



City of Kent
Wednesday, November 8, 2023
Special City Council Meeting
320 S. Depeyster Street, Kent, OH 44240

MINUTES

At 06:00 PM, Mayor Jerry T. Fiala called the Special City Council Meeting to order.

Present: Mr. Jack Amrhein, 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; Ms. Bridget Susel, Community Development Director; Ms. Ms. Joan Seidel, Health Commissioner; Ms. Angela Manley, Parks and Recreation Director; Ms. Amy Wilkens, Clerk of Council

Absent: Mr. Michael DeLeone

Committee of the Whole (Chair Fiala/ Vice-Chair Amrhein)

Mayor Fiala opened the Committee of the Whole meeting at 6:00 p.m.

Board and Commission Interviews

Mayor Fiala started by thanking those who have served on a Board or Commission and for those applying for the first time. He said they are a very special part of the City mechanism. He said interviews will be conducted tonight and a vote will occur on November 15, 2023.

Ms. Wilkens introduced the first candidate, Mr. David Hansford for the Board of Building Appeals. Mr. Hansford introduced himself to Council and outlined his years of service on the board. Ms. Shaffer Bish asked him why he was interested in continuing on the board. He said he was happy to continue serving and encouraged others to apply in the future. Ms. Shaffer Bish thanked him for his service.

Mr. Evan Howe was the next applicant to speak for his spot on the Board of Health. He said he has been a member of the community for a year and a half and has served on the Board. He is a family physician with a great interest in public health. He has enjoyed serving on the Board and contributing to the health of the community. Ms. Shaffer Bish asked if anything surprised him on the Board. He replied he was surprised to learn some of the sanitation and inspection side of things as well as about the number of things that fall under the building safety codes. Ms. Shaffer Bish asked how his professional experience contributed to the Board of Health. He reviewed his work as a clinician and how that translated to helping those in the community with healthy environments and helping those with disparities.

Ms. Wilkens said the other applicant, Dr. Zeena Salman was not in attendance.

The next candidate, Steve Protzman, was called to the podium for the Board of Zoning Appeals. He said he has served on the Board of Zoning Appeals for two years and has already enjoyed it immensely. He has learned so much not only about zoning but also about the city. He highlighted his skills, which include a background in architecture, a good sense of detail, and an ability to read useful plans. He added he thinks as a member of the community, he gains so much by having a clean, safe, well-maintained, and fun city to live in, and it's good to be able to give back in a small way by serving on that board. Mr. Turner asked Mr. Protzman to talk about his role on the board. Mr. Protzman said he was recruited by a prior member and is not the chair of the Board. Mr. Sidoti asked him if he had been surprised by anything during his time on the board. Mr. Protzman said he learned that the City of Kent has a lot of small very odd-shaped lots that make some of our setbacks difficult to use effectively. He concluded by adding he has also met a lot of people who take pride in this city and care about Kent a lot and are doing things to improve and care for their property.

The next candidate was Michelle Sahr. She approached the podium and reintroduced herself to the Council. She would like to continue on the board, help out, and be a part of the city. She feels it is an easy way to do it, and is not a highly time-consuming way to give back. Mr. Kuhar asked if there were any specific issues she would like to see dealt with better. She said in the year she has been on the board, she has learned the most important thing is consistency. She said the Board looks at the rules they are given and sees where the appeal falls. Mr. Sidoti asked if there was anything that surprised her in her first year on the board. She said there weren't a lot of big surprises, but sometimes finds it surprising when she sees people who don't realize there are rules that need to be followed. She added the city and the board are very helpful in walking residents through the process.

Ms. Kathleen Endres was next to be interviewed. She introduced herself to the Council, stating she serves on the design and preservation committee and would like a second term because of her interest in old buildings, mentioning the charm they bring. Mr. Sidoti asked what types of issues come up and she replied it is most frequently the design and preservation guidelines that are currently being considered. Mr. Sidoti asked about a particular building on the corner of Main and South Water that is covered in green "stuff". She said she would probably take the green stuff off of it. She mentioned she had heard there were many interesting things inside the building and would like to see it restored.

The next applicant, Mr. David Mertz was not present for the interview.

Ms. Wilkens said the next applicant for the Fair Housing Board, Ms. Keligh Veraldo-Zuccherro, was not able to attend the meeting and had reached out before the meeting to say she was still interested, but had a time conflict.

Ms. Wilkens introduced the next applicant, Mr. Roderick Moxley, Jr. for the Parks and Rec Board. Mr. Moxley introduced himself to the Council and gave his education and work history. Mr. Kuhar asked the first question, asking Mr. Moxley how he would make improvements on the Board. Mr. Moxley mentioned different ideas that were outside of the box, such as teaching kids how to change a flat tire, babysitting, and other nontraditional areas that need to be tapped into. Mr. Turner asked about ways to engage the youth in the community. Mr. Moxley mentioned helping kids steer away from technology and engaging them in creative activities. Mr. Turner asked about getting kids interested in organized sports in their neighborhoods. Mr. Moxley acknowledged his comments, saying it is a challenge. He talked about transportation issues, and dealing with parental involvement. The council asked him about being active with elderly residents, and Mr. Moxley highlighted the importance of connecting the youth with the elderly, saying they are very important.

Mayor Fiala brought up getting pickleball courts for the community. Ms. Rosenberg said the Parks just completed a Capital Improvement Plan and is in the process of reviewing the results. They are considering all of their options very carefully along with making sure it is cost effective.

