



**City of Kent**  
**Wednesday, January 17, 2024**  
**Regular City Council Meeting**  
320 S. Depeyster Street, Kent, OH 44240

## **MINUTES**

At 07:30 PM, Mayor Jerry T. Fiala called the Regular City Council Meeting to order. He stated that the draft ordinances that are being voted on and adopted tonight have been previously discussed in prior committee meetings with input from the public, city administration, and council.

### **Roll Call**

**Present:** Mr. Jack Amrhein, Ms. Melissa Celko, Mr. Chris Hook, Mr. Jeff Clapper, Mr. Michael DeLeone, Ms. Gwen Rosenberg, Ms. Heidi Shaffer Bish, Mr. Roger Sidoti, Mr. Robin Turner

**Also Present:** Mr. Jerry T. Fiala, Mayor, and President of Council; Mr. Dave Ruller, City Manager; Ms. Hope Jones, Law Director; Ms. Bridget Susel, Community Development Director; Ms. Melanie Baker, Service Director; Mr. Jim Bowling, City Engineer; Mr. Jamie Kennedy, Acting Fire Chief; Ms. Amy Wilkens, Clerk of Council

### **Opening Remarks and Pledge of Allegiance**

Ms. Melissa Celko, Ward 1 Council Member, expressed gratitude to the Kent Area Chamber of Commerce, Main Street Kent, and the entire team working on Kent Eclipse 2024. She also thanked the sitting council and all the staff for making her and her new colleagues feel welcome.

She then asked everyone to stand for the Pledge of Allegiance.

### **Approval of Minutes**

**MOTION TO APPROVE DECEMBER 20, 2023 REGULAR MEETING MINUTES AND JANUARY 3 , 2024 SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES MADE BY Ms. Gwen Rosenberg, SECONDED by Mr. Jeff Clapper and CARRIED by a voice vote of 9-0-0.**

### **Communications**

#### **Public Comment**

Mayor Fiala read the following statement:

“While the law does not require the 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 the 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. Wilkens, Clerk of Council, introduced Mr. John Kennedy, Portage County Commissioner. He introduced himself and read a prepared statement (**Attachment #1**)

Ms. Wilkens introduced the second member of the public, Mr. Kadin McElwain who read from a prepared statement (**Attachment #2**)

There were no other members of the public signed in to speak to Council.

#### **Written Comment Received in Clerk of Council Office**

1. Sustainability Commission meeting agenda for January 8, 2024 and November 2023 Meeting Minutes were received and posted on January 2, 2024.
2. Standing Rock Cemetery Board of Trustees meeting minutes for January 11, 2024, received and posted on January 2, 2024.
3. Board of Health meeting agenda for January 9, 2024 was received on January 5, 2024.
4. The Program Year 2024 CDBG Implementation Schedule for Community Development was received on January 8, 2024.
5. An email from Kayla Adolph was received and forwarded to Council on January 9, 2024, encouraging City Council to apply for grants to electrify its fleet of vehicles.
6. The Planning Commission and Staff Report for the January 16, 2024 meeting was received on January 10, 2024.

#### **Communication Received After Agenda Published:**

1. The Parks and Rec Agenda Packet for the January 18, 2024 meeting was received on January 12, 2024.
2. An email from Haymaker Farmer's Market regarding concerns about the proposed cannabis moratorium and the effect on vendor sales was received on January 17, 2024

#### **City Manager's Report**

1. Request for authorization to accept a \$1,500 donation from the Christenson Foundation for the eclipse mural.
2. Request for authorization to accept a donation from Bower's Landscaping of masonry landscaping bricks to the West Side Fire Station valued at \$3,000.
3. Request for approval to accept a \$1,000 donation from Mike Beder and the Crooked River Arts Council to be used to support the Fire Department paramedicine program.
4. Request for approval to submit an Ohio Department of Commerce grant application for firefighter turnout gear in an amount up to \$15,000, and if approved to allocate those funds to the fire department. (Draft #2024-010}
5. Request for Committee of the Whole time to present the updated Codified Ordinances that require Council's formal adoption.
6. Request for Committee of the Whole time to present a suggestion from a Council member to consider changing the start times of City Council meetings.

