City of Kent

Wednesday, September 20, 2023

Regular City Council Meeting

320 S. Depeyster Street, Kent, OH 44240

MINUTES

7:30 P.M. Regular Council Meeting

At 07:30 PM, Mayor Jerry T. Fiala called the Regular City Council Meeting to order.

Present:	Mr. Jack Amrhein, Mr. Michael DeLeone, Mr. Garret Ferrara, Mr. John Kuhar, Ms. Gwen Rosenberg, Ms. Heidi Shaffer Bish, Mr. Roger Sidoti, Mr. Robin Turner, Ms. Tracy Wallach
Also Present:	Mr. Jerry T. Fiala, Mayor, and President of Council; Mr. Dave Ruller, City Manager; Mr. Eric Fink, Assistant Law Director; Ms. Bridget Susel, Community Development Director; Ms. Melanie Baker, Service Director; Mr. Jim Bowling, City Engineer; Ms. Amy Wilkens, Clerk of Council

Opening Remarks and Pledge of Allegiance

Mr. Amrhein welcomed the Kent State University Journalism students in attendance and asked everyone to stand for the Pledge of Allegiance.

Approval of Minutes

MOTION TO APPROVE AUGUST 16, 2023 REGULAR MEETING MINUTES MADE BY Mr. Michael DeLeone, SECONDED by Mr.John Kuhar and CARRIED by a voice vote of 8-0-1 with Mr. Sidoti voted 'abstain'.

Communications

Public Comment

Mayor Fiala read the following statement:

"While the law does not require Council to provide time for public comment, we have historically invited the public to make comments and we appreciate their input. This is the time when residents and others can comment on matters that concern them. However, we will not engage in debate, and as President of Council, I reserve the right to end any public communication that is disruptive, embarrassing, harassing or otherwise objectionable. We ask you to give your name and address and limit comments to three (3) minutes."

Ms. Amy Wilkens, Clerk of Council, introduced the first speaker, Mr. Robert Wilson.

Mr. Wilson read from the following statement:

"Mayor Fiala, members of the council. My name is Robert Wilson. I live at 536 N. Willow St. in Kent. I am here to request that council initiate action to bring in additional revenue to the city without increasing taxes, with a public-private partnership. Some examples from other Ohio cities illustrate the kind of project I mean. In August, the city of Akron announced a request for proposals from private businesses that produce ground-based solar-generated electricity, to lease from the city some unused land, to construct solar electricity-generating facilities and pay rent to the city for use of the city's land. The land in question is the former Hardy Rd. Landfill. Finding a solar partner to rent this land makes a lot of sense. In a similar vein, Dayton is seeking proposals for a solar installation. The city conducted a feasibility study in the fall of 2022 to consider ground-mounted solar on city-owned property adjacent to the Miami Water Treatment Plant (WTP) and adjacent to the Water Reclamation Facility (WRF). At this time, the City has decided to move forward with soliciting proposals for installing roughly 5 MW of ground-mounted solar at the Miami WTP with the primary aim of reducing electric bills while also reducing carbon emissions, utilizing a brownfield site, and showcasing the city's commitment to its climate goals.

And, there are cities that have gone beyond seeking proposals. Cincinnati is home of the largest city-led solar array in the U.S. It began producing electricity in the Spring of 2022. It cost 12.5 million dollars, but Cincinnati did not pay any of that. Instead, they entered into an agreement to purchase power from the array to provide enough clean, renewable energy to power all city of Cincinnati buildings and facilities. That includes City Hall but also places like health clinics, police districts, and Greater Cincinnati Water Works facilities. Cincinnati negotiated with the land owners, working out an arrangement where those farm owners get more in fees from the solar operation than they would have gotten from leasing to soybean growers. I mention this project as an example of a creative approach to saving money and lowering a city's carbon footprint, without large capital investment by the city. Some examples of how Kent might try this. We have some properties that might work, parking lots, our water treatment plant or maybe our wellfield, and even rooftops under city control. We also have a sizeable former industrial property in Kent. Even if the city doesn't own it, we might be able to come to some arrangement with land owners who might be interested in turning unused land into a money maker. I realize that Akron, Dayton, and Cincinnati are all much bigger than Kent, so I also looked for smaller cities that have solar projects going. In Cohoes, New York, a working-class community of 17,000 residents, the town turned to its own reservoir as a way to power its municipal buildings with renewable energy, using a floating solar array."

