Ruller, City Manager, welcomed the Mayor back at this time. He explained that in the early part of 2007, they began looking at the neighborhoods, and announced their neighborhood initiative. Mr. Ruller said they outlined a few components that were largely driven by staff research. He said with the decline in ownership, they felt it was important to start at strategic levels. He said one of the elements with their initiative deals with property maintenance code issues. Mr. Ruller introduced **Gary Locke, Director of Community Development**, at this time.

Mr. Locke explained when they came to Council in June, they presented a few things to be done as part of the neighborhood enrichment program. He said there are some differences between houses in the neighborhoods. Mr. Locke said that he had a discussion with Mr. Amrhein prior to the meeting about South Mantua Street. He said some are fixed up, with a house next door that is not so good. He said this is indicative of a lot of neighborhoods in Kent, where they have a mix of those caring for their homes, next to unkept homes. Mr. Locke said some are rentals, while some are owner occupied. Mr. Locke said the issue they are facing is not solely based on rental issues. He said it is not just a rental problem. Mr. Locke said this is a problem they are seeing in many neighborhoods.

Mr. Locke said they tried to look at three elements. He said they have suggested adoption of a property maintenance code, and a few other things that have not yet been presented. Mr. Locke said they want to try and get this element moving, while they continue to look at the other two elements. He said one element is a ticketing program, and the question of how they look at the licensing of rental properties.

Mr. Locke said that currently a "multiple use structure" license, as issued by the Health Department, has a different definition between the Zoning Code and the Environmental Housing Code. Mr. Locke explained that this creates confusion, and they have questioned whether to license them similar to a business. He noted that is a major question in and of itself.

Mr. Locke said while looking at the issue of licensing, some staff felt the City needed to look at the International Property Maintenance Code. He said they obtained a draft copy of this code developed by the International Code Council, a group that is well known across the country. He said a lot of this group's model codes are adopted by many communities across the country. He said Ohio has simplified some of the rules regarding building codes, and they currently have an Ohio Residential Building code that is uniform across the state. He said the commercial building code is fairly uniform.

Mr. Locke said the property maintenance code is not as widely adopted. He displayed a list of forty-one

municipalities within Ohio that have adopted the Property Maintenance Code in Ohio.

Mr. Locke said they have reviewed this Code, and compared it to the existing Exterior Maintenance Code. He said in approximately 1997 or 1998, the City adopted an Exterior Maintenance Code. He said it currently deals with all residential properties, including rental and owner occupied, and does not include the nonresidential properties, such as commercial and industrial. He said they are included only if they are vacant. Mr. Locke said the Code is not all that comprehensive, with respect to its applicability.

Mr. Locke said the current code deals with exterior items only. He said when implementation of the current code was discussed, they had discussion on enforcement being on a complaint only basis. He said they did not have the personnel to go out touring the City. Mr. Locke said currently they are in the process of hiring a new Code Enforcement Officer, and hope to have that person on board by the end of May. He said they had forty-fifty applicants. He said the current code is enforced by the Community Development Department, and includes sections on enforcement and appeals.

Mr. Locke said the proposed code applies to all properties, and it does not matter if a property is vacant or occupied. He said it incorporates interior elements also. Mr. Locke said they need more work on the administration/enforcement section, and were hoping for Council's input. He said another issue is on the enforcement, adding there are issues such as financial capability of the elderly and the timing of implementation if adopted.

Mr. Locke said the Community Development department would enforce this code. He said they have mentioned the idea of bringing other departments together as an enforcement team. He said that thought it still in the early states, adding there is nothing definitive. He said they are trying to be more creative with their resources.

Mr. Locke said that the Fire Department has been helping them with some of their zoning enforcement since the part time code enforcement officer left. He said they have been helpful, adding it is greatly appreciated.

Mr. Locke said they need to address the enforcement and appeals section of the proposed code. He suggested they may wish to consider the Board of Zoning Appeals as the appellate body, instead of creating another body of volunteers. He said they discussed that idea with the Board of Zoning Appeals, who did not have a problem with the idea.

Mr. Locke displayed a list of those items covered by the current code and what would be covered in the proposed code. He said there are a lot of similarities to a point between the two codes. Mr. Locke said the current Exterior Maintenance Code only deals with broken windows. He said the proposed code deals with broken windows and the window elements, such as sashes and various other components. He said it allows them to deal with other areas of deterioration with the window.