7. Request for Committee of the Whole time to provide Council with a brief update on the status of the new City Hall construction project.
8. Request for the Committee of the Whole time to present the proposed Ward Map amendments to comply with the 10% Charter requirement.
9. Request for Health and Safety Committee time to provide an overview of the 2023 Annual Report for the Health Department.
10. Request for Land Use Committee time to discuss the future role and responsibilities of the Architectural Review Board (ARB) under the new design guidelines.
11. Request for Land Use Committee time to provide an update on the implementation of the City's Climate Action Plan and sustainability efforts.
12. Request for Streets, Sidewalks & Utilities Committee time to present a request from the Kent JC's to change the street closures associated with their annual Craft Beer Fest event.
13. Request for Streets, Sidewalks & Utilities Committee time to present a proposed Lake Rockwell Trail Agreement.
14. Request for Finance Committee time for Council's consideration of a subrecipient grant agreement with the Portage County Landbank.
15. Request for Finance Committee time to ask for Council's authorization to accept and allocate a NOPEC Community grant in the amount of \$2,500 to be used for the 2024 Eclipse Event.
16. Request for Finance Committee time to ask for Council's consideration of a proposed 2024 Budget Appropriations Amendment.
17. Request for Finance Committee time to present a recommendation for Council to authorize creating a new budget fund specifically for the Health Department budget line items.

**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.**

## **Standing Committees & Legislation**

### **Committee of the Whole**

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

#### **Actions Recommended:**

1. Authorize the reorganization of Council assigned Chairs, Vice-Chairs and Board Liaisons
2. Authorize the following changes to Council's Pending List:

Remove:

- a. Sustainability Commission to come up with 10 action items to fend off global warming
- b. Review and Discuss Unattended vehicles idling in the City
- c. Design Guidelines Reorganization
- d. Review of Planning Commission Timelines
- e. New Administration Building Dedication

- f. Downtown Ice Rink
- g. Review Neighbor Complaint
- h. Parameters for Low-Frequency Noises
- i. Discussion on proactively dealing with racism, hatred and diversity in Kent
- j. City Flag Redesign
- k. Changes in Fireworks Law
- l. Vape Shops and Marijuana Dispensaries
- m. 24 Hour Parking Regulations Review
- n. Safety Town Discussion

Keep

- a. Discussion with Franklin Twp. /sidewalk and snow upkeep
- b. Review of roadwork needed on Portage Street
- c. Land O'Lakes Noise Issue
- d. Noise Ordinance Review
- e. Fur Regulations and Sales in Kent

### **Voting on Board and Commission Candidate**

**MOTION TO APPOINT JULIE GRANT TO THE SUSTAINABILITY COMMISSION MADE BY** Mr. Jack Amrhein, **SECONDED** by Ms. Melissa Celko and **CARRIED** by a voice vote of 9-0-0.

**MOTION TO INSERT NAME INTO LEGISLATION MADE BY** Ms. Melissa Celko, **SECONDED** by Mr. Chris Hook and **CARRIED** by a voice vote of 9-0-0.

**Draft 2024-002 A RESOLUTION APPOINTING JULIE GRANT TO THE SUSTAINABILITY COMMISSION 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 2024-002 MADE by** Ms. Heidi Shaffer Bish, **SECONDED** by Mr. Roger Sidoti. On Roll Call Voting "Yes" Mr. Jack Amrhein, Ms. Melissa Celko, Mr. Jeff Clapper, Mr. Michael DeLeone, Mr. Chris Hook, Ms. Gwen Rosenberg, Ms. Heidi Shaffer Bish, Mr. Roger Sidoti, Mr. Robin Turner The motion **CARRIED** by a roll call vote of 9-0-0.

**MOTION TO ADOPT Draft 2024-002 A RESOLUTION APPOINTING MS. JULIE GRANT MADE by** Ms. Heidi Shaffer Bish, **SECONDED** by Mr. Roger Sidoti. On Roll Call Voting "Yes" Mr. Jack Amrhein, Ms. Melissa Celko, Mr. Jeff Clapper, Mr. Michael DeLeone, Mr. Chris Hook, Ms. Gwen Rosenberg, Ms. Heidi Shaffer Bish, Mr. Roger Sidoti, Mr. Robin Turner. The motion **CARRIED** by a roll call vote of 9-0-0.

Ms. Shaffer Bish expressed gratitude to Julie Grant for stepping forward to join the Sustainability Commission. She commended the quality of candidates on the city's boards and commissions, encouraging others to consider serving in similar capacities.

