



City of Kent

Regular City Council Meeting

319 S. Water Street, Kent, Ohio 44240

May 21, 2025

MINUTES

At 7:00pm, a public hearing for 2025-2029 CDBG Consolidated Plan and 2025 Action Plan was held. Ms. Susel reported that the allocation was approximately \$20,000 less than expected, but there were plans to make up the loss of those funds from other areas. There were no comments from the public.

Immediately following the public hearing, Mayor Jerry T. Fiala called the Regular City Council meeting to order.

Present: 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

Also Present: Mr. Jerry T. Fiala, Mayor and President of Council; Mr. Dave Ruller, City Manager; Ms. Hope Jones, Law Director; Mr. Nick Cecil, IT Director; Ms. Bridget Susel; Community Development Director; Mr. Eric Helmstedter, Economic Development Director; Ms. Dominique Bollenbacher, Community Outreach Coordinator; Mr. Jim Bowling, City Engineer; Mr. Jamie Samels, Fire Chief; Ms. Kathy Coleman, Clerk of Council

RIBBON CUTTING CEREMONY

Council gathered for a ceremonial ribbon cutting to recognize the opening of Council Chambers for the first regular Council meeting. Mayor Fiala cut the ribbon and stated to the public, "This is your City Hall."

OPENING REMARKS AND PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Mr. Turner thanked all the citizens of Kent for supporting the building of the new City Hall and recognized the honor of holding the first Council meeting in the new chambers. He then led Council in the Pledge of Allegiance.

COMMUNICATIONS

Public Comment:

Mr. Jim Smith of River Park Drive encouraged Council, the City of Kent, and Kent State University community to join him in recognizing and celebrating Kent State alumnus Antonio Gates' enshrinement in the Pro Football Hall of Fame on August 2, 2025.

Ms. Cass McKay Walker of North Mantua Street presented a framed print as a gift to Council in honor of her love for the City of Kent.

Ms. Tina Bhargava of Crain Avenue, representing the Kent Higher Education Coalition, congratulated Council on their decision to delay the vote on Flock cameras and expressed appreciation for their transparency, accountability and care for the community.

Written Communication:

Clerk Coleman reported the following written communication:

- Between April 28 and May 5, 2025, numerous emails were received regarding the issue of the outdoor seating area on Franklin Avenue, with most in support of maintaining the closure of Franklin Avenue.
- On April 29, 2025, the agenda and staff report for the May 6, 2025 Planning Commission meeting were received.
- On May 1, 2025, the following was received from Standing Rock Cemetery: minutes from the April meeting, agenda and minutes from the emergency meeting in April, and the agenda for the May meeting.
- On May 5, 2025, an email was received from Tom Lavelle of Miller Avenue regarding Spin Scooters being left about rather than returned. This email was forwarded to Council, the City Manager and the Mayor.
- On May 12, 2025, the agenda for the May 19, 2025 Board of Zoning Appeals meeting was received.

CITY MANAGER'S REPORT

Ms. Rosenberg thanked individuals for their donations to the Health Department and Parks & Recreation Department.

MOTION TO APPROVE ITEMS 1-7 OF THE CITY MANAGER'S REPORT was made by Mr. Amrhein, seconded by Mr. Clapper, and carried by unanimous voice vote.

1. Health Department Donation - Joan has asked for Council's approval to accept the donation of a wheelchair, pressure relief cushions, health care supplies valued at \$130, and a \$10 cash donation.
2. Fire Department Grant Application (Draft #2025-036) Chief Samels has asked for Council's authorization to apply for a \$10,000 grant from the Leary Firefighter's Foundation for fire safety training equipment, with the emergency clause.
3. "Then and Now" Authorization (Draft #2025-037) Rhonda has requested Council's approval of the latest "then and now" purchases as required by the City's auditing standards, with the emergency clause.
4. Information Item - Bridget Susel has enclosed copies of the monthly zoning and permit violations report for April 2025. Permit revenues were \$21,788.24 for the month with the most permits being issued for HVAC Residential, Electric Residential and Engineering Residential (20 permits for each category). There were 32 code enforcement items for the month.
5. Information Item - Rhonda Hall has provided a summary of income tax collections for March of 2025. Overall, the City income tax collections YTD are up 4.4% (\$185,719) compared with YTD of 2024. For the month of March, the City income tax collections are up 2.8% (\$35,497) compared to 2024.
6. Information Item - Chief Samels has provided a copy of the fire and emergency medical services reports for March 2025. The MTD calls for fire service are up by 3 calls (at 123 calls) compared with 2024. Calls for fire mutual aid assistance received MTD is down from 3 to 0 calls for the month in 2025 as compared to 2024; and EMS responses are up 7.7% (by 25 calls) for 2024, compared to MTD 2024. (attachment)
7. Information Item - 2024 Summary Report: Community Reinvestment Area Housing Council and Tax Incentive Review Council Meetings Bridget has shared a report reviewing the current CRA, TIRC, and TIF and Enterprise Zone agreements for Council's information. Bridget lists 18 projects, including the project investments and their status. No action is needed by City Council, this is for informational purposes only.

CONSENT AGENDA

MOTION TO SUSPEND THREE READINGS OF DRAFTS 2025-036 THROUGH 2025-043 AND DRAFT 2025-045 was made by Ms. Rosenberg, seconded by Mr. Sidoti, and carried by unanimous roll call vote.

MOTION TO APPROVE THE CONSENT AGENDA was made by Ms. Rosenberg, seconded by Mr. Clapper, and carried by unanimous roll call vote.

- Approval of April Regular Council Meeting minutes
- Approval of May Council Committee Meeting minutes
- Approval of May Special Council Meeting with Franklin Township minutes
- **2025-0036** AN ORDINANCE AUTHORIZING THE KENT FIRE DEPARTMENT TO APPLY FOR A GRANT THROUGH LEARY FIREFIGHTER'S FOUNDATION, AND TO ACCEPT ANY GRANT, IF AWARDED, WITH CORRESPONDING APPROPRIATIONS OF FUNDS

WHICH PROVIDES FUNDING FOR A NEW FORCIBLE ENTRY TRAINING DOOR AND THREE (3) TRAINING MANNEQUINS, AND DECLARING AN EMERGENCY.

- **2025-037** AN ORDINANCE AUTHORIZING THE FINANCE DIRECTOR, UPON THE ISSUANCE OF A CERTIFICATE OF AVAILABILITY OF FUNDS, TO PAY CERTAIN PURCHASE ORDERS MADE THAT EXCEED \$3000.00; AND DECLARING AN EMERGENCY.
- **2025-038** AN ORDINANCE AMENDING ORDINANCE NO. 2024-131, THE CURRENT APPROPRIATION ORDINANCE, PASSED DECEMBER 18, 2024; 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, 2025; AND DECLARING AN EMERGENCY.
- **2025-039** A RESOLUTION DETERMINING TO PROCEED TO SUBMIT TO THE ELECTORS OF THE CITY OF KENT THE QUESTION OF THE RENEWAL OF THE CITY'S EXISTING 0.73-MILL TAX LEVY FOR THE PURPOSE OF PROVIDING SUFFICIENT FUNDS FOR THE CURRENT EXPENSE OF MAINTAINING AND OPERATING A FIRE STATION IN THE CITY OF KENT WEST OF THE ERIE RAILROAD PURSUANT TO SECTIONS 5705.19(I) AND 5705.191 OF THE OHIO REVISED CODE, AND DECLARING AN EMERGENCY.
- **2025-040** AN ORDINANCE AUTHORIZING THE CITY MANAGER, OR HIS DESIGNEE, TO CONTINUE THE ENTERPRISE ZONE AGREEMENT WITH THE DAVEY TREE EXPERT COMPANY PROVIDING FOR A PROJECT AND REAL PROPERTY TAX EXEMPTION PURSUANT TO THE OHIO ENTERPRISE ZONE PROGRAM (EZ), AND DECLARING AN EMERGENCY.
- **2025-041** AN ORDINANCE AUTHORIZING THE CITY MANAGER, OR HIS DESIGNEE, TO ENTER INTO AN AGREEMENT WITH KENT STATE UNIVERSITY (KSU), HAYMAKER FARMERS' MARKET (HFM, INC.) AND CITY OF KENT (CITY) TO INSTALL NEW PUBLIC ART BENEATH THE HAYMAKER PARKWAY BRIDGE; AND DECLARING AN EMERGENCY.
- **2025-042** AN ORDINANCE AUTHORIZING THE CITY MANAGER, OR HIS DESIGNEE, FOR THE INSTALLATION OF A FOUNTAIN IN THE RIVER AT THE HERITAGE PARK DAM SITE; AND DECLARING AN EMERGENCY..
- **2025-043** AN ORDINANCE AUTHORIZING A WATER TAP-IN FOR THE PROPERTY LOCATED AT 5885 HORNING ROAD, OUTSIDE THE CITY OF KENT, AND DECLARING AN EMERGENCY.
- **2025-045** AN ORDINANCE AMENDING "PART FOURTEEN-PROPERTY MAINTENANCE AND HOUSING CODE" OF THE CODIFIED ORDINANCES OF THE

CITY OF KENT TO AMEND SECTIONS 1406.05, 1410.04 AND 1411.12, AND
DECLARING AN EMERGENCY.

Consent agenda passed.

STANDING COMMITTEES AND LEGISLATION

Committee of the Whole – Chair Mayor Fiala/Vice-Chair Amrhein

No action.

Community Development Committee – Chair Rosenberg/Vice-Chair Clapper

MOTION TO SUSPEND 3 READINGS OF DRAFT NO. 2025-044 was made by Ms. Shaffer Bish, seconded by Ms. Rosenberg, and carried by unanimous roll call vote.

MOTION TO ADOPT DRAFT NO. 2025-044 was made by Mr. Clapper, seconded by Ms. Shaffer Bish, and carried by unanimous roll call vote.

DRAFT 2025-044 AN ORDINANCE APPROVING A REQUEST FOR COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT BLOCK GRANT (CDBG) ASSISTANCE FOR PROGRAM YEAR (PY) 2025 AND THE FIVE YEAR CONSOLIDATED PLAN FOR 2025-2029 UNDER TITLE I OF THE HOUSING AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT ACT OF 1974, AS AMENDED, AND AUTHORIZING THE EXECUTION AND FILING OF THE FIVE YEAR CONSOLIDATED PLAN FOR 2025-2029 AND THE PY2025 ANNUAL ACTION PLAN, INCLUDING RELATED CERTIFICATIONS, AND UPON AWARDING OF THE GRANT, AUTHORIZING APPROPRIATION OF FUNDS AND DECLARING AN EMERGENCY.

Draft 2025-044 passed.

Health & Safety Committee – Chair Amrhein/Vice-Chair Sidoti

No action

Land Use Committee – Chair Shaffer-Bish/Vice-Chair Hook

No action.

Streets, Sidewalks & Utilities Committee – Chair Sidoti/Vice-Chair Clapper

No action.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

None

NEW BUSINESS

None

COUNCIL MEMBERS' COMMENTS

Mr. Hook thanked Mr. Smith for coming to the meeting and sharing the news about Antonio Gates, stating that he knew Mr. Gates when they were younger.

Ms. Shaffer Bish discussed the history of the removal of the Kent dam, stating that the dam site was a monument to history. She encouraged Council and city residents to consider ways to include some of that history in developing plans for the Heritage Dam site.

MAYOR'S REPORT

Mayor Fiala recognized the upcoming Memorial Day holiday and read a short poem. He also thanked Ms. McKay Walker again for the donation and stated that an ordinance would be drawn up to accept it.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

At 7:31pm, Mr. Amrhein moved to adjourn to executive session to discuss proposed changes to the AFSCME contract and Position Allocation Ordinance. Motion was approved by unanimous roll call vote.

RETURN TO REGULAR MEETING

At 7:41, Council returned to regular session.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 7:42pm.

Kathleen Coleman
Clerk of Council

Jerry T. Fiala
Mayor and President of Council

Council Chambers May 21, 2025

Tonight's ribbon cutting is for the council room only.

There will be other ceremonies forth-coming for the rest of city hall.

Just some background:

Our 1st. chamber was in the old police building at this same location.

Our last city hall was in the old renovated Sparkle Market on S. Depeyster St.

The 1st. council meeting was held March 15 1995 with a ribbon cutting.

This council desk that we set at now was originally made for the the Depeyster location, now it become part of the new chamber.

The last council meeting was held on May 6th. 2015 we moved out of the former Depeyster location on May 18th. 2015. Approximately 10 years later were here, tonight to cut a ribbon o the New council chamber on the originally council desk from days gone by.