Mr. Locke said the new code would include swimming pools and hot tubs, adding the existing code does not deal with either one of those issues. He said there would be more detail about grading and drainage, and the proposed code would deal with exhaust vents, and the private component of sidewalks and driveways. He said the code would allow them to deal with motor vehicles and other equipment, although they have other codes, currently, that deal with motor vehicles. He said it would allow them to deal with garbage and trash.

Mr. Locke said there are some other things, with regard to the exterior, including building security, such as securing doors and windows. He said that address identification and rodent infestation are elements of the new code. He said none of these elements are in the existing code. Mr. Locke said with respect to the Exterior elements, the proposed code is more comprehensive.

Mr. Locke said a lot of people asked about the building code. He noted the Chief Building Office was present. Mr. Locke said the building code deals with construction, but does not deal with the maintenance of a building once it is constructed. He said the building code sets a minimum standard. He said a

builder can meet the building code with a building that is not well constructed. He said their building code does not guarantee a high quality construction.

Mr. Locke said the balance of the comparison list deals with interior items covered. He said there are no interior elements in the current code. He said some of the items that would be included would be structural elements; paints/surfaces; stairs; doors and handrails; rubbish and garbage; insect and rodent infestation; lighting and ventilation; habitable room sizes; food preparation areas; plumbing systems and toilets; heating & electrical facilities; fire safety; egress; and fire protection systems. He said they may wonder why they need to get into the interior. He said it is something for debate, adding it will be a controversial component. Mr. Locke said a homeowner will not complain about themselves, and it will not be seen from the outside. He said that tenants may complain about the items, adding that is where they will find most of the inside issues. Mr. Locke said they need to think about what they want to accomplish. He said there are visible parts, and parts the public does not see. He suggested that as they start dealing with the quality of homes, he is unsure they can stop with the outside of the property. He said some may think it is not the City's business, adding they may be right, to some degree. He said renters have little recourse at this time, adding there are a lot of properties the Health Department does not deal with, such as single family rentals. He said those people have no recourse, unless they file a complaint in court. He said they can ask a landlord to fix it, but if there is no response, they have little recourse. Mr. Locke said this will be a controversial section.

Mr. Locke said buildings are inspected when they are built for mechanical and structural components. He said there is no way for the City to go back in, after wards, unless it is complaint driven, like an electrical issue.

Ms. Shaffer asked if the Health Department can go in a house on rubbish components, and **John Ferlito, Health Commissioner**, said they can go inside. He said if they find health concerns, they can cite the people. Mr. Ferlito said it is a little harder with the owner-occupied homes, adding they need a complaint to get inside. He said their licensed housing units have routine inspections to renew the license annually. He said they had complaints, previously, for owner-occupied houses, and he used the state health nuisance codes.

Mr. Hawksley asked Mr. Ferlito if he said he could go into a single-family house if someone renting it complained, and Mr. Ferlito said that was correct, under the general nuisance law. He said if he goes to court, he must have the house declared a nuisance by the Board of Health. He said there is a little more to the process, and this proposed code would give his department more leverage.

Mr. Hawksley said that one problem they have currently deals with the subdivision of rooms to make additional bedrooms or to put bedrooms in basements. He asked if the Health Commissioner gets complaints about these issues, and Mr. Ferlito said if they have issues, he brings in the Building Department. He said unless they are called in on a complaint, he does not know it exists.

Ms. Wallach asked if the codes enforced by the Health Department are city/state codes, and Mr. Ferlito said their current code is a City code, adopted in 1969, and revised in 1976. Mr. Ferlito said their code is very similar to the elements for single family houses and duplexes. Ms. Wallach asked if some of his codes could be revised to include some of these issues, and Mr. Ferlito said they have discussed that administratively. He said when multiple people are in a house, there are more concerns for safety. He said if they cut it back to single family houses, they may lose the constitutionality. He said they have upheld it twice, during his tenure, in court. Mr. Ferlito said with multiple people, the government has the right, but if they cut it down, weaken our stand for licensing.

