



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

September 3, 2025

MINUTES

PUBLIC HEARING – PROPOSED ZONING MAP AMENDMENT

Brian Gