



City of Kent

City Council Committee Meeting

320 S. Depeyster Street, Kent, Ohio 44240

April 2, 2025

MINUTES

At 6:45pm, Mayor Jerry T. Fiala called the City Council Committee meeting to order.

Present: Jack Amrhein; Melissa Celko; Jeff Clapper; Michael DeLeone; Gwen Rosenberg; Heidi Shaffer Bish; Roger Sidoti; Robin Turner

Also present: Jerry T. Fiala, Mayor and President of Council; Dave Ruller, City Manager; Hope Jones, Law Director; Angela Manley, Parks & Recreation Director; Jim Bowling, City Engineer; Bridget Susel, Community Development Director; Nick Cecil, IT Director; Rhonda Hall, Budget and Finance Director; Joan Seidel, Health Commissioner; Dominique Bollenbacher, Community Engagement Coordinator; Kathy Coleman, Clerk of Council

COMMITTEES

COMMUNITY OF THE WHOLE – Chair Fiala/Vice-Chair Amrhein

Charter Review Commission Member Selection and Discussion

Council discussed member selection for Charter Review. Initial discussion revealed some confusion around the process and timeline. Previous methods of selection were discussed, but since there were only 9 applicants at this point, it was decided to accept these and continue searching for candidates until at least 15 regular members were selected. Ms. Jones pointed out that 8 members would constitute a quorum, but in that situation, it would be necessary for all members to attend all meetings. She also advised Council that any amendments to the Charter need to be to the Board of Elections 60 days before the general election.

MOTION TO APPOINT DAWN ALBRIGHT, CRAIG BERGER, BRIAN BIALIK, JASON GARTLAND, JULIE HURD-SCHMIDT, JASMINE JEFFERSON, JENNIFER MAPES, JEFF ROEGER, AND ADAM STEPHENS AS REGULAR MEMBERS, AND BARBARA HIPSMAN SPRINGER AS AN ALTERNATE, TO THE CHARTER REVIEW COMMITTEE was made by Ms. Rosenberg; seconded by Mr. DeLeone; and carried by unanimous voice vote.

Civil Service Commission Language Changes to Rules 5.01 and 6.02

Ms. Coleman advised Council that the Civil Service Commission (CSC) authorized changes to two CSC rules at the March 17, 2025 meeting, and requested final approval from Council. The following revisions were made:

REVISION 5.01 Notice of Examination

Entrance Examination – Notice of competitive entrance examinations shall be given ~~through a newspaper or local circulation and~~ by posting notices conspicuously ~~on the city's website~~, on the City's ~~Hall~~ bulletin boards, ~~in the Human Resources Office, the city's website~~, and in such places as may be deemed advisable, not less than two (2) weeks prior to the last day on which applications shall be accepted for the examination. Examinations shall be held at such places as the Commission deems advisable and shall be administered under its direction.

REVISION 6.02 Duration of Eligible Lists

A certified eligible list will expire ~~upon the filling or closing of the position, or~~ 12 months from the date of record, ~~whichever comes first~~. Firefighter lists are valid for a period of two (2) years, per Ohio Revised Code 126.46. However, the Civil Service designee may use an expired certified list to fill a position of the same classification within the same appointing authority for which the list was created. The Civil Service Commission may grant a one (1) year extension for any eligible list that has not expired. No eligible list will be granted more than one (1) extension.

MOTION TO APPROVE CHANGES TO CIVIL SERVICE RULES 5.01 AND 6.02 WITH THE EMERGENCY CLAUSE was made by Ms. Rosenberg; seconded by Mr. Sidoti; and carried by unanimous voice vote.

Replacement Pages for Codified Ordinances

Ms. Jones explained that the City periodically receives hard copies of new ordinances, or those that have been amended, from the codifying company, American Legal. She requested Council's authorization to accept the replacement pages.

MOTION TO AUTHORIZE ACCEPTANCE OF THE REPLACEMENT PAGES FOR THE KENT CODIFIED ORDINANCES WITH THE EMERGENCY CLAUSE was made by Ms. Rosenberg, seconded by Mr. Amrhein, and carried by unanimous voice vote.