Mr. Turner said they have had situations where there are eight cars at a property, but when the property owner is asked, he indicates they only know about the two to three people on the lease. Mr. Locke said the primary piece of law they use is the Zoning Code, which distinguishes between the different types of uses. He said it defines single-family, two-family, and a rooming/boarding house. He explained that when he uses the term "rooming/board house", it is the Zoning Code term that is most synonymous with the Health Code's term of "multiple use structure." He said a rooming house in the Zoning Code is when

there are two or more unrelated people. He said if there is a duplex, they look at both people. He said if there are more than two unrelated people in one or both units, it is a rooming house. He said the Environmental Housing Code does not license until there are four unrelated people in one unit, or three or more units in one building. He said a triplex would be licensed, but a property with two duplexes would not be licensed. He said if they get a complaint, they must demonstrate, through an investigation, that there are more than two unrelated people in the house. He said it is not as straight forward. Mr. Locke said to determine who lives in the house is not as straight forward either. He said they have a fair number of transient people. He said it is not always easy to prove who lives at the house, adding it is more of an art than a science. He said they are also exploring things to "tweak it." He said when they look at three or more unrelated people, they see what it is defined as in the Zoning Code. He said if someone has four unrelated people in a house, the Zoning Department would define it as a rooming house. He said they then look to see if that zoning district allows rooming houses, adding that most do not permit rooming houses. He said it is somewhat difficult because a number of the rooming houses are "grand fathered." He said these are legal nonconforming uses. Mr. Locke further explained that at some point in time when the Zoning Code was changed, it may have made a rooming house not permitted in the new district. He said that was the only way a legal nonconforming use is created. He said they cannot take that right away with the Zoning Code.

Mr. Ferlito said in 1969, the University would register houses that had multiple young people living in them. He said the University felt they could no longer handle it and came to Council to turn them over to the City. Mr. Ferlito said that is when they came up with the Health Code. He said if they can prove there is a health hazard with multiple people in the house, he can force standards upon them. He said the building codes are not retroactive, and some of the homes have been licensed since 1969. He said they threw a lot of people out of basements, etc., and forced owners to get smoke detectors and fire extinguishers. He said the City is permitted to exercise concern for health and safety issues when there are multiple people. He said that was held up in the courts. Mr. Ferlito said they are now seeing wear and tear on duplexes and single family rentals, but have no jurisdiction unless there is a complaint.

Mr. Fender asked how many noncompliant homes are cited during the year, and Mr. Locke said they had more when they had the part time code enforcement officer. He said at one time, that employee had cited two to three hundred properties in the course of the year, adding it can include a variety of things, including grass and weeds. He said that the code enforcement dealt with noncriminal issues. Mr. Locke said that is one motivation for looking at the licensing, adding there are areas where they could be more effective regulating the rentals. He said it would be part of the annual licensing. Mr. Locke said they hear from people that they are a legal nonconforming use and the City cannot make them do anything. He said in some cases, they are accurate, but in other cases, the owner is wrong. He said that is one motivation for exploring the licensing.

Mr. Fender asked if all of the cities shown on the display have used this code, and Mr. Locke said those are the cities that adopted the property maintenance code. Mr. Fender asked if he is assuming that any problems with the code have been upheld in court, and Mr. Locke said he could not tell him that, for certain. Mr. Fender noted it was a fairly stringent code.

Ms. Shaffer asked what recourse tenants would have if they lived in a multiple use structure that was annually inspected and had furnace problems ignored by the landlord, and Mr. Ferlito explained that if a complaint was filed, the Health Department would look at it. He said if it was a problem they were unsure of, they would have the City's heating and electrical inspectors look at it.

Ms. Shaffer asked if they have education for tenants regarding their rights, and Mr. Ferlito said they have developed a few pamphlets. He said they used to talk to freshmen classes at KSU. Mr. Ferlito said their phone number is on the license, with instructions to call if there is a complaint. He said that these licenses have a tendency to be torn down, so they require the owner to give that information to the tenants when they sign a lease.

Mr. Locke said that the Community Development Block Grant program requires fair housing activity. He said they have a contract to do this, and it provides assistance to landlords and tenants. He said they do not provide legal aid, but can help them with housing issues. Mr. Locke said approximately two years

earlier, the Fair Housing Agency put on two different seminars. He said they invited landlords to come to the presentation, and Lt. Lee from the Kent Police Department talked about how to spot potential meth labs. Mr. Locke said there are a few ways to approach those types of issues, but unless his department is brought in with a building issue, there is no good way for them to deal with it, which is why this code would be more useful.

Ms. Shaffer asked how many calls a year deal with interior issues, and Mr. Ferlito said it is approximately twenty to thirty a year. He said they had a lot of complaints about heat this year.