May 21, 2025

I stand before you this evening as a Kent resident for nearly 30 years, a Kent State University alumnus and as the Content Manager at the Pro Football Hall of Fame in Canton. I am here with a celebratory message and request; and would like the city of Kent leadership and the Kent and Kent State communities to unite in celebrating the enshrinement of a second Kent State Golden Flashes athlete as a Pro Football Hall of Famer.

On August 2, Antonio Gates will join Portage County native and Golden Flash Jack Lambert among the 382 enshrinees in the Hall. For perspective, we, at the Pro Football Hall of Fame, know that approximately 30,000 have played or coached in the NFL since 1920. Therefore, Antonio is joining the greatest 1.27% to have played professional football.

Some of you may know that Antonio's journey to enshrinement is extraordinary as he didn't play collegiate football. He was a member of the Golden Flashes basketball team. A team that captured America's attention when they advanced to the Elite 8 of the NCAA tournament.

He was signed by the NFL's San Diego (now Los Angeles) Chargers as an undrafted free agent with modest expectations. Upon enshrinement, Antonio will be one of only 23 undrafted free agents in the Hall of Fame.

I encourage members of this council and community to celebrate the achievement via congratulatory messages throughout the community --for example, the digital display across the street-- and consider visiting the Hall during "Football's Greatest Weekend," July 31-Aug. 3, to honor Antonio. Included among the many activities is a free Fan Fest to share in the excitement and, of course, the Enshrinement Ceremony on Aug. 2

One doesn't need to be a football fan to appreciate Antonio and his fellow enshrinees' accomplishments. If you attend the enshrinement and listen to the Hall of Famer's speeches (feel free to "Google" past enshrinement speeches) you will hear stories of commitment, perseverance, courage, integrity, respect, excellence and honesty and everyone is a fan of these values that create model character. I would encourage you to bring a young person with you to share the experience and hear these amazing stories.

Throughout the school year, Theodore Roosevelt students have visited the Hall through our educational programs and have heard personal stories from Hall of Famers.

Please consider celebrating throughout our city and joining us in Canton as one community "College Town Kent."

Council representative Melissa Celko has my contact information, feel free to reach out with any questions about Enshrinement Week activities or to discuss the celebration possibilities.

Thank you for your time and your service to our city.

Jim Smith

1432 River Park Drive

KENT HIGHER ED COALITION

Kent City Council 319
S. Water St.
Kent, Ohio 44240

May 21, 2025

Dear Kent City Council,

The Kent Higher Education Coalition, a community of individuals who live, work, and study in Kent, offers this letter in recognition of your service and to express our gratitude for your devotion to our shared community. Your decision to delay a vote on the proposed surveillance cameras during the April 16th City Council meeting demonstrated thoughtful leadership. By choosing to pause and allow time for public engagement and thorough assessment, you modeled the kind of transparency, accountability, and care our community needs, especially in these challenging times. Your action was both reassuring and deeply appreciated.

Much of what we're experiencing, on every level of government, is unprecedented and frightening. The passage of SBI, which severely restricts academic freedom and inclusion, a sheriff who speaks about immigrants in derogatory terms aligning with ICE, and the revocation of international students' visas are but a few examples of our devolving reality. Given that, we are extremely concerned about the potential consequences of employing this technology. We cannot know whether the data collected by these cameras will eventually be used to harm people.

We recognize the need to maintain a healthy balance between safety measures and privacy. However, the fact that surrounding towns have cameras tracking license plates throughout their cities is not enough to warrant their use in Kent. We want to reaffirm that law enforcement still has ample resources if you continue to prioritize the residents' privacy and

not adopt the cameras. In reality, most of us are already overexposed to surveillance with trackers in our cars, phones, and computers.

Your decision to choose deliberation over business as usual indicates your understanding that these are not normal times. Trust in our police chief, or any other individual, no matter how well-deserved, is insufficient justification to enact a policy that would endanger some of the most vulnerable residents in our community. The severity of the threat we face requires that we imagine how a less trustworthy person in power might wield that same authority and access.

Using our values as a guide, the character of our community requires us to lead and not follow. The tests before us are not partisan or ideological. This is about our democracy - not left and right, but instead right and wrong. We look forward to continuing this dialogue, considering community concerns, monitoring the actions of our governmental and enforcement agencies, and learning more about these cameras, their use, data storage, and how they may increase and/or impede the safety of Kent's community. Knowing that our representatives are listening and working with us to keep each other safe makes us

proud to be a part of this community.

Sincerely,

The Kent Higher Education Coalition

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