Ms. Wilkens called Ms. Ann Ward to speak next.

Ms. Ward approached the microphone and introduced herself to Council. She introduced herself as someone who has a history of being an environmentalist since moving to the area and expressed strong support for a solar array project. They emphasize that the solar project would be a "win-win" situation as it wouldn't incur any costs for the City of Kent and aligns with the city's climate action plan. The project is characterized as a "feel-good" initiative and earnestly hopes that it would receive positive consideration from Council.

Written Communication

1. The Civil Service Commission Meeting Agenda for August 21, 2023, was received and posted on August 18, 2023.

2. An unsigned letter from a resident who resides on Mohawk Place in Kent in regard to Portage County not placing a recycling contract bid was received and forwarded to Council on August 29, 2023.
3. The Standing Rock Cemetery Board of Trustees Agenda for the meeting on September 14, 2023 was received on September 6, 2023.
4. Email from Christopher Myers in regard to the Shaw Drive/Land O'Lakes noise complaint received on September 6, 2023.
5. The Planning Commission Agenda for the meeting on September 19, 2023, was received on September 11, 2023.
6. Meeting minutes from the June 8, 2023, Portage County Solid Waste Management District Policy Committee Meeting were received on September 12, 2023.

Additional Communication Received After Agenda Published:

1. The Civil Service Commission Meeting Agenda for September 18, 2023, was received and posted on September 14, 2023
2. The Parks and Recreation Board Packet for their meeting on September 21, 2023 was received and posted on September 15, 2023.
3. An anonymous email from a Kent resident in regards to the recycling contract with Republic Services was received and forwarded to Council on September 13, 2023
4. A letter regarding acceptable recycling material questions from Diane Stresing and an empty drink container in a plastic bag was received and forwarded to the Council on September 15, 2023.

City Manager's Report

1. Request Council's authorization to accept a $5,000 donation from the Jo Woodward Solem Memorial Foundation to Kent Parks and Recreation in support of Art in the Park.
2. Request Council's authorization to schedule the "Democracy Day" public hearing for 6 pm on October 4, 2023.
3. Request Committee of the Whole time to provide an update on the status of the construction of the new City Hall building.
4. Request Health & Public Safety Committee time to present Council with an overview of the local preparations for the 2024 Eclipse event.
5. Asking for Health & Public Safety Committee time to discuss the proposed idling ordinance to be presented by Council member Tracy Wallach.
6. Requesting Health & Public Safety Committee time to provide a staff report in response to the proposal to allow overnight parking in Kent.
7. Request Health & Public Safety Committee time to present proposed updates to the City Code that are designed to streamline the approval of new and recurring special events in Kent that require street closures.
8. Request Streets, Sidewalks & Utilities Committee time to request Council's authorization of a permanent access and utility easement.

MOTION TO APPROVE CITY MANAGER'S REPORT MADE BY Mr. Jack Amrhein, SECONDED by Ms. Gwen Rosenberg, and CARRIED by a voice vote of 9-0-0.

Ms. Gwen Rosenberg expressed gratitude for a generous donation made by the Joe Woodward Solem Memorial Foundation to Kent Parks and Recreation in support of "Art in the Park." She said she appreciated this substantial contribution and mentioned that Art in the Park, which the donation supported, was an outstanding event. She concluded by thanking the Joe Woodward Solem Memorial Foundation once again for their support.

