



City of Kent
City Council Committee Meeting
319 S. Water St., Kent Ohio 44240

July 2, 2025

MINUTES

At 7:00pm, Mayor Jerry T. Fiala called the City Council Committee 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; Mr. Nick Shearer, Chief of Police; Ms. Bridget Susel; Community Development Director; Ms. Dominique Bollenbacher, Community Outreach Coordinator; Ms. Melanie Baker; Service Director; Mr. Eric Helmstedter, Economic Development Director; Ms. Angela Manley, Parks & Recreation Director; Ms. Joan Seidel, Health Commissioner; Ms. Rhonda Hall, Budget and Finance Director; Mr. Jim Bowling, City Engineer; Mr. Jamie Samels, Fire Chief; Ms. Kathy Coleman, Clerk of Council

Board/Commission Interviews

Ms. Cara Wolfram Evans was interviewed for a position on the Fair Housing Board. Mr. Randall Houska and Mr. Christopher Syphrit were interviewed for a position on the Board of Building Appeals. Candidates were advised that voting would take place at the July 16, 2025 regular Council meeting and they would be notified via email of the results.

Public Hearing for 2026 Tax Budget

No public comment.

COMMITTEES

Committee of the Whole – Chair Fiala/Vice Chair Amrhein

Standing Roundtable Updates

- Community Development – Ms. Susel advised Council of CD's new online development service, two emergency sewer grants and the finalization of the CHIP grant submission.
- Fire Department – Chief Samels provided an overview of the river rescues that had taken place the previous week after severe weather.
- Health Department – Ms. Seidel provided information on West Nile Virus in local mosquito populations.
- Community Engagement – Ms. Bollenbacher provided updates on the first neighborhood movie night, Heritage Fest, and the new yard recognition program.

Community Development Committee – Chair Rosenberg/Vice-Chair Clapper

Amendments to Outdoor Seating Program Guidelines

Mr. Helmstedter reviewed the history of outdoor seating in Kent and requested Council's authorization to approve the proposed amendments to the outdoor seating guidelines with the emergency clause. Motion to approve was made by Ms. Shaffer Bish, seconded by Mr. Clapper, and carried by unanimous voice vote.

Renewal of Designated Outdoor Refreshment Area

Mr. Helmstedter advised Council that ORC requires the City to renew or eliminate the DORA after 5 years of operation. He requested Council's authorization for renewal. Motion to renew DORA was made by Ms. Shaffer Bish, seconded by Mr. Sidoti, and carried by unanimous voice vote.

Finance Committee – Chair DeLeone/Vice-Chair Celko

Staff Report on 2026 Budget: Street Repair

Ms. Baker provided a presentation on the condition of the City's streets; subsequent discussion regarding possible solutions included hiring dedicated staff, outsourcing pothole repair, and other considerations. Informational only; no action taken.

Proposed 2026 Tax Budget for Submission to Portage County

Ms. Hall requested authorization to submit the 2026 tax budget to the County. Motion to approve authorization was made by Mr. Sidoti, seconded by Ms. Rosenberg, and carried by unanimous voice vote.

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

SAFER Fire Department Staffing Grant

Chief Samels asked for Council's approval to apply for the Staffing for Adequate Fire and Emergency Response (SAFER) grant which is available through the Department of Homeland Security and FEMA. The grant application would partially fund three firefighter/paramedic positions for three years. Motion to authorize application was made by Ms. Rosenberg, seconded by Ms. Shaffer Bish, and carried by unanimous voice vote.

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

No business.

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

North Mantua Street - OPWC Application

Mr. Bowling requested Council's authorization to submit a funding application with the Ohio Public Works Commission (OPWS) for the North Mantua Street project, which includes construction of a roundabout, boulevard, pedestrian facilities, and a section of the Lake Rockwell Hike and Bike trail on North Mantua St. The application includes \$850,000 in grant

funds and \$150,000 in no interest loans from OPWC. The total cost of the project is \$7,180,000 with construction tentatively scheduled for the fall of 2026. Motion to authorize the submission of the grant request was made by Ms. Shaffer Bish, seconded by Ms. Rosenberg, and carried by unanimous voice vote.

New Event Permit: Longest Table

Ms. Bollenbacher and Mr. Helmstedter requested Council's approval for a new event permit for a community dinner event known as "The Longest Table." The City is partnering with Main Street Kent to host the new event, which would take place on the Main St. bridge and would require the closing of Main St. between River St. and North Water St. on Sunday August 3rd from 3pm to 8:30pm. Motion to approve the permit was made by Mr. Amrhein, seconded by Mr. Hook and carried by unanimous voice vote.

Revised Special Event Permit Request – Grill for Good

Mr. Helmstedter requested a modification to the footprint of the annual Grill for Good fundraising event on September 13, 2025. The event is now sponsored by AxxessPoint Community Services, and they have requested to reconfigure the footprint to reduce traffic impacts by no longer closing East Main St. as part of the event. Motion to approve the modification was made by Mr. Amrhein, seconded by Ms. Celko, and carried by unanimous voice vote.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

Motion to move to Executive Session to discuss possible property acquisition was made at 9:20pm by Mr. Amrhein, seconded by Ms. Celko, and carried by unanimous voice vote.

RETURN TO REGULAR SESSION

Council returned to Regular Session at 9:26pm.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 9:27pm.



Kathleen Coleman, Clerk of Council