**Resolution 2024-002 passes.**

### **Community Development**

**MOTION TO APPROVE JANUARY 3, 2024 COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES MADE BY**

Mr. Roger Sidoti, SECONDED by Ms. Melissa Celko and CARRIED by a voice vote of 9-0-0.

**MOTION TO APPROVE ACTION RECOMMENDED** MADE BY Mr. Michael DeLeone, SECONDED by Mr. Jack Amrhein and CARRIED by a voice vote of 9-0-0.

Action Recommended:

1. Approve a temporary moratorium on the opening of recreational marijuana dispensaries until the staff has time to review the new State guidelines and amend the City's Zoning Code to accommodate the new dispensaries, with the emergency clause.

**Draft 2024-003** AN ORDINANCE DECLARING A MORATORIUM ON ADULT USE CANNABIS OPERATORS, TESTING LABORATORIES AND INDIVIDUALS REQUIRED TO BE LICENSED BY THE OHIO REVISED CODE IN THE CITY OF KENT, OHIO, 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 2024-003 MADE by Mr. Roger Sidoti, SECONDED by Mr. Michael DeLeone. On Roll Call Voting "Yes" Mr. Jack Amrhein, Ms. Melissa Celko, Mr. Jeff Clapper, Mr. Michael DeLeone, Mr. Chris Hook, Ms. Gwen Rosenberg, Ms. Heidi Shaffer Bish, Mr. Roger Sidoti, Mr. Robin Turner. The motion was CARRIED by a roll call vote of 9-0-0.

Before adopting, Mr. Chris Hook asked about the email from Haymaker Farmer's Market that was mentioned in the Written Comments. Ms. Hope Jones asked if he read her email response, which explained the difference between cannabis and marijuana in the language of the legislation. She explained it would not affect the Farmer's Market sales of hemp, CBD and other related products.

MOTION TO ADOPT Draft 2024-003 MADE by Mr. Roger Sidoti, SECONDED by Mr. Michael DeLeone. On Roll Call Voting "Yes" Mr. Jack Amrhein, Ms. Melissa Celko, Mr. Jeff Clapper, Mr. Michael DeLeone, Mr. Chris Hook, Ms. Gwen Rosenberg, Ms. Heidi Shaffer Bish, Mr. Roger Sidoti, Mr. Robin Turner. The motion was CARRIED by a roll call vote of 9-0-0.

**Ordinance 2024-003 passed.**

### **Streets, Sidewalks and Utilities**

**MOTION TO APPROVE THE JANUARY 3, 2024 COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES** MADE BY Mr. Roger Sidoti, SECONDED by Mr. Michael DeLeone and CARRIED by a voice vote of 9-0-0.

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

**Action(s) Recommended**

1. Approve the proposed street closure request for the 2024 eclipse events with the emergency clause.
2. Approve the special event policy language changes with the emergency clause

**Draft 2024-004** AN ORDINANCE AUTHORIZING THE CITY MANAGER OR HIS DESIGNEE TO APPROVE A NEW SPECIAL EVENT APPLICATION FROM MAIN STREET KENT AND THE KENT CHAMBER OF COMMERCE TO BE HELD ON APRIL 7, 2024, AND APRIL 8, 2024, AND THE TEMPORARY CLOSURE OF THE KENT DOWNTOWN STREETS, 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 2024-004 MADE by Mr. Michael DeLeone, SECONDED by Ms. Gwen Rosenberg. On Roll Call Voting "Yes" Mr. Jack Amrhein, Ms. Melissa Celko, Mr. Jeff Clapper, Mr. Michael DeLeone, Mr. Chris Hook, Ms. Gwen Rosenberg, Ms. Heidi Shaffer Bish, Mr. Roger Sidoti, Mr. Robin Turner. The motion was CARRIED by a roll call vote of 9-0-0.

MOTION TO ADOPT Draft 2024-004 MADE by Mr. Michael DeLeone, SECONDED by Mr. Jeff Clapper. On Roll Call Voting "Yes" Mr. Jack Amrhein, Ms. Melissa Celko, Mr. Jeff Clapper, Mr. Michael DeLeone, Mr. Chris Hook, Ms. Gwen Rosenberg, Ms. Heidi Shaffer Bish, Mr. Roger Sidoti, Mr. Robin Turner. The motion was CARRIED by a roll call vote of 9-0-0.