Standing Committees & Legislation

Committee of the Whole

MOTION TO APPROVE SEPTEMBER 6, 2023 COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES MADE BY Mr. Garret Ferrara, SECONDED by Mr. Michael DeLeone and CARRIED by a voice vote of 6-0-3. Ms. Rosenberg, Ms. Shaffer Bish and Mr. Sidoti abstained.

MOTION TO APPROVE ACTION(S) RECOMMENDED MADE BY Mr. Michael DeLeone, SECONDED by Ms.Tracy Wallach. Before the vote, there were comments made by several Council members.

Ms. Shaffer Bish apologized for her absence during a previous meeting due to family-related issues. She expressed support for Bridget Susel's efforts to redraw district boundaries, acknowledging the complexity of this task. The main concern raised is that the redrawn districts are based on inaccurate census data, particularly for Ward 5, which contains a lot of off-campus student housing. Ms. Shaffer Bish said that the pandemic and students leaving during that time resulted in a significant undercount for Ward 5. She said that despite their support for the idea of expanding Ward 5, the speaker notes that this expansion is based on flawed data, making it problematic. She suggests a potential solution, which is to put a charter amendment on the ballot to change the variance from 10 percent to 15 percent. This change would allow the districts to remain largely intact despite the inaccuracies in the census data. Ms. Shaffer Bish acknowledges that some residents might be confused by changes in district boundaries but argues that this is a lesser issue compared to using flawed data. She expressed her belief in letting citizens decide through a vote on the charter amendment. If citizens vote against it, the city would have to consider one of the redrawn maps based on inaccurate data.

Mr. Turner believed that the Community Development Department was comfortable with the numbers and assumed that the issue of data accuracy had been resolved. However, he was not aware that this was still an outstanding concern. He said he was concerned upon learning that the census undercount issue had not been adequately addressed during the discussion. He expressed support for the proposed 15 percent change but highlighted the problem of potentially working with flawed data. He suggested Ms. Bridget Susel should address the issue of the census undercount and provide clarity on whether the data being used for redistricting is accurate or flawed. Ms. Wilkens stated there was a motion on the floor, and it may not be possible to call Bridget at that moment due to the ongoing discussion.

Mr. Turner expressed continued support for the 15 percent change and was skeptical about the current status of the data and the potential implications of making decisions based on inaccurate information. He stressed the importance of having a sound basis for judgment.

Mr. Ferrara said that the data collected via the census was done properly and followed the standard process, regardless of population trends. He distinguished between "bad information" and "bad policy" and expressed concern that changing the city's charter based on perceived data inaccuracies could set a problematic precedent. He emphasized the importance of not altering policy every time there is dissatisfaction with data. He stated that the Charter Review Committee's role is to address issues like this and to allow citizens to have input and that the data will be corrected in the next census cycle. He dismissed concerns about citizens getting confused, stating that citizens receive information about where and how to vote, and therefore, confusion should not be a significant issue. He strongly opposed redrawing ward boundaries and that it could be seen as gerrymandering. He said that this practice should be above partisan politics and political manipulation.

Mr. Ferrara concluded by stating he intended to vote against the proposed charter amendment action item and ordinance, emphasizing his belief that it sets a bad precedent and could be seen as political maneuvering.

Ms. Shaffer Bish clarified her position on the proposed charter amendment, emphasizing the importance of protecting the city's interests in the face of unforeseen circumstances. She said that in Ward 5, which has many student households, the census data was affected because students left during the pandemic, leading to an undercount. She stressed that while the city is constrained by the census data, they have flexibility in adjusting the percentage variance, which should be open to discussion and decision by the citizens.

Mr. Kuhar asked if anyone watched the Cleveland Browns football game that occurred on Monday night. He said he watched the game and didn't like the final score but accepted it as the actual result. Mr. Kuhar drew a parallel between the football game's outcome and the ongoing discussion about redistricting. He suggested that just as the game result was accepted, the redistricting decision should be based on the data and circumstances at hand. He anticipates a significant reversal in the next census due to various factors affecting the community.