Mr. Locke said he previously mentioned some issues for them to consider. He said one would be the timing of the implementation. He said if they are going to do something, he would like to stretch it out, allowing a later effective date. He said this would permit voluntary compliance. Mr. Locke said they are talking about prioritizing their inventory of residential units. He said one approach was to identify some of the worst properties and to start with them initially. He said they are still talking about that issue. He said his question is about enforcement, adding that normally when the code is enforced, a person is to be cited whether the City sees a violation or receives a complaint. He said there is no discretion given, adding the question is how to approach a few chips of paint on a house versus an entire house needing painted. He said there is only so much any enforcement person can do, adding the police cannot catch every speeder going down Haymaker Parkway. He said if they get more people involved, they will be able to do more with the full time person.

Mr. Locke said another dilemma is timing. He said if someone is cited for their house needing paint, it cannot be done in January. He said if they go forward with this Code, they need administrative guidelines and rules with respect to implementation. He said those would return to Council, adding they are not there yet. Mr. Locke said the staff felt they needed to start the dialogue to get a sense of where they want to go.

Mr. Locke said they talked about the poor and the elderly. He said they obviously have an element in their community of people who do not have money. He asked what happens if people do not have the financial resources, adding it is a tough issue. He said he was unsure they could be exempted, adding they need their properties maintained. He said they do have programs available, but do not have a broad program to help the 200 to 300 annually. He said they spoke a few weeks earlier about CDBG funding, and modified some components so people would not be limited on the loan-to-value issues. He said it is always an issue between the carrot and the stick. He said they want to look at the carrot type of things.

Mr. Locke said they need to decide how they want to implement this program, adding things are going to get worse before it gets better. He said they needed to look at the whole picture.

Ms. Shaffer asked if the results of inspections are public records, and Mr. Ferlito said they were public records. Ms. Shaffer suggested they put them on the internet, and Mr. Ferlito said they cannot do that. He said that someone has to file a request to see a folder, and putting them on the internet would get touchy. Ms. Shaffer said some students had the idea of a public record data so students could know what they are getting into, and Mr. Ferlito said they posted the licensed houses on the internet. He said if there is a house of interest, someone can fill out a request form, and view the folder.

Mr. Ruller said they have heard of things discussed as UL Listed approved or Good Housekeeping approved. He suggested a list of good houses, showing those homes that voluntarily invite inspections and do not have any history of problems with the City. He said they could be given a stamp of approval, and Ms. Shaffer likened it to certified used cars.

Mr. Fender said it is a tough question. He said as he looks at the issue, two things run through his mind. He said they have an older stock of home, and in his opinion, Kent is not a rich city.

Mr. Ruller asked if it is the general consensus to continue the dialogue, adding that similar to the nuisance and party ordinances, they need some administrative processes. He said they need to start developing those guidelines for enforcement. He said that there are the issues of chronic problems. He

said they need to define when something is chronic and when it is normal maintenance. Mr. Ruller suggested they allow Mr. Locke to begin spelling it out. He said they need input from Council, and suggested they may want to involve landlords, students, and different representatives from the university.

Mr. Locke said the basic question is whether they want to move forward, or is staff spinning their wheels. He said they have not given all of the answers in terms of implementation, but need to look at the administrative policy to spell out the enforcement methodology. Mr. Locke said they need to have public input. He said he has no problem hearing the issues, but does not want to cross the line where staff listens, without Council present. He said public hearings are typically done in front of Council, adding he did not wish to step on anyone's toes. He said it is important to hear what people have to say, adding he was sure some may be negative. He said the public needs to hear that this may change the way they do things. He said he does not want to make it a staff only process, adding staff should hear it as well. He said they all need to factor the input into the decision at the end of the day.

Mr. Amrhein said in the newly-elected public officials class he is currently enrolled in, they discussed economic development. He said they mentioned that a city must be aesthetically pleasing. He said it is very complicated, but is vital to attracting businesses. He said the appearance of what people see when they enter Kent is essential.

Mr. Hawksley commended the staff for their work so far. He said the idea of a grace period is a great concept. He said this would allow the enforcement to be approached as a mediating idea. He said this will be taken into account that it takes time to make some changes. He agreed with the sensitivity to affordability. He said some have problems making their end's meet.

Mr. Hawksley told Mr. Amrhein that with respect to his comments, part of the issue is about investment. He said they are always going to have a lot of rental property, and suggested people would be more willing to make an investment, and convert a home to a single family home if there was a community standard. He said on his block, some put money in their properties, while others skate. He said he would like to get a realistic sense of what they can do with one staff person, so they can attack the hardest problem.

