

**THE CITY OF KENT, OHIO
FINANCE COMMITTEE
WED., JULY 11, 2007**

This meeting of the Finance Committee of Kent City Council was called to order on Wednesday, July 11, 2007 at 8:45 p.m. by Wayne Wilson, Chair.

PRESENT: MR. BARGERSTOCK, MR. DELEONE, MR. FERRARA, MS. GAVRILOFF, MR. HAWKSLEY, MS. OSWITCH, MR. SCHULTZ, AND MR. WILSON

ALSO PRESENT: J. FENDER, MAYOR; D. RULLER, CITY MANAGER; J. SILVER, LAW DIRECTOR; G. LOCKE, ACTING COM. DEV. DIR.; AND E. ZORC, ACTING CLERK OF COUNCIL

**ABSENT: MR. KUCHAR, COUNCIL
L. COPLEY, CLERK OF COUNCIL**

Mr. Wilson said the first item on their agenda dealt with a lease agreement for 211 E. Summit Street. **Dave Ruller, City Manager**, introduced **Gary Locke, Acting Director of Community Development**, who would discuss the single applicant they have for available space.

Mr. Locke said the business is Rock River Bike, adding the owner has a business in Clinton Ohio. He said he is interested in opening a second store in Kent, and would like to do it in the Kent Business Development Center, previously known as the Incubator. He said this was the only interest they received as the result of solicitations in the newspaper. Mr. Ruller noted that as a biker, he is delighted in their interest. He said they carry a nice line of bikes, and were anxious to be downtown. He said there are not as many vacant properties downtown, and in the end, for financial reasons, since a bike shop is not a high profit business, the owner felt it was wise to ease into the City and grow from there.

There were no questions from the Committee nor audience commented at this time.

MOTION TO AUTHORIZE THE LEASE AGREEMENT WITH ROCK RIVER BIKE @ 211 E. SUMMIT STREET.
Motion made by Mr. Schultz, seconded by Ms. Gavrilloff.

Mr. Bargerstock commended the Administration for following the procedures. He indicated it is refreshing that this was advertised to the whole world. He asked that they continue to do this, as it is a fair process.

The motion carried by a voice vote of 8-0-1, with Mr. Wilson abstaining.

Mr. Wilson said the second item on their agenda dealt with staffing issues for code enforcement. Mr. Ruller said they have discussed staffing issues previously. He said the previous Code Enforcement Officer did leave, so it presented the opportunity to revisit the issue before advertising the position.

Mr. Locke said when they found out their employee was leaving, they felt it was necessary to advertise and move the position as quickly as possible. He said they have had discussions on code enforcement previously. Mr. Locke said they indicated previously that they should see about upgrading this position to a full time position. He said it is difficult, but felt it was best to get a feel from Council, so they could advertise the position. He said they felt they would get a different pool of applicants if it was a full time position. He said the primary reason Mr. Hall left was because he was offered full time employment in another community. He said if they keep it as a part time position, they will have to deal with that issue. Mr. Locke said they limit their applicant pool by keeping it part time.

Mr. Locke said there are benefits to being full time. He said if the public called on a Tuesday or Thursday, Mr. Hall was not there, as he worked twenty-four hours weekly. He said he was sure there was frustration because of that fact. He said they had difficulty in continuity because of the part time basis. He said Mr. Hall made it work, but if it were full time, the continuity would be better.

Mr. Locke said some of the internal discussions have been that up until now, the Code Enforcer has been a reactor to a complaint. He said as they look at code enforcement issues in Kent, the question they must ask is whether they want to do it reactively or if they wish to be more proactive, having this individual going through the neighborhoods, doing an inventory. He said this would enable them to deal with potential violations. Mr. Locke said they need to look at upgrading the position as a full time position. He said as they look at these issues, they would beg the issue of a full time position as well. He said it needs to be discussed at this time.

Mr. Locke said that no matter what they change and what codes are implemented, they will only be as good as the staffing to enforce them. He said if they limit their staffing, they will get the same type of quality control in the future as they are getting currently. He said they need at least one full time position to deal with some of the issues they are seeing on a daily basis.

Mr. Ferrara asked if there was any potential in changing a position within to allow for this, as they balance expenditures and personnel issues, and Mr. Locke said Ms. Gilbert was a part time position. He said he was unsure what position they would convert, as all the rest of them are full time. He said they have eliminated at least one position in the last seven to eight years. He said they would have to discuss it, adding he is unsure if they could take it from within the department.

Mr. Hawksley asked how the help from the Fire Department assists the scenario, and Mr. Locke said that is assisting them on an interim basis. He said they distributed some of Mr. Hall's duties throughout the department, adding he is doing some of it at this time. He said they looked at a few areas, like the rooming house issues. He said they spoke with the Safety Director and the Fire Chief, who were willing to help them with staffing issues. He said the two Fire Department personnel will do a lot of the rooming house issues, adding that will increase closer to the school year. He said it is significant in terms of the assistance, adding he is unsure it will be a permanent issue.

Mr. Ruller said one of their goals is to do more of a coordinated process. He said that they are still a bit disjointed with Fire, Police, Zoning, and Code Enforcement doing their jobs. He said part of the discussion was with cross training. He said that the fire personnel are authorized to enforce many of the things that the Code Enforcer can enforce. He said they are looking, in the long term, how to throw more resources at the problems.

Ms. Oswitch asked if they are able to maintain being on top of the issues, as far as court hearings and search warrants, and Mr. Ruller said he would defer to those who deal with that issue. Mr. Locke said it is tough, adding they are stretched. He said Heather Phile is doing the grass and weeds complaints, as well as some of his duties so he can handle Director duties. He said they have been spreading the work around for the last nine or ten months.

Ms. Oswitch asked if they go forward with a new employee, when do they plan to fill the position, and Mr. Locke said it would be two to three months.

There were no further questions, and no audience comment.

MOTION TO APPROVE THE CODE ENFORCEMENT OFFICER AS A FULL TIME POSITION.

Motion made by Mr. Ferrara, seconded by Ms. Oswitch.

Mr. Ferrara said it is almost hypocritical to speak of the problems they are having with boarding houses and zoning issues, and to not have a full time inspector to address those issues. He said it is a timely issue, and says a lot about the fact they are enforcing their codes to make sure their standards are upheld for the community.

Ms. Oswitch agreed with Mr. Ferrara, adding they have discussed it previously. She said it is hard to get issues solved on a part time basis. She said she would love to give them twelve code enforcers, if they had the money, adding it will revitalize their neighborhoods. She said it is another piece of the puzzle.

The motion carried by a voice vote of 8-0-1, with Mr. Wilson abstaining.

Hearing no further business before this Committee, Chair Wilson adjourned this meeting at 9:00 p.m.

Transcribed by Linda Copley, Clerk of Council, this 25th day of July, 2007.

Linda M. Copley, Clerk of Council

ACTION RECOMMENDED:

- 1) **TO AUTHORIZE A LEASE AGREEMENT FOR 211 E. SUMMIT STREET**
- 2) **TO AUTHORIZE UPGRADING THE CODE ENFORCEMENT OFFICER TO A FULL TIME POSITION**