

City of Kent Charter Review Commission Meeting

319 S. Water St., Kent, Ohio 44240

May 27, 2025

MINUTES

Present: Jason Gartland; Tom Mahon; Dawn Albright; Barb Hipsman-Springer; Julie Hurd-Schmidt; Craig Berger; Jeff Roeger; Don Schjeldahl; Jasmine Jefferson;; Adam Stephens; Brian Bialik; Todd Milton; Emma Kelly

Absent: Darlene Rocco; Jen Mapes; Kai Carpenter

Also Present: Hope Jones, Law Director; Kathy Coleman, Clerk of Council; Jack Amrhein, Ward 2 Council/President Pro Tem; Jerry Fiala, Mayor and President of Council

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- At 6:01, the meeting was called to order by Adam.
 - Motion to approve minutes from 5/13/25 meeting was made by Jasmine; seconded by Todd and carried by unanimous voice vote.
 - Kathy advised that Pete Kenworthy had stepped down, so Emma Kelly would move into his position. Hope confirmed that there was no action from the commissioners necessary to implement the change.
 - The commissioners reviewed Articles V-VII. Discussion included:

Article V - Council and the Mayor

5.01 Number, Selection, Term

Language updated to remove “Editor’s Note” from the first paragraph; suggestion to update the language to reflect current time, rather than historical references.

Discussion about being realistic as to what should be taken to Council/voters.

Straw poll: Update language in 5.01 to incorporate the “editor’s note” content into the rest of the narrative. MAJORITY: YES

5.02 Qualification

Suggestion/discussion about updating the first sentence with “municipal,” i.e., “Council members shall be qualified electors of the City and shall hold no other elected or appointed **municipal** public office...”

Straw poll: Add the word “municipal” in first sentence. MAJORITY: NO

Suggestion/discussion about removing exemption for public school or college employees' ineligibility for service on Council or as Mayor due to possible conflicts of interest.

Straw poll: Remove "No other public official elected or appointed shall be eligible except those persons employed as public school or college employees or those persons employed as a subordinate to a public official either appointed or elected."
MAJORITY: NO

5.03 Removal

Suggestion/discussion about replacing "crime involving moral turpitude" with "felony" due to the perception of historical injustices associated with the words moral turpitude. Hope explained that "moral turpitude" does have a legal definition and it was read aloud from the ORC. A suggestion was made to include the phrase "as defined by the ORC" immediately after "moral turpitude."

Straw poll: Add the words "as defined by the Ohio Revised Code" immediately following the words "moral turpitude." **MAJORITY: YES**

5.09 Clerk of Council

Suggestion/discussion about removing residency requirement. Hope stated that state law already made residency requirements illegal, so all references to it in the Charter would be removed.

5.15 Recall Petition and Election

Suggestion/discussion about adding time frame to ineligibility for office after removal, and expanding the ineligibility to include all offices of the City.

Straw poll: Replace the last sentence with "An officer removed by recall shall not be eligible for appointment to the vacancy created by their own removal, nor shall they be eligible for appointment to any other vacant office of the City for a period of one year following the election in which they were recalled." **MAJORITY: YES**

Article IV – City Manager

6.03 Acting City Manager

Suggestion/discussion about removing the term "disability" from the narrative to reflect more modern sensibilities.

Straw poll: Replace the word "disability" with "inability to perform duties."
MAJORITY: YES

6.04 Powers and Duties of the City Manager

Don provided handouts regarding sustainable economies. Suggestion/discussion about future economic development of the City and the City Manager's role in that, and the need for an economic strategic plan. Don will send additional information (through Kathy) to commissioners for further review.

Article VII – Administrative Departments

7.03 (E) Director of Safety

Suggestion/discussion regarding the need for complaint forms about the Police Department to be available anonymously, in multiple formats, for those who fear reprisal. Further, it was suggested that the Directory of Safety present an annual report to Council of all the police department complaints and updates to open investigations. Hope pointed out that it would be inappropriate to report on open investigations, and stated that a report of all complaints may violate union contract rules. She will check into that. Kathy confirmed that an online complaint form was available and that there was an area in the foyer of City Hall where forms could be picked up by the public. Some felt that requiring the Safety Director to report only on the Police Department was inappropriate, but that an overall report could be helpful.

Straw poll: Add language to ensure neutral methods of submitting complaints and require an annual report from the Safety Director outlining complaints received for all departments they supervise, i.e., Police, Fire and Dispatch. MAJORITY: YES

Miscellaneous

Audience member Doug Fuller suggested the following:

- All administration departments should have a citizens' advisory committee when developing new projects
- Community Development should be included under the Administrative Departments of the Charter.
- The Architectural Review Board should approve any construction projects the City undertakes.
- City Boards and Commissions need to be educated on the specific laws, duties and ethics of making decisions for the public.

- Citizens should be informed about meetings of potential interest by signing up for a notification list
- The City should update the Master Plan every 10 years.

Don said he will come up with wording to incorporate into the Charter.

Motion to postpone discussion on Old Business – Conflict of Interest was made by Jason, seconded by Craig and carried by unanimous voice vote.

Motion to adjourn was made by Emma, seconded by Jason and carried by unanimous voice vote.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 8:07.

The next meeting will be held on June 10, 2025 at 6:00pm at City Hall.