Mr. Hawksley said he did not think they needed a long public process. He said he knew the student government had sent a letter, and suggested inviting them to another meeting. He suggested they put more effort into advertising the code, once they have developed a policy schedule. Mr. Hawksley suggested another meeting. He said the problem they are facing now is that they are up against the end of a school year. He asked if it would be nice to do this by the end of this school year so they did not have to wait another six months.

Mr. Turner said he would support this as a mechanism to deal with blight issues, adding it is one of the only things they can do. He said that once this is implemented, it becomes a mandate and they cannot be selective. He said that leads him to the issue of how this may impact someone who does not have the resources and are cited. He said it is an important enforcement mechanism, but like the hotel, they could keep adding on additional costs associated with the inability to get the property up to their standards. He said what they do in those circumstances becomes important, adding he still believes the positive effect outweighs those issues, but he is concerned. He said a lot of people want their properties up to acceptable standards, but do not have the resources. He said that some use their properties as a mechanism for a revenue stream. Mr. Turner said he would like to see the city work harder to allow a way for them to have some type of access or funding, however they come up with it. He said that would allow him to support the process with more zeal.

Mr. Fender said that if that can be done, and there are monies available, it would be more user friendly.

Mr. Fender asked if he can assume they are looking upon this draft favorably, and wish for the staff to go forward. He said he understands they may look at some parts further.

Ms. Shaffer said they have a responsibility to protect their residents, including those who are tenants

living in some substandard housing. She said they also have a responsibility to help people who have rooted their lives in their community. Ms. Shaffer said when she was campaigning, this was one of the main issues. She said the homeowners fear the absentee landlords. Ms. Shaffer said they would have greater harmony if they were on a level playing field and knew the guidelines. Ms. Shaffer said they need to promote this, and need to do public education. She said they need to get the conversation going, adding they need to let the public hear. She said she has a ward meeting, and would share it. She said she would like to hear what people have to say, adding that enforcement is a hot button issue.

Mr. Fender thanked Mr. Locke at this time. A member of the audience asked if anyone could speak, and Mr. Fender explained that work session do not entertain public comment, and there would be another session for the public.

Mr. Fender said their next issue would be to set some guidelines for their strategic planning sessions. Mr. Fender said he was not comfortable with strategy talks. He said he had spoken to a few members prior to this meeting, and if they are going to discuss strategies and methodologies, they need a good, professional facilitator. He said at this meeting, they need to discuss dates and locations. He asked if they wished to have the meeting in the Council chambers or elsewhere. He asked Mr. Ruller for his thoughts at this time.

Mr. Ruller said he was in meetings all day, and did not find a "perfect" definition on strategic planning. He said he did recall some notes from strategic planning sessions he has participated in previously.

Mr. Ruller said he feels that strategic planning is taking the concept of planning, and using it in a more business like fashion. He said they can do anything, but they cannot do everything. He said they need to decide what they should be doing.

Mr. Ruller said that those cities, businesses, and organizations who do it best, get together annually or biannually and do an environmental scan. He said they decide their strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. He said they have done these exercises previously, but this allows them some self-reflection as a city.

Mr. Ruller said they discuss where they are currently, and where they want to be in three and five years. He said five years is a stretch, adding that the one and three year time periods are the critical action time frames. He said the goal is to come to an agreement in terms of the big picture. He said the strategic issues are which path to take, and to set targets.

Mr. Ruller said this is not meant to be an exercise in listening. He said it is fairly specific. He said the essence of strategy is learning what not to do. He said the easy part is coming up with a list of things to do. He said successful organizations have those hard discussions to decide which are the wrong opportunities. He said they cannot afford to do all of the opportunities, so they have to decide which are the wrong opportunities.

Mr. Ruller said that discussion enables them to come up with the action list for setting real targets. He said his goal is to not just have a philosophical discussion. He said one of the Greeks said, "Philosophy bakes no bread", adding they want to bake bread.

Mr. Ruller said he found facilitators to be very effective for making those hard decisions. He said a retreat can be a struggle as they are being asked to turn down things that are opportunities. He said he has the same problem, as he wants to take advantage of every opportunity. He said there are limits, and they do not want to be everything to everyone. He said one other quote is, "Stop trying to juggle thirty balls in the air, and learn to let some balls fall." He said a facilitator can help them.