**Ordinance 2024-004 passed.**

**Draft 2024-005** AN ORDINANCE AMENDING CHAPTER 316 OF THE CODIFIED ORDINANCES OF THE CITY OF KENT TITLED "SPECIAL EVENTS-PARADES, FESTIVALS, CARNIVALS, PUBLIC ASSEMBLIES, ETC", 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 2024-005 MADE by Mr. Michael DeLeone, SECONDED by Mr. Roger Sidoti. On Roll Call Voting "Yes" Mr. Jack Amrhein, Ms. Melissa Celko, Mr. Jeff Clapper, Mr. Michael DeLeone, Mr. Chris Hook, Ms. Gwen Rosenberg, Ms. Heidi Shaffer Bish, Mr. Roger Sidoti, Mr. Robin Turner. The motion was CARRIED by a roll call vote of 9-0-0.

MOTION TO ADOPT Draft 2024-005 MADE by Mr. Roger Sidoti, SECONDED by Mr. Michael DeLeone. On Roll Call Voting "Yes" Mr. Jack Amrhein, Ms. Melissa Celko, Mr. Jeff Clapper, Mr. Michael DeLeone, Mr. Chris Hook, Ms. Gwen Rosenberg, Ms. Heidi Shaffer Bish, Mr. Roger Sidoti, Mr. Robin Turner. The motion was CARRIED by a roll call vote of 9-0-0.

**Ordinance 2024-005 passed.**

### **Finance Committee**

**MOTION TO APPROVE JANUARY 3, 2023, COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTE AND ACTIONS RECOMMENDED** MADE BY Mr. Michael DeLeone, SECONDED by Mr. Jeff Clapper, and CARRIED by a voice vote of 9-0-0.

#### **Action Recommended:**

1. Authorize the Health Department Grant Applications and Appropriations with the emergency clause.

**Draft 2024-006** AN ORDINANCE AUTHORIZING THE CITY OF KENT HEALTH DEPARTMENT TO APPLY FOR THE FARM TO SCHOOL GRANT IN THE AMOUNT OF \$50,000, AND TO ACCEPT THE GRANT, IF AWARDED, WITH CORRESPONDING APPROPRIATION OF FUNDS 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 2024-006 MADE by Mr. Jack Amrhein, SECONDED by Ms. Melissa Celko. On Roll Call Voting "Yes" Mr. Jack Amrhein, Ms. Melissa Celko, Mr. Jeff Clapper, Mr. Michael DeLeone, Mr. Chris Hook, Ms. Gwen Rosenberg, Ms. Heidi Shaffer Bish, Mr. Roger Sidoti, Mr. Robin Turner. The motion was CARRIED by a roll call vote of 9-0-0.

MOTION TO ADOPT Draft 2024-006 MADE by Mr. Roger Sidoti, SECONDED by Mr. Michael DeLeone. On Roll Call Voting "Yes" Mr. Jack Amrhein, Ms. Melissa Celko, Mr. Jeff Clapper, Mr. Michael DeLeone, Mr. Chris Hook, Ms. Gwen Rosenberg, Ms. Heidi Shaffer Bish, Mr. Roger Sidoti, Mr. Robin Turner. The motion was CARRIED by a roll call vote of 9-0-0.

**Ordinance 2024-006 passed.**

**Draft 2024-007** AN ORDINANCE AUTHORIZING THE CITY OF KENT HEALTH DEPARTMENT TO APPLY FOR THE OFFICE OF MINORITY HEALTH GRANT IN THE AMOUNT OF \$15,000, AND TO ACCEPT THE GRANT, IF AWARDED, WITH CORRESPONDING APPROPRIATION OF FUNDS 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 2024-007 MADE by Mr. Roger Sidoti, SECONDED by Mr. Michael DeLeone. On Roll Call Voting "Yes" Mr. Jack Amrhein, Ms. Melissa Celko, Mr. Jeff Clapper, Mr. Michael DeLeone, Mr. Chris Hook, Ms. Gwen Rosenberg, Ms. Heidi Shaffer Bish, Mr. Roger Sidoti, Mr. Robin Turner. The motion was CARRIED by a roll call vote of 9-0-0.

MOTION TO ADOPT Draft 2024-007 by Mr. Roger Sidoti, SECONDED by Mr. Michael DeLeone. On Roll Call Voting "Yes" Mr. Jack Amrhein, Ms. Melissa Celko, Mr. Jeff Clapper, Mr. Michael DeLeone, Mr. Chris Hook, Ms. Gwen Rosenberg, Ms. Heidi Shaffer Bish, Mr. Roger Sidoti, Mr. Robin Turner. The motion was CARRIED by a roll call vote of 9-0-0.

