



For Immediate Release

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August Ballot to Include Millage Question for Kentwood Park, Trail and Recreational Improvements

Kentwood, Michigan, Feb. 24, 2020 – The Kentwood City Commission has unanimously approved a millage question to be put on the August ballot for voters' consideration to improve Kentwood parks, trails and recreational facilities and programming.

The ballot question will ask voters to consider authorizing a millage of 0.9 mills for a period of 10 years, which would then be reduced to a perpetual millage of 0.65 mills. The tiered millage would be dedicated solely to construct, operate, maintain and acquire parks, trails and recreation improvements and programs.

If approved, the millage would fund improvements to the City campus, a new community center, improvements to all parks and allow for trail improvements, as well as support enhanced programming.

“Since celebrating the City’s 50th anniversary in 2017, considerable time and effort has been dedicated to developing plans for the next 50 years of community growth,” Mayor Stephen Kepley said. “With clear direction from Kentwood residents, the plans would improve all the parks and enhance the trail systems, while providing for a central community gathering place, which is a frequent request from our residents.”

A mill is 1/1000 of a dollar or .001 cents. If a tax rate, or millage rate, is a 0.9 mill, a resident would be taxed .009 cents for every dollar, or \$0.90 per \$1,000 of the taxable value of his or her property. For a 0.65 mill, that would equate to \$0.65 per \$1,000 of taxable value.

For example, a residential home with a taxable value of \$100,000, the cost of 0.9 mills would be \$90 per year for 10 years. After 10 years, the millage would reduce to 0.65, which would equate to \$65 per year.

The proposed millage would support the following improvements:

- **Bowen Station Park:** New restroom, new playground components, gateway signage, site amenities, landscaping
- **Burgis Park:** Trail and sidewalk improvements, drinking fountain
- **City campus:** Splashpad, playground, plaza, shelters, stage, event lawn, parking, restrooms, site amenities
- **Community center:** Approximate 40,000-square-foot community center (to be designed)
- **East Paris Nature Park:** Trail improvements, signage, site amenities

- **Home Acres Park:** Skate park improvements, shade shelters, lighting, signage, site amenities, landscaping
- **Jaycee Park:** New restroom/program building, playground structure, basketball court, parking improvements, playground
- **Kellogg Woods Park:** Restrooms, softball/baseball field, landscaping
- **Northeast Park:** Restrooms, playground, splashpad, site amenities, landscaping
- **Old Farm Park:** Parking improvements, playground or splashpad, shelter, site amenities
- **Paris Park:** Trail improvements, signage
- **Pinewood Park:** Splashpad improvements, pickleball/tennis courts, restroom, shade shelters, site amenities, landscaping
- **Rondo Street Station Park:** Playground, site amenities, landscaping
- **Stanaback Park:** Playground, ADA improvements, parking improvements, signage, pickleball courts, site amenities, landscaping
- **Stauffer Station Park:** Kiosk, lighting, signage, site amenities, landscaping
- **Summerwood Park:** Playground, landscaping
- **Trails:** Repair, replacement or the creation of new connections
- **Veterans Memorial Park:** New soccer field and playground expansion (to be completed in FY 2021 via Community Development Block Grant funding)

“The improvements identified through our extensive community engagement and planning process demonstrated our community needs have grown beyond our current budget,” said Val Romeo, Kentwood Parks and Recreation director. “The Parks and Recreation Department has exhausted current general funds, including a parks millage that expired in 2013. We have only been able to achieve improvements through various grant opportunities which are becoming more and more difficult to acquire.

“To keep pace with our growing community needs, new funding is critical.”

The City Commission decision comes on the heels of a recommendation made by the City of Kentwood Parks, Trails and Recreation Advisory Committee. The City Commission worked with the committee to refine the plan.

The plan objectives are to begin improvements to City campus in year two, address the most immediate needs at every park within the first five years, start construction on a new community center in year five and complete all remaining improvements within 10 years.

In addition to the potential permanent dedicated millage, the City would contribute up to \$3.6 million from other funding sources and a future loan of up to \$5 million, which would come from the City’s Special Assessment Revolving Fund. An internal loan would eliminate the need to issue a bond and associated interest.

The 19-member advisory committee included a broad cross-section of Kentwood residents to ensure the diverse needs of the community would be represented in the review of the proposed improvements. Ed Kape, who currently serves on the Planning Commission and as chair of the Parks and Recreation Commission, served as chair of the advisory committee. Dustin Moseley, a Parks and Recreation commissioner, served as vice chair.

“At the charge of City Commission, Kentwood residents from all over the community pulled together to create this plan,” Kape said. “As residents, we unanimously concluded that a millage was

necessary to create a sustainable funding plan for the future of our parks, trails and recreational programming.

“We are pleased the City Commission has approved putting the millage question on the August ballot so residents can weigh in on this opportunity to support our parks in a new and meaningful way.”

In developing its recommendation, the advisory committee reviewed, and prioritized improvements identified in the Parks and Recreation Business Plan, Parks Master Plan, Non-Motorized Trail Plan and findings from the Plan Our Parks – POP! Public Engagement Series.

“We are thankful for the residents’ involvement in the committee and its holistic review process,” Kepley said. “The detailed visionary planning they’ve contributed to will increase Kentwood’s excellent quality of life for many years to come.”

Kentwood is home to more than 13 miles of non-motorized trails, which are used year-round by residents and visitors, as well as parks that cover more than 300 acres. More than 700 recreational programs and numerous community events for people of all ages and abilities are offered through the Parks and Recreation Department in the Kentwood Activities Center, on City campus and other locations.

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