Ms. Wallach suggested instead of hiring one that they have someone who has been a facilitator and is willing to volunteer his time. She said that since the City is in a budget crunch, she would like to look at that option. Mr. Ruller said he would be happy to look at that option, and Ms. Wallach said they have someone who has already volunteered his time. She said it is the person leading their elected officials'

class. Mr. Fender asked if it was Dale, and Ms. Wallach said that was correct. Mr. Wilson noted if it was Dale Helsel, he used to be a city manager, and Ms. Wallach said he is an international advisor to other cities.

Mr. Wilson said he hated to throw a wrench in the whole thing, but they spent nine months with the Blue Ribbon Panel and have done nothing with it. He said they are going to discuss what they want to do, and still have not made a decision on the financials. He suggested they get that handled ahead of time, so they know if they are going to boost their income or if what they have is the only pot of money they have.

Mr. Hawksley suggested they put that in Finance Committee for April. He said that is one of the three strategic goals they settled on last January. He said it is a simple matter of putting it in committee. He agreed they studied the issue for a full year. Mr. Fender said he sees that as a part of the strategy plan, adding it might be a priority. He said they need to look in a visionary way. Mr. Wilson asked if they were saying to include it in the strategic planning, and Mr. Fender said it is a component of the plan. Mr. Wilson said they need to address it before they move on.

Mr. Turner said he could not agree with Mr. Wilson more on the issue of deal in with the Blue Ribbon Panel. He said they need to say something about all of the work those people put into the process, and agreed it is part of the overall plan. He said the strategic planning session is to educate them as to how they should function as a governmental body with deciding their priorities and the implementation/establishment of them. He said he sees it a little differently, adding they are one in the same, while a little different. He said one is an educational retreat for Council and administrative leaders. He said he is in agreement with Mr. Wilson is saying, adding they definitely end to deal with it. He said it has just been sitting, adding he has wanted to find out what is going on. He said the community wants to know where they stand. Mr. Turner said it is essential to take the earliest possible opportunity to deal with the issue of strategic planning.

Ms. Wallach was going to say she agreed with Mr. Wilson, adding she felt they could incorporate it into their strategic planning session as "part of the pieces." Mr. Fender suggested that may be the driver, adding they should look at it initially. Mr. Wilson said he did not care how they did it, adding he felt they needed to address that issue before they made plans to move forward, without knowing what they have to move forward with, financially.

Mr. Ruller said he is hearing that free facilitation is a good thing, adding that he is also hearing that finances are a big piece. He said he met earlier in the week with the Mayor and the Clerk, and they noted that the last two Wednesdays in April are open. He asked if that would work. Mr. Wilson suggested they coordinate with a facilitator, but said for him that a couple of two-hour sessions are better than one eight-hour session.

Mr. Hawksley said he is comfortable with Wednesday nights. Mr. Wilson said he was not objecting to that, but suggested they make sure it works with the facilitator. He said that the facilitator may want another building.

Ms. Wallach asked the Manager if he wanted one of them to talk to Mr. Helsel, and Mr. Ruller said he would talk to him.

Ms. Shaffer asked if they can be less formal, possibly sitting around a table, and also asked about public involvement. Mr. Ruller said that he has gone to hotels in the city where he worked, or a large room. Mr. Ferrara noted they do not have a hotel yet. Mr. Ruller said they have even had seating assignments, alternating Council with department heads. Mr. Ruller said the facilitator would lead the process, adding it works well. He said their meetings were always open, because of the law, but they did not have feedback sessions built into those sessions. He said those cities were also sensitive to public comment, but was meant to keep Council focused as it was their plan.

Mr. Hawksley said that the public typically reacts to what they come up. He said they will target the

stakeholders, as they are not going to do everything themselves. He said they can set up time to work on some of the things, beyond the "Big Three" on their list.

Mr. Wilson said anything they discuss will be done in committee for further discussion. He said he liked Mr. Ruller's idea of having senior staff involved. He said they can offer their input, while saving the City some time and energy. He said he was never in a retreat where staff was involved, and other members disagreed. Mr. Hawksley said they met, previously, at the fire station and the senior staff was present.

Mr. Fender said it appears they have no problem with Dave or someone looking at some other site. Mr. DeLeone said the fire station conference room was comfortable. He said it was a good location.

Mr. Hawksley suggested one without the staff. He said they do not know each other all that well. He said they can refine what they wish to discuss, and bring in the staff. He asked that they talk to the facilitator and see what he says.

Mr. Fender said they would begin on April 23, 2008. Mr. Fender adjourned this meeting at 8:20 p.m.

Linda M. Copley, Clerk of Council