Mr. Moxley's interview concluded with a brief discussion on the various availability of multiple sports venues and encouraging active participation.

Ms. Wilkens said the next applicant, Naser Matar, is an active member of the Planning Commission. He was unable to attend the interview tonight due to a time conflict, having just participated in the Planning Commission meeting the previous evening. She reiterated his interest in remaining on the commission.

The next candidate was Mr. Paul Sellman, who approached the microphone and introduced himself to Council. A Boy Scout leader with over 30 years of experience, he also addressed the issue of getting kids involved in outdoor activities and face-to-face interactions rather than being immersed in electronic devices. He shared his background as a lifelong resident of Kent, a veteran, and his involvement in family businesses. He discussed his experience as a project manager/engineer for Alltel and as a network manager for Kent City Schools. He also mentions his previous 16 years on the zoning board and expresses a desire to ensure quality development in Kent. He highlighted specific projects, such as improving the appearance of the bank building and developing the mill, that he finds interesting and wants to be involved in. Overall, he intends to contribute to maintaining the greatness of Kent and ensuring that development is done right. John Kuhar inquired about the speaker's perspective on the aesthetics of development, asking whether new structures should be designed to look old, if old structures should be renovated to appear new, or if a balance between the two should be sought. Mr. Sellman acknowledged the importance of considering each project on its own merits and suggested that the decision to make new structures look old or vice versa should be based on the specific circumstances. He emphasizes the value of restoring historic buildings when possible, citing examples like the Thompson building renovation. He discussed ongoing renovations at Town Hall II and mentioned the challenge of restoring buildings that may be too far gone, like the bank building. He shares thoughts on the aesthetics of downtown development and the need for new buildings to fit the existing neighborhood's character. Additionally, he said he appreciated the diversity of Kent's neighborhoods, mentioning specific areas like West Main Street and the South End. He expressed a commitment to ensuring that Planning Commission decisions align with the city's vision and enhance its overall appeal. He recognized the challenges in the South End, noting the prevalence of rental properties and the transitory nature of residents. He emphasized the importance of encouraging homeownership and maintaining single-family homes. He recognized the historical significance of the South End and praised initiatives like the Historic South End signage that instills pride of ownership. He acknowledged the difficulty in obtaining funding for improvements in the area. Mr. Sellman then discussed the broader issue of a transient population in college towns and suggested the need to work on getting people back to homeownership. While he didn't offer a specific solution, he noted the city's efforts to toughen codes regarding rentals during his time on the Board of Zoning Appeals (BZA). There were no further questions from Council.

Next, Mary Jayne Stone shared her background as an environmentalist, dating back to her childhood when she organized neighborhood cleanups. Expressing concern about global warming, she describes her efforts to reduce her carbon footprint. Mary Jayne Stone joined the Sustainability Commission three years ago, driven by a desire to contribute more actively to environmental causes. She expressed excitement about the adoption of the Climate Action Plan (CAP) and her willingness to support its implementation, whether or not she continues to serve on the commission. Ms. Shaffer Bish, asks about the role of the Sustainability Commission in implementing sustainability initiatives and requests an example of the commission's efforts over the past three years. Ms. Stone elaborated on the Sustainability Commission's role in advocating for a paid position, which has been fulfilled by Julie Morris. Additionally, she discussed the need to bring in experts to collaborate with other cities and communities. She sees the commission as a bridge between citizens, Kent State, and the city, facilitating the implementation of sustainability initiatives. Ms. Stone agreed that the commission's function in proposing policy suggestions to the council aims to advance Kent as a sustainable community. She expressed anticipation for a continued positive working relationship with the commission and emphasized the importance of educational and outreach efforts for Kent's citizens. When asked, she shared her surprise about the intricate workings of the city and the necessity for everything to be run by and vetted by everyone. She highlighted the educational aspect of their experience on the Sustainability Commission and mentioned ongoing brainstorming sessions about the initiatives they would like to see happen. Ms. Stone acknowledged the guidance received from Bridget Susel and discussed plans for a kickoff event to update stakeholders and citizens on the progress and direction of the Sustainability Commission's work. Overall, there is a positive outlook

and anticipation for the forthcoming initiatives and information.

The final candidate tonight for the Shade Tree Commission, Diane Papes, expressed her love for trees and a strong appreciation for their role in the planet's survival. She indicates her desire to learn more about the Shade Tree Commission and actively contribute to its work. When asked about her favorite street tree, she describes a tree with red leaves in the fall and a maple-like leaf structure, though she is uncertain about its specific name. Diane mentions her gardening skills and that she prunes her trees. Responding to a question about the trimming of trees by the power company, she acknowledges that it played a role in her interest in the commission but emphasizes that she was considering joining even before that incident. Overall, Diane expresses a proactive approach to addressing tree-related concerns and a commitment to action.

Mayor Fiala announces that the formal appointment vote will take place on the 15th. He thanked all applicants and encouraged them to reapply if they didn't get nominated this time.

MOTION TO ENTER EXECUTIVE SESSION TO DISCUSS BOARD AND COMMISSION APPOINTMENTS MADE BY Mr. Jack Amrhein, SECONDED by Ms. Gwen Rosenberg and CARRIED by a voice vote of 8-0-0.

MOTION TO RETURN TO REGULAR COUNCIL MEETING MADE BY Ms. Gwen Rosenberg, SECONDED by MR. Jack Amrhein and CARRIED by a voice vote of 8-0-0.

Hearing no further business, the meeting adjourned at 7:25 p.m.



Amy Wilkens, CMC
Clerk of Council