Ms. Tracy Wallach disagreed with the characterization of the proposed change as gerrymandering. She said that changing it to 15 percent would maintain the current ward boundaries rather than manipulating them. She said she believes that increasing the variance to 15 percent would benefit the city's staff by reducing the need for frequent redistricting efforts. She added that she appreciated the work done by Bridget Susel on the ward maps. She points out that sticking with a 10 percent variance could result in non-contiguous wards, as some parts of Ward 6 would extend into Ward 1 and parts of Ward 2 into Ward 3, separated by the river. She has concerns about voter confusion, especially during elections. She said that people easily get confused at polling stations, and moving between precincts can disenfranchise voters. She said she would vote in favor of changing the variance to 15 percent, citing that it was Dave Ruller's suggestion.

Mr. Turner appreciated and echoed Ms. Shaffer Bish's earlier comments about the historical implications of keeping ward boundaries contiguous. Mr. Turner emphasized the historical and community-related factors for supporting the proposal, rejected the gerrymandering accusation, and highlighted concerns about voter confusion and disenfranchisement. They express hope that the City Council will see the benefit of the 15 percent variance proposal.

Ms.Gwen Rosenberg is hesitant to support the proposed charter amendment, citing concerns about cost, the existing mechanism for charter review, and the difficulty of justifying the change's benefits to residents. She expressed a preference for evaluating the existing maps created by Ms. Susel instead of pursuing a charter amendment.

Mr. Kuhar expressed a concern that if the city were to go to the voters for a change in the future, it would take time to implement the change. He said that there would be an election followed by the redrawing of maps or other related processes. He is worried that the desire to change something now could potentially create an unfair imbalance in the wards due to the time it takes for these changes to be fully implemented.

Mr. Ferrara said that the initial recommendation by Ms. Susel to change the wards was made because another council member had solicited someone to run for council. He expressed concern that the proposed changes could have led to the person they solicited running for council being placed in their ward, which he would consider to be gerrymandering.

MOTION TO APPROVE ACTION(S) RECOMMENDED CARRIED by a voice vote of 6-3-0. Mr. Ferrara, Mr. Kuhar, and Ms. Rosenberg voted 'No'.

Action(s) Recommended
Authorize sending a charter amendment to the voters in 2024 to amend the ward differential from 10% to 15%.

Draft 2023- 061 AN ORDINANCE PROVIDING AN AMENDMENT TO THE CHARTER OF THE CITY OF KENT, OHIO TO BE SUBMITTED AT THE PRIMARY ELECTION ON MARCH 19, 2024, WHICH WILL AMEND ARTICLE XII, SECTION 12.02 TITLED "VOTING WARD APPORTIONMENT," AND DECLARING AN EMERGENCY was read by title only by Clerk Wilkens per Mayor Fiala's request.

MOTION TO SUSPEND THE THREE READINGS OF Draft 2023- 061 MADE by Mr. Michael DeLeone, SECONDED by Ms. Tracy Wallach. On Roll Call Voting "Yes" Mr. Jack Amrhein, Mr. Michael DeLeone, Ms. Heidi Shaffer Bish, Mr. Roger Sidoti, Mr. Robin Turner, Ms. Tracy Wallach The motion CARRIED by a roll call vote of 9-0-0.The motion FAILED by a roll call vote of 6-3-0. Mr. Ferrara, Mr. Kuhar, and Ms. Rosenberg voted "No".

MOTION TO APPROVE FIRST READING OF ORDINANCE MADE by Mr. Michael DeLeone, SECONDED by Mr. Robin Turner. On Roll Call Voting "Yes" Mr. Jack Amrhein, Mr. Michael DeLeone, Ms. Heidi Shaffer Bish, Mr. Roger Sidoti, Mr. Robin Turner, Ms. Tracy Wallach The motion CARRIED by a roll call vote of 9-0-0. The motion CARRIED by a roll call vote of 6-3-0.

Mr. Sidoti provided context for the decision to put the proposed charter amendment on the ballot, citing concerns about delays if they waited for the charter review process and emphasizing the need for timely resolution.

After the vote, Ms. Wilkens stated the ordinance passed the first reading.

Community Development

MOTION TO APPROVE SEPTEMBER 6, 2023 COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES MADE BY Mr. John Kuhar, SECONDED by Mr. Michael DeLeone and CARRIED by a voice vote of 6-0-3. Mr. Sidoti, Ms. Rosenberg and Ms.Shaffer Bish abstained.

MOTION TO APPROVE ACTION(S) RECOMMENDED MADE BY Mr. John Kuhar, SECONDED by Mr. Michael DeLeone and CARRIED by a voice vote of 9-0-0.

Action(s) Recommended

1. Authorize TREX Liquor License request for Fast Mex LLC located at 164 East Main Street, with the emergency clause.

Draft 2023-062 AN ORDINANCE AUTHORIZING THE TRANSFER OF A TREX LIQUOR LICENSE INTO THE CITY OF KENT BY FAST MEX, LLC, AN OHIO LIMITED LIABILITY COMPANY, CONDITIONED UPON THE EXECUTION OF A DEVELOPMENT AGREEMENT BETWEEN THE CITY OF KENT, OHIO AND FAST MEX, LLC, AND DECLARING AN EMERGENCY was read by title only by Clerk Wilkens per Mayor Fiala's request.

MOTION TO SUSPEND THE THREE READINGS OF Draft 2023-062 MADE by Mr. John Kuhar, SECONDED by Mr.Garret Ferrara. On Roll Call Voting "Yes" Mr. Jack Amrhein, Mr. Michael DeLeone, Mr. John Kuhar, Mr. Garret Ferrara, Ms. Gwen Rosenberg, Ms. Heidi Shaffer Bish, Mr. Roger Sidoti, Mr. Robin Turner, Ms. Tracy Wallach The motion CARRIED by a roll call vote of 9-0-0. The motion CARRIED by a roll call vote of 9-0-0.

MOTION TO ADOPT Draft 2023-062 MADE by Mr. John Kuhar, SECONDED by Mr. Garret Ferrara. On Roll Call Voting "Yes" Mr. Jack Amrhein, Mr. Michael DeLeone, Mr. John Kuhar, Mr. Garret Ferrara, Ms. Gwen Rosenberg, Ms. Heidi Shaffer Bish, Mr. Roger Sidoti, Mr. Robin Turner, Ms. Tracy Wallach The motion CARRIED by a roll call vote of 9-0-0.

Ordinance 2023-062 has passed.

Health & Safety Committee

MOTION TO APPROVE SEPTEMBER 6, 2023 COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES MADE BY Mr. Jack Amrhein, SECONDED by Mr. Garret Ferrara and CARRIED by a voice vote of 6-0-3.

MOTION TO APPROVE ACTION(S) RECOMMENDED MADE BY Mr. Jack Amrhein, SECONDED by Mr. Garret Ferrara and CARRIED by a voice vote of 9-0-0.

Action(s) Recommended

1. Approve text amendments regarding downtown parking, changing hours of parking restrictions from 2:30 am to 5:30 am., with the emergency clause.

Draft 2023- 063 AN ORDINANCE AMENDING CHAPTER 355 OF THE CODIFIED ORDINANCES OF THE CITY OF KENT TITLED "MUNICIPAL PARKING LOTS", AND DECLARING AN EMERGENCY was read by title only by Clerk Wilkens per Mayor Fiala's request.

MOTION TO SUSPEND THE THREE READINGS OF Draft 2023- 063 MADE by Mr. Garret Ferrara, SECONDED by Mr. Michael DeLeone. On Roll Call Voting "Yes" Mr. Jack Amrhein, Mr. Michael DeLeone, Mr. John Kuhar, Mr. Garret Ferrara, Ms. Gwen Rosenberg, Ms. Heidi Shaffer Bish, Mr. Roger Sidoti, Mr. Robin Turner, Ms. Tracy Wallach The motion CARRIED by a roll call vote of 9-0-0.

MOTION TO ADOPT Draft 2023- 063 MADE by Mr. Garret Ferrara, SECONDED by Ms. Tracy Wallach. On Roll Call Voting "Yes" Mr. Jack Amrhein, Mr. Michael DeLeone, Mr. John Kuhar, Mr. Garret Ferrara, Ms. Gwen Rosenberg, Ms. Heidi Shaffer Bish, Mr. Roger Sidoti, Mr. Robin Turner, Ms. Tracy Wallach The motion CARRIED by a roll call vote of 9-0-0.

Ordinance 2023-063 has passed.

Streets, Sidewalks and Utilities

MOTION TO APPROVE SEPTEMBER 6, 2023 COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES MADE BY Ms. Tracy Wallach, SECONDED by Mr. Michael DeLeone and CARRIED by a voice vote of 6-0-3.

MOTION TO APPROVE ACTION(S) RECOMMENDED MADE BY Ms. Tracy Wallach, SECONDED by Mr. Michael DeLeone and CARRIED by a voice vote of 9-0-0.

Action(s) Recommended

1. Street Closure for the KSU 5K race was authorized beforehand by voice vote at the September 6, 2023 meeting.

Finance Committee

MOTION TO APPROVE SEPTEMBER 6, 2023 COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES MADE BY Mr. Michael DeLeone, SECONDED by Mr. Garret Ferrara and CARRIED by a voice vote of 6-0-3. Ms. Rosenberg, Ms. Shaffer Bish and Mr.Sidoti abstained.

MOTION TO APPROVE ACTION(S) RECOMMENDED MADE BY Mr. Michael DeLeone, SECONDED by Mr. Garret Ferrara and CARRIED by a voice vote of 9-0-0.

Action(s) Recommended

1. Authorize sale at auction of surplus City vehicles, with the emergency clause.
2. Authorize and certify the tax rates and amounts for submission to the Portage County Auditor, with an emergency clause.
3. Approve the 2023 budget appropriation amendments with an emergency clause.

Draft 2023-064 AN ORDINANCE AUTHORIZING THE TRADE IN / AUCTION / DISPOSAL OF VEHICLES, LARGE EQUIPMENT AND TRAILERS NOT NEEDED FOR MUNICIPAL PURPOSES, AND DECLARING AN EMERGENCY (Authorized) was read by title only by Clerk Wilkens per Mayor Fiala's request.

MOTION TO SUSPEND THE THREE READINGS OF Draft 2023-064 MADE by Mr. Michael DeLeone, SECONDED by Ms Gwen Rosenberg. On Roll Call Voting "Yes" Mr. Jack Amrhein, Mr. Michael DeLeone, Mr. John Kuhar, Mr. Garret Ferrara, Ms. Gwen Rosenberg, Ms. Heidi Shaffer Bish, Mr. Roger Sidoti, Mr. Robin Turner, Ms. Tracy Wallach The motion CARRIED by a roll call vote of 9-0-0.

MOTION TO ADOPT Draft 2023-064 MADE by Mr. Michael DeLeone, SECONDED by Mr. Roger Sidoti. On Roll Call Voting "Yes" Mr. Jack Amrhein, Mr. Michael DeLeone, Mr. John Kuhar, Mr. Garret Ferrara, Ms. Gwen Rosenberg, Ms. Heidi Shaffer Bish, Mr. Roger Sidoti, Mr. Robin Turner, Ms. Tracy Wallach The motion CARRIED by a roll call vote of 9-0-0.

Ordinance 2023-064 has passed.

Draft 2023- 065 RESOLUTION ACCEPTING THE AMOUNTS AND RATES AS DETERMINED BY THE BUDGET COMMISSION AND AUTHORIZING THE NECESSARY TAX LEVIES AND CERTIFYING THEM TO THE COUNTY AUDITOR was read by title only by Clerk Wilkens per Mayor Fiala's request.

MOTION TO SUSPEND THE THREE READINGS OF Draft 2023- 065 MADE by Mr. Michael DeLeone, SECONDED by Ms. Gwen Rosenberg. On Roll Call Voting "Yes" Mr. Jack Amrhein, Mr. Michael DeLeone, Mr. John Kuhar, Mr. Garret Ferrara, Ms. Gwen Rosenberg, Ms. Heidi Shaffer Bish, Mr. Roger Sidoti, Mr. Robin Turner, Ms. Tracy Wallach The motion CARRIED by a roll call vote of 9-0-0..

MOTION TO ADOPT Draft 2023- 065 MADE by Mr. Michael DeLeone, SECONDED by Ms. Gwen Rosenberg. On Roll Call Voting "Yes" Mr. Jack Amrhein, Mr. Michael DeLeone, Mr. John Kuhar, Mr. Garret Ferrara, Ms. Gwen Rosenberg, Ms. Heidi Shaffer Bish, Mr. Roger Sidoti, Mr. Robin Turner, Ms. Tracy Wallach The motion CARRIED by a roll call vote of 9-0-0.

Resolution 2023-065 has passed.

Draft 2023-066 AN ORDINANCE AMENDING ORDINANCE NO. 2022-138, THE CURRENT APPROPRIATION ORDINANCE, PASSED DECEMBER 21, 2022; SO AS TO ADJUST APPROPRIATIONS, TRANSFERS AND ADVANCES FROM THE VARIOUS

FUNDS OF THE CITY OF KENT TO INDIVIDUAL ACCOUNTS FOR THE CURRENT EXPENSES OF THE CITY FOR THE FISCAL YEAR ENDING DECEMBER 31, 2023; AND DECLARING AN EMERGENCY was read by title only by Clerk Wilkens per Mayor Fiala's request.

MOTION TO SUSPEND THE THREE READINGS OF Draft 2023-066 MADE by Ms. Gwen Rosenberg, SECONDED by Ms. Heidi Shaffer Bish. On Roll Call Voting "Yes" Mr. Jack Amrhein, Mr. Michael DeLeone, Mr. John Kuhar, Mr. Garret Ferrara, Ms. Gwen Rosenberg, Ms. Heidi Shaffer Bish, Mr. Roger Sidoti, Mr. Robin Turner, Ms. Tracy Wallach The motion CARRIED by a roll call vote of 9-0-0.

MOTION TO ADOPT Draft 2023-066 MADE by Ms. Heidi Shaffer Bish, SECONDED by Mr. Garret Ferrara. On Roll Call Voting "Yes" Mr. Jack Amrhein, Mr. Michael DeLeone, Mr. John Kuhar, Mr. Garret Ferrara, Ms. Gwen Rosenberg, Ms. Heidi Shaffer Bish, Mr. Roger Sidoti, Mr. Robin Turner, Ms. Tracy Wallach The motion CARRIED by a roll call vote of 9-0-0.

Ordinance 2023-066 has passed.

Unfinished Business

Mr. Kuhar said that the council had passed a resolution or ordinance about 10 to 12 years ago to install domestic solar water in a city facility in Kent. He said that despite the resolution being passed, there has been no progress or implementation of the solar water heating system to date. He suggested revisiting the idea of solar energy, particularly solar electric energy, as proposed by a gentleman during the meeting. He mentioned the possibility of finding suitable locations for solar electric installations through partnerships, potentially including vacant lots in areas like Lake Street.

Ms. Shaffer Bish expressed agreement with the previous speaker, John, who raised the idea of installing solar arrays in the city. She said she had an interesting conversation about solar arrays with someone who had a similar perspective. She added that during a trip to Ithaca, New York, she observed solar fields and rooftop solar installations, which inspired her. Ms. Shaffer Bish assured Council that the city's sustainability staff is actively exploring options and funding mechanisms for solar installations. She acknowledged that progress may not always be immediately visible but asserted that the city is moving forward. She also emphasized the importance of climate action and the city's commitment to addressing climate-related issues, stating that such efforts will help the city progress and not remain stagnant.

