

City of Kent Charter Review Commission Meeting

319 S. Water St., Kent, Ohio 44240

May 13, 2025

MINUTES

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

Also Present: Hope Jones, Law Director; Kathy Coleman, Clerk of Council

- At 6:01, the meeting was called to order by Adam.
- Motion to approve minutes from 4/29/25 meeting was made by Jason; seconded by Brian and carried by unanimous voice vote.
- Hope advised the commissioners that Todd and Emma's applications were approved at the last Council meeting and that Todd was appointed as a member, with Emma filling an alternate role.
- The commissioners reviewed Articles I-IV. Discussion included:
 - **Preamble:** The commissioners felt strongly about the removal of the words "to Almighty God" from the first sentence of the preamble, stating that the sentence would convey the intention without it. Some members felt its inclusion would be offensive in modern society. In an unofficial vote, the commissioners voted 14-1 to remove "to Almighty God" from the preamble, with Mr. Roeger voting no.
 - **4.02 Conflict of interest:** Some commissioners felt that the wording was too broad and did not include necessary time limitations. Others felt that defining elements of the article too narrowly would essentially turn it into a treatise. Variations in wording were discussed, and comparisons were made with other municipalities and the State Ethics Commission.
 - **4.09-4.14** These sections deal with the inception of the initial Charter and the City's transition from a strong mayor system to a weak mayor/city manager system and felt they no longer served a purpose in the Charter. Removing the sections was discussed, as well as including a reference to the history. Hope suggested that some charters permit the law director to make such changes without going through Council and said she will look into it.

- Miscellaneous
 - A suggestion was made that it would be helpful to have at least some Council members at these meetings
 - Jen will send a detailed ward map to Kathy, who will distribute it to the group
 - Commissioners will send any suggestions for upcoming topics to Kathy one week prior to future meetings, so that the commissioners can review before the meeting.
 - One of the commissioners expressed dissatisfaction with the city management and felt that Kent does not have a solid strategy in place for financial stability. Hope explained that financial strategy issues did not fall within the scope of the Charter, but pointed out that Section 6.04 dealt with the duties of the City Manager. One of the commissioners suggested that they could look at adding the development of a strategic plan to those duties.
- Motion to adjourn was made by Brian; seconded by Darlene and carried by unanimous voice vote. The meeting was adjourned at 7:38pm.