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE – Chair Rosenberg/Vice-Chair Clapper***Warming Center Report***

Ms. Susel provided a report to Council regarding the City's partnership with Shepherd's House for warming center services for the 2024-25 winter season. Key points include:

- 18 persons originating from the City of Kent were assisted;

- Of the 18 persons assisted, 12 became guests at Shepherd's House so they are no longer unhoused and are benefitting from the provision of wrap-around supportive services provided by Shepherd's House;
- Warming center assistance was provided for a total of 37 days as follows:
 - o 2 dates in December: both were night & day shelter;
 - o 25 dates in January: 19 night shelter only; 6 night & day shelter;
 - o 10 dates in February: 5 night shelter only; 5 night & day shelter;
- Rate for night only shelter stay is \$50.00;
- Rate for night & day shelter stay is \$250.00;
- Total \$17,650.00 thus far, still awaiting information from Shepherd's House on 11 dates for which temperatures exceeded 22 degrees (\$1,700 in rate). \$8,000.00 Council commitment.

Council discussed increasing the amount of support for Shepherd's House because the initial \$8,000 turned out to be less than half of the total amount for the winter season, and the original plan was for that amount to apply to both warming and cooling services. It was decided to send the issue back to committee in May to determine if any more money could be provided this year, and what should be budgeted for next year.

MOTION TO RETURN THE SHEPHERD'S HOUSE FUNDING ISSUE TO COMMITTEE IN ORDER TO RECEIVE A RECOMMENDATION FROM THE ADMINISTRATION REGARDING WHAT LEVEL OF ADDITIONAL FUNDING COULD BE PROVIDED TO SHEPHERD'S HOUSE THIS YEAR, AND WHAT FUNDING COULD BE PROVIDED NEXT YEAR was made by Ms. Shaffer-Bish, seconded by Mr. Sidoti, and carried by unanimous voice vote.

Request for an Administrative Variance for 1238 West Main Street

Ms. Susel advised Council of the need for an administrative variance to allow for the connection of a new sanitary sewer for Klaben's new Lincoln dealership. The variance would allow the connection on an existing easement at the rear of Klaben's property, rather than West Main Street, thereby avoiding significant traffic disruptions and detours for an extended period of time.

MOTION TO APPROVE THE ADMINISTRATIVE VARIANCE FOR 1238 WEST MAIN STREET WITH THE EMERGENCY CLAUSE was made by Mr. Clapper; seconded by Mr. Amrhein, and carried by unanimous voice vote.

2025 Celebrate Kent! Grant Awards

Ms. Susel presented a report on the 2025 Celebrate Kent! Grant Awards. The RFP for the 2025 Celebrate Kent Grant Program was issued on January 24, 2025 and the City received a total of nine proposals from five different organizations. The total amount of funding requested was \$15,740. The amount appropriated was \$15,000, and one of the applications requested Diversity Grant funding, therefore all proposal submissions were funded. The submissions are listed below along with their 2025 recommended funding:

2025 Celebrate Kent Recommended Funding Amounts:

Haymakers Farmers' Market: Music @ the Market, \$3,000

Standing Rock Cultural Arts: Downtown Innovative Community Events (5), \$800

Standing Rock Cultural Arts: "Who's Your Mama?" Earth Day w/film festival, \$800

Kent Jaycees: Kent Craft Beer Fest: \$2,000

Crooked River Arts Council: Kent Beatlefest, \$1,250

Crooked River Arts Council: Kent American Roots, \$1,250

Crooked River Arts Council: Kent Blues Fest, \$2,500

Crooked River Arts Council: Kent Rocks, \$2,500

2025 Diversity Grant Recommended Funding Amounts:

South End Juneteenth Committee: 4th Annual Juneteenth Day Celebration, \$1,200

2025 City Social Service Grant Funding

Ms. Susel reported that the City received applications from five (5) different nonprofit organizations seeking support for seven (7) different programs or activities totaling \$73,795.54. The total amount of funding available is \$65,000. Five (5) projects were funded in full, and two programs were partially funded for a total of \$65,000 awarded. These projects provide many supportive services for Kent residents, including resident engagement programming in low-income housing developments, eviction prevention, homeless assistance, and free legal assistance. The funding awards are listed below:

Coleman Health Services: Eviction Prevention/Housing Start-Ups, \$14,000

Community Legal Aid: Legal Assistance for Kent residents, \$6,000

Axess Family Services: Housing and Emergency Support, \$10,000

Axess Family Services: Portage Area Recovery Center, \$5,000

Axess Family Services: Safer Futures, \$7,000

Lovelight: Building Community, Building Futures-Youth Component, \$12,000

PMHA: Good Neighbor Program, \$11,000

Council discussed the benefits of increasing the amount of the social service grant funding, given that the last increase was 17 years ago. Council was in favor of increasing the appropriation to \$100,000, and Mr. Ruller stated that the increase could be included in the budget appropriations amendment being presented this evening.

MOTION TO INCREASE SOCIAL SERVICE GRANT FUNDING TO \$100,000.00 WITH THE EMERGENCY CLAUSE was made by Ms. Celko, seconded by Ms. Shaffer Bish, and carried by unanimous voice vote.

City/KSU Fire Department Apparatus Shared Purchase MOU

Ms. Hall and Chief Samel requested Council's authorization for an MOU between the City and KSU for the shared funding of the purchase of a new ladder truck for the Kent Fire Department. The terms of the MOU state that KSU will assist the City of Kent for 25 percent of the cost of the ladder truck which is estimated at this time to cost approximately \$2 million. Funding from KSU will come in five \$100,000 payments starting in 2025 and going through to 2030. This money will be added to the Fire & EMS Fund 128 and immediately encumbered to account number 128.01.510.108.7630 for the purchase of the ladder truck. The City and KSU will also continue to jointly pursue grant funding for the balance of the costs of the new ladder truck, and once that funding is secured, the truck will be ordered immediately, because delivery can take up to 3 years.

Ms. Susel and Chief Samel answered a clarifying question from a member of the audience regarding the funding.

MOTION TO AUTHORIZE THE MOU BETWEEN THE CITY AND KENT STATE UNIVERSITY TO SHARE FUNDING OF A LADDER TRUCK FOR THE CITY OF KENT FIRE DEPARTMENT WITH THE EMERGENCY CLAUSE was made by Ms. Rosenberg, seconded by Mr. DeLeone, and carried by unanimous voice vote.

2025 Budget Appropriations Amendment

Ms. Hall requested Council's authorization for a 2025 Budget Appropriations Amendment.

MOTION TO AUTHORIZE THE 2025 BUDGET APPROPRIATIONS AMENDMENT, INCLUDING THE ADDITIONAL \$35,000 TOWARDS THE SOCIAL SERVICE GRANTS, WITH THE EMERGENCY CLAUSE was made by Ms. Shaffer Bish, seconded by Mr. Sidoti, and carried by unanimous voice vote.

West Side Fire Station Levy

Ms. Hall requested Council's approval to renew/replace the City's current 0.73 mil West Side Fire Station Operating Expense Tax Levy. This levy was originally passed in 2005, and the current renewal of the levy began with the 2021 Tax Year and runs for five consecutive years ending with the 2025 Tax Year. The levy is set to expire in tax year 2025/collection year 2026. The requested action from Council is to authorize placing a 0.73 mil Renewal/Replacement Tax Levy for West Side Fire Station Operating Expenses on the upcoming November 4, 2025, general election ballot.

MOTION TO AUTHORIZE PLACING A 0.73 MIL RENEWAL/REPLACEMENT TAX LEVY FOR WEST SIDE FIRE STATION OPERATING EXPENSES ON THE UPCOMING NOVEMBER 4, 2025 GENERAL ELECTION BALLOT WITH THE EMERGENCY CLAUSE was made by Ms. Shaffer Bish, seconded by Ms. Celko, and carried by unanimous voice vote.

HEALTH AND PUBLIC SAFETY COMMITTEE – Chair Amrhein/Vice-Chair Sidoti

Kent Safety Town – Declaration of Collective Intent

Mr. Bowling requested Council's consideration and approval of a Declaration of Collective Intent ("DCI"). The Rotary Club of Kent has initiated the completion of a permanent Safety Town in Kent. Rotary has made a considerable start to making the permanent Safety Town a reality by raising funds for the project from the community and the State of Ohio. They have also established a project planning team with stakeholders in the community for the completion of the project. The planning team includes representatives from the Kent Junior Mothers, the Kent City School District, Kent State University and the Kent Parks and Recreation Department.

The DCI, is a formal declaration that the community stakeholders will work cooperatively to share resources, ideas and talent to complete the Project. The DCI will commit only staff time and knowledge to progress the project. If, in the future, funding or additional resources are required, there would be a subsequent agreement that would require Council's consideration and approval.

MOTION TO APPROVE THE EXECUTION OF THE DECLARATION OF COLLECTIVE INTENT WITH THE EMERGENCY CLAUSE was made by Mr. Sidoti, seconded by Mr. Amrhein, and carried by unanimous voice vote.

Proposed Purchase of Public Safety Video Detection Technology

Chief Shearer, along with representatives from Flock Safety provided a presentation on the Flock Safety Automated License Plate Reader system. ALRP technology uses high-speed cameras combined with sophisticated computer algorithms capable of converting the images of license plates and vehicles to electronically readable data. The cameras are not owned by the city, they are owned by Flock Safety. All the maintenance of the cameras is the responsibility of Flock Safety. In addition to the cameras, Flock Safety has an integrated user interface that allows police officers to search for data in the system to include cameras in other cities. Officers will also receive alerts to vehicles entered into the national crime information center database. These alerts are specific to missing persons, stolen vehicles, and serious felony warrants. It is important to note that the cameras do not alert to individuals, rather to vehicles associated with people. The cameras do not record live video footage and do not take photos of the occupants in the vehicle.

Another important piece of the Flock system is that they provide an audit trail of all vehicles searched in the system. When conducting a search in the system, officers and detectives are

required to enter a reason for the search. Officers and detectives will be restricted from using the system to search anything except for legitimate law enforcement purposes and will be required to enter the specific case number associated with the search. KPD will conduct audits to ensure there is no misuse of the system.

Many agencies in our local area have already adopted the Flock Safety platform, including Ravenna Police, Brimfield Police, Aurora Police, Stow Police, and Tallmadge Police. There are a significant number of other agencies, both large and small in northeast Ohio that use the system. The benefit to this is that all the users are able to share data with each other. This provides a wide network for KPD to use as an investigative resource. Our proposal is to implement 14 Flock cameras at a cost of \$3,000 per camera per year. We propose using state, local, and federal forfeiture funds available only for law enforcement use to pay for this project.

Some council members had concerns regarding privacy, input from the community, accountability, and contract parameters. Others considered the technology as a beneficial tool to augment existing safety measures, including pole cameras, already in place. It was decided to make a motion without the emergency clause, so that Council would have more opportunity to consider the matter before a final vote, as well as including a trial period.

MOTION TO AUTHORIZE THE CONTRACT WITH FLOCK SAFETY FOR THE AUTOMATED LICENSE PLATE READER SYSTEM WITH TRIAL PERIOD was made by Mr. Sidoti, seconded by Ms. Rosenberg, and carried by unanimous voice vote.

STREETS, SIDEWALKS & UTILITIES COMMITTEE – Chair Sidoti/Vice-Chair Clapper

Amended Street Closure Request for Kent Jaycees' Craft Brew Fest

Ms. Susel advised Council that the Kent Jaycees will hold its 7th Annual Kent Craft Beer Fest on Saturday, May 17, 2025. The event footprint has been reconfigured to have less impact on traffic and will no longer include the closure of East Main Street between North Water Street and the Main Street Bridge. The revised layout extends the existing North Water Street closure between Main Street and Portage Street north on North Water Street to Brady Street. This proposed reconfiguration and the North Water Street closure will accommodate vendors, as well as additional businesses that wanted to be included in the event footprint.

MOTION TO APPROVE THE AMENDED STREET CLOSURE REQUEST FOR THE KENT JAYCEES' CRAFT BREW FEST WITH THE EMERGENCY CLAUSE was made by Mr. Amrhein, seconded by Ms. Rosenberg, and carried by unanimous voice vote.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 9:07pm.



Kathleen Coleman, Clerk of Council