New Business

Mr. Ferrara suggests that the issue under discussion should be referred to the sustainability commission for their consideration.

MOTION TO SEND THE ISSUE OF A SOLAR ARRAY IN THE CITY OF KENT TO THE SUSTAINABILITY COMMISSION FOR A REVIEW AND REPORT BACK TO COUNCIL MADE BY Mr. Garret Ferrara, SECONDED by Mr. Robin Turner and CARRIED by a voice vote of 9-0-0.

Mr. Ferrara had no further comments on the matter.

Mr. Turner highlights the importance of including a land survey in the proposal to explore economic opportunities for clean energy and invites any further discussion or comments from the rest of the council.

Councilmembers' Comments

Mr. Sidoti raised the question of whether having ward structures is necessary for a city of Kent's size and complexity. He said that a broader conversation should occur among the citizens to decide if wards are still relevant. For instance, the city could consider having all council members elected at-large, which would mean representing the entire city rather than specific wards. He acknowledged that there are pros and cons to both approaches. He mentions that the city's charter review process occurs every ten years but expresses a desire for a more comprehensive review of the city's structure. He said he advocates a nonpartisan discussion, emphasizing that council members serve the entire community regardless of political affiliation. He also encouraged citizens to participate in the conversation, submit their comments, and engage in thoughtful discussions on this topic, stating there is a need to get more people engaged in the political process.

Mr. Turner thanked Mr. Wilson for his comments and suggestions for community improvement in regard to the solar array. He then commented on the rationale behind having ward structures in local government. He said that wards are meant to balance the interests of the community as a whole with those of individual areas within the community. The ward system is seen as a way to ensure that various segments of the community have their interests represented and that the ward system can be important for ensuring that minority groups or specific neighborhoods have their concerns addressed. He raised concerns about moving to an all-at-large representation system, as it could result in the dominance of one area over others and may not adequately represent the diverse interests of the entire city. He continued his comments by providing historical context, mentioning that some communities moved to at-large systems in the past to disenfranchise certain groups, particularly during the civil rights era. Mr. Turner expressed trust in the judgment of the citizens and believes that the final decision on the matter should be made by the residents themselves through a ballot initiative.

Mr. Sidoti said, to clarify, he is not advocating for any specific changes to the ward system. He wants to promote open discussions and the exploration of various perspectives on the issue. He suggests that the discussion should take place within the community, allowing residents to express their views and concerns. He said that if residents feel strongly about specific changes, they will bring those ideas to the council for further discussion.

Mayor's Report

Mayor Fiala expressed his appreciation for the new City Administration City Hall building. He highlighted that he spent time downtown on Friday and Saturday and did not hear any negative remarks about the building. Instead, he received positive feedback from people in the community who found the building to be a positive addition to downtown Kent. Mayor Fiala commends the efforts of the city staff, including Melanie Baker and Dave Ruller, for their work in making this project a success and bringing city services together.

MOTION TO ENTER EXECUTIVE SESSION MADE BY Mr. Jack Amrhein, SECONDED by Mr. John Kuhar and CARRIED by a voice vote of 9-0-0

1. Discuss an employee's evaluation and compensation
2. Discussion with an attorney for the public body concerning disputes involving the public body that are the subject of pending or imminent court action

MOTION TO RETURN TO REGULAR COUNCIL MEETING MADE BY Ms. Gwen Rosenberg, SECONDED by Mr. Jack Amrhein and CARRIED by a voice vote of 9-0-0.

MOTION TO GRANT A MERIT RAISE FOR THE CLERK OF COUNCIL MADE BY Mr. Michael DeLeone, SECONDED by Mr. John Kuhar and CARRIED by a voice vote of 9-0-0.

Hearing no further business, the meeting adjourned.

Amy Wilkens

Amy Wilkens , CMC
Clerk of Council

Jerry T. Fiala
Mayor & President of Council