

Article published May 2, 2007

City Council votes funding for gardening

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Toledo City Council last night spent some of a promised \$334,000 surplus to beautify gateway intersections and to reinstate funding for two agencies that were cut from the budget March 30.

Council voted 7-4 to approve Mayor Carty Finkbeiner's request for \$39,900 to contract with a landscaping firm to plant flowers at and maintain 22 gateway gardens.

Bill Franklin, director of public service, said the work would begin immediately, adding that the gardens would bloom by Mother's Day and Memorial Day.

Voting in support were Councilmen Rob Ludeman, George Sarantou, Betty Shultz, Michael Ashford, Joe Birmingham, Wilma Brown, and Phil Copeland.

Voting no were Councilmen Michael Craig, Ellen Grachek, Joe McNamara, and Frank Szollosi. Councilman Mark Sobczak was absent.

Mr. Craig said that given the city's budget constraints he couldn't justify spending money on gardens.

Ms. Shultz said she opposed the urban beautification effort when it started several years ago, but now considers it critical to attracting new businesses and visitors to the city.

"The city looks beautiful and clean and those are two things businesses want," Ms. Shultz said.

Dennis Garvin, commissioner of forestry, said the program spent \$72,000 last year. The ordinance contained a clause requiring the approval of city employee union American Federation of State County and Municipal Employees Local 7 to avoid a possible grievance over outsourcing city jobs.

Mr. McNamara said the clause was an inappropriate delegation of council's authority.