

**APPROVED MINUTES OF THE
COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE**

RETREAT

January 28, 2023

Clubhouse, Covenant Park

8:30 A.M.

Present: Commissioners: Mayor Pro-Tem Robert Coughlin (by electronic media), Betsy Artz, Ron Draayer, Maurice Groce, Clarkston Morgan, Jessica Ann Tyson, and Mayor Stephen Kepley.

Staff present: Finance Director Tom Chase, Executive Assistant to the Mayor Stephanie Fox, Deputy City Administrator Shay Gallagher, DPW Director Chad Griffin, City Clerk Dan Kasunic, Police Chief Bryan Litwin, Fire Chief Brent Looman, Parks & Recreation Director Val Romeo and City Attorney Jeff Sluggett.

Mayor Kepley opened the meeting by introducing the two new staff members in his office, then spoke of the estimated population of Kentwood to be around 56,000 and the issues that come with an increasing population including an increase in cost of operation. He asked City Attorney Sluggett to review the Open Meetings Act and the legal implications.

LEGAL DISCUSSION-OPEN MEETINGS ACT AND FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT.

City Attorney Sluggett reviewed certain points of the Open Meetings Act along with some court decisions that clarified what is allowed. The commission specifically had a discussion on when to have public comment pertaining to an issue or project. Attorney Sluggett spoke on the City Charter and how amendments would be handled. He noted that for social media, the need to be careful not to represent themselves as speaking on behalf of the city. Have a disclaimer.

FINANCE PRESENTATION.

Finance Director Chase and Mayor Kepley noted the information provided covered additional years than normal because of the upcoming discussions on Police and Fire staffing. Finance Director Chase stated the information is reflecting a conservative projection on revenue and staffing, with the Mayor discussing timing of any proposed millage question.

POLICE DEPARTMENT STAFFING AND PROPOSED STAFFING AND FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS.

Police Chief Litwin reviewed the proposed staffing changes including the timeline if a possible millage were to pass. They spoke of the question on finance to support the increase in staff and the necessary equipment needed to support the increase. Fire Chief Looman informed the commission as the population increases there may be a need to have an additional medical unit placed at station two that would require adding six additional Fire Fighters.

PARKS & RECREATION FUNDING AND PROJECT INFORMATION.

Parks & Recreation Director Romeo, DPW Director Griffin, Deputy City Administrator Gallagher and Mayor Kepley spoke on upcoming park projects, priorities, safety standards to be met and ongoing projects with some of the projects to be funded by Community Development Block Grants. Specifically trail projects to begin in the spring along the Paul Henry Trail. They spoke of the need for maintenance and how the cost for all projects including equipment will need to be incorporated into the yearly costs. They spoke of the revenue calculations were up to the year 2038 with some projects front loaded in the early years. They are also working on finding grants and private funding to aid in funding projects including possibility borrowing from the Special Assessment Revolving Fund.

OTHER ITEMS DISCUSSED.

The commission discussed meeting more often to discuss these possible millages and projects and when to meet.

Some commissioners wanted the Mayor to have a State of the City address.

All wanted to emphasize getting the word out on the projects going on in the city other than Facebook posts.

Mayor Kepley spoke of Finance Director Chase and his upcoming retirement and looking into a nation-wide search for a replacement because of the complicated nature of his job.

The meeting was adjourned at 1:03 P.M.

Dan Kasunic
City Clerk

Stephen C.N. Kepley
Mayor