**Ordinance 2024-007 passed.**

**Draft 2024-008** AN ORDINANCE AUTHORIZING THE CITY MANAGER OR HIS DESIGNEE TO ACCEPT AND APPROPRIATE THE EXTENDED TOBACCO USE GRANT IN THE AMOUNT OF \$117,000 FOR THE CITY OF KENT HEALTH DEPARTMENT, 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 2024-008 MADE by Mr. Jack Amrhein, SECONDED by Mr. Michael DeLeone. On Roll Call Voting "Yes" Mr. Jack Amrhein, Ms. Melissa Celko, Mr. Jeff Clapper, Mr. Michael DeLeone, Mr. Chris Hook, Ms. Gwen Rosenberg, Ms. Heidi Shaffer Bish, Mr. Roger Sidoti, Mr. Robin Turner. The motion was CARRIED by a roll call vote of 9-0-0.

MOTION TO ADOPT Draft 2024-008 MADE by Mr. Michael DeLeone, SECONDED by Mr. Roger Sidoti. On Roll Call Voting "Yes" Mr. Jack Amrhein, Ms. Melissa Celko, Mr. Jeff Clapper, Mr. Michael DeLeone, Mr. Chris Hook, Ms. Gwen Rosenberg, Ms. Heidi Shaffer Bish, Mr. Roger Sidoti, Mr. Robin Turner. The motion was CARRIED by a roll call vote of 9-0-0.

**Ordinance 2024-008 passed.**

**Draft 2024-009** AN ORDINANCE AUTHORIZING THE CITY MANAGER, OR HIS

DESIGNEE, TO ACCEPT AND APPROPRIATE THE EXTENDED OHIO EPA GRANT IN THE AMOUNT OF \$25,000.00 FOR THE CITY OF KENT HEALTH DEPARTMENT, 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 2024-009 MADE by Mr. Jack Amrhein, SECONDED by Ms. Heidi Shaffer Bish. On Roll Call Voting "Yes" Mr. Jack Amrhein, Ms. Melissa Celko, Mr. Jeff Clapper, Mr. Michael DeLeone, Mr. Chris Hook, Ms. Gwen Rosenberg, Ms. Heidi Shaffer Bish, Mr. Roger Sidoti, Mr. Robin Turner. The motion was CARRIED by a roll call vote of 9-0-0.

MOTION TO ADOPT Draft 2024-009 MADE by Ms. Heidi Shaffer Bish, SECONDED by Mr. Michael DeLeone. On Roll Call Voting "Yes" Mr. Jack Amrhein, Ms. Melissa Celko, Mr. Jeff Clapper, Mr. Michael DeLeone, Mr. Chris Hook, Ms. Gwen Rosenberg, Ms. Heidi Shaffer Bish, Mr. Roger Sidoti, Mr. Robin Turner. The motion was CARRIED by a roll call vote of 9-0-0.

**Ordinance 2024-009 passed.**

Mr. Sidoti commented and thanked the Health Department on all of their efforts in obtaining grant funds.

**Draft 2024-010** AN ORDINANCE AUTHORIZING THE CITY OF KENT FIRE DEPARTMENT TO APPLY FOR AN INDIVIDUAL AND JOINT EQUIPMENT GRANT, AND TO ACCEPT THE GRANT, IF AWARDED, WITH CORRESPONDING APPROPRIATION OF FUNDS 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 2024-010 MADE by Mr. Roger Sidoti, SECONDED by Mr. Jeff Clapper. On Roll Call Voting "Yes" Mr. Jack Amrhein, Ms. Melissa Celko, Mr. Jeff Clapper, Mr. Michael DeLeone, Mr. Chris Hook, Ms. Gwen Rosenberg, Ms. Heidi Shaffer Bish, Mr. Roger Sidoti, Mr. Robin Turner. The motion was CARRIED by a roll call vote of 9-0-0.

MOTION TO ADOPT Draft 2024-010 MADE by Mr. Jack Amrhein, SECONDED by Mr. Jeff Clapper. On Roll Call Voting "Yes" Mr. Jack Amrhein, Ms. Melissa Celko, Mr. Jeff Clapper, Mr. Michael DeLeone, Mr. Chris Hook, Ms. Gwen Rosenberg, Ms. Heidi Shaffer Bish, Mr. Roger Sidoti, Mr. Robin Turner. The motion was CARRIED by a roll call vote of 9-0-0.

**Ordinance 2024-010 passed.**

**Unfinished Business**

NONE

**New Business**

Ms. Gwen Rosenberg proposed a motion to fly the city flag on all city buildings, order city flags, and make digital versions available on the website. The motion was seconded by Mr. DeLeone, and there was a discussion about the practicalities of implementing the motion. The decision was made to send it to the Administration for further consideration.

**MOTION TO SEND TO COMMITTEE A DISCUSSION REGARDING DOWNTOWN STREET CLOSURES WITH A FOCUS ON OBTAINING RECOMMENDATIONS FROM COMMUNITY**



**DEVELOPMENT, MAIN STREET KENT, AND THE CHAMBER OF COMMERCE** MADE BY Ms. Gwen Rosenberg, **SECONDED** by Mr. Roger Sidoti and **CARRIED** by a voice vote of 9-0-0.

Ms. Rosenberg emphasized the need for guidelines and a review process for road closures, taking into account changes in the business community.

Mr. Sidoti agreed, stating the need to align processes with regulations and evaluate the effectiveness of current policies.

### **Councilmembers' Comments**

Ms. Shaffer Bish commented on the two speakers during public comment. She commended the second speaker for his courage and emphasized the importance of embracing people with different abilities in the community. Ms. Shaffer Bish also praised the new Treasurer, John Kennedy, for his thoughtful approach to fiscal policy and expressed a long-standing question about understanding the overlap between the county and the city.

Mr. Amrhein expressed his gratitude to Kadin, the second public speaker as a former educator, acknowledging Kadin as an inspiration and thanking him for his contributions.

Mr. Robin Turner shared an incident from the weekend involving his furnace going out during the polar vortex. He expressed fear and difficulties in dealing with the situation, which led to a power outage, forcing him to move to a motel. Mr. Turner highlighted concerns about the reduced number of heating centers in the county and emphasized the need for people to reach out for assistance during challenging circumstances. He discussed the role of social service agencies, community coordination, and the importance of individuals understanding the available support systems. Additionally, he acknowledged the efforts of John and other community members in connecting the dots to ensure people are aware of government assistance and encouraged residents not to hesitate to seek help when needed.

Mr. Sidoti raised a thoughtful point, expressing concern about the well-being of homeless individuals during extreme weather conditions, particularly the recent polar vortex. He acknowledged the warmth and comfort of his own surroundings and emphasized the need for social service agencies to come together and create an emergency plan to address the challenges faced by homeless individuals during such crises. Mr. Sidoti suggested that the planning for such situations should ideally take place in the months preceding the extreme weather, like August or September, to ensure a well-thought-out and coordinated response. He emphasized the importance of starting a conversation about the steps, contacts, and actions that need to be taken to provide assistance and support to those in need.

Mr. Chris Hook shared a concerning experience from a renter in the west side of Kent who faced issues with a broken radiator, resulting in a temperature drop to 54 degrees. The landlord initially dismissed the situation, stating it's normal when it gets cold. Eventually, after five hours, the issue was addressed, and the temperature started to rise. Mr. Hook highlighted the challenges faced by renters who may not be fully aware of their rights and responsibilities, emphasizing the need for greater education on tenant and landlord responsibilities. He expressed support for the idea of addressing such issues through education and clear guidelines, echoing the sentiments shared by other council members about the importance of proactive planning and discussions.

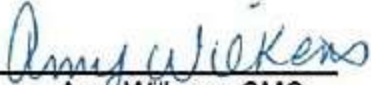
Ms. Gwen Rosenberg reminded council members about the resources available for tenants facing issues, particularly during the cold weather. She mentioned that the Community Development Office is the first step towards assistance, providing information on landlords' obligations. Additionally, she suggested reaching out to the health department for support.

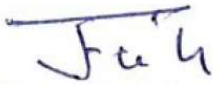
There were no further council member comments.

## Mayor's Report

Mayor Fiala commented that it was good to be at the meeting this evening.

The meeting adjourned at 8:17 p.m.

  
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Amy Wilkens, CMC  
Clerk of Council

  
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Jerry T. Fiala  
Mayor & President of Council

## **John Kennedy, Portage County Treasurer – January 17, 2024 Remarks**

Mayor Fiala and members of the Kent City Council,

I'm John Kennedy, your newly appointed Portage County Treasurer. Since jumping on-board in December, I have learned a lot about the good work your County Treasurer's office is doing all year round, and not just at property tax collection time!

What I've learned is that we are much more than simply the county's tax collector – which I will quickly note that first-half bills are being processed and mailed out – and due dates are February 26<sup>th</sup> for real estate and March 1<sup>st</sup> for mobile homes.

This is an extremely important county function as you know – these tax dollars provide important local services such as police and fire protection, roads, schools, parks and libraries. We also collect revenues for the county itself, which provides services including emergency management, public assistance, criminal prosecutions, etc, etc.

One of the most important aspects of the job is being a good financial steward of the monies collected. As your "chief investment officer" for the county, we work diligently to be a good fiduciary steward of county funds ensuring their safety, liquidity, and the best possible return. This role requires constant monitoring to maintain the county's investment portfolio. I sit on the county's Investment Advisory Committee which holds the Treasurer accountable for this work, and requires the Treasurer to provide financial data, forecasting, and interest yield information on a quarterly basis to make sure the county's investment goals are fully met. And with the local banks who hold millions of our assets, I negotiate and fight for the best rates we can get to ensure we get the best rate of return for our hard-working tax payers.

I also serve on several boards including the Board of Revision, reviewing property valuation appeals from residents; Budget Commission, monitoring local subdivision budgets; Data Processing Board, reviewing technological policies and upgrades – upgrades that could save millions of dollars for county taxpayers; and the Portage County Land Bank, returning blighted and forfeited properties to functional use – which is a great return on investment – as it funds its entire operation on a percentage of delinquent taxes.

I also sit on the board of the Portage County Community Action Council – David Shea's group – and learned just today about some of the programs available to residents – things like a new Healthy Aging Grant that has been approved by Jobs & Family Services – for seniors 60 and over, it's going to provide home repair, rent, utilities, and homeowner assistance which includes property taxes. A total of \$110,000 will be available through June 30<sup>th</sup> of this year. Since 2021, CAC has used a grant from the Ohio Housing Finance Agency (OHFA) to serve more than 360 families in Portage County, assisting 119 families with a total of \$252,000 for property taxes. Later this month, Mr. Shea is going to visit my office and provide our staff with even more information that we can share with residents who are struggling to pay their property taxes.

*I would be remiss – (GROW LINK)*

We are not just tax collectors; we help connect folks to the people, programs and resources they need as they navigate through a sometimes hectic and complicated life – especially those who need those connections and resources the most. My goal is to serve you, the residents of Kent, and all our residents here in Portage County by helping us collectively navigate and make the right connections along the way. We have great organizations and great people doing great work throughout our wonderful county, and my job is to help build those bridges that can move the needle ever so slightly forward. Thank you for your time tonight.



When I was two years old, I was diagnosed as being on the autism spectrum disorder. The doctors questioned whether or not I'd be able to live a normal life and, throughout my life, I've had some naysayers and doubters who questioned my capabilities. But time and time again, thanks to an amazing support system, I was able to prove all of my doubters wrong. I'm a sophomore in college at Kent State University and I am living my best life as an adult with autism. None of this would've been possible without the help of the multiple resources I've had over the years.

In 2022, when I was a freshman at Lake Erie College in Painesville, my leadership class was assigned with the task of thinking of a way to help the community and acting upon it. With my group, I was able to begin my journey in being an advocate for those with special needs in Lake County. Just last year, I raised \$1,085 for the Autism Society of America, presented before the Lake County Commissioner's Board twice, raised \$234 for the Lake County Special Needs Birthday Club for my birthday, and hosted a Christmas Toy Drive with nine different businesses in Lake County, collecting toys for four different families with special needs children. I know what it's like to have a disability and lack the self-confidence to live a normal life and embrace the gift I have. It hurts my heart to see how much stigma there is surrounding autism and special needs. That's why I stand before you today, ladies and gentlemen, to ask that we team up to help special needs children and young adults in the city of Kent and possibly the state of Ohio. Some examples of ways we can do this include simple tasks like raising money for various organizations in the city and passing legislation to fund the programs that have helped so many people like me thus far.

To conclude, my story has been both an interesting one and a beautiful one. With your help today, we can make more beautiful stories like mine for children and young adults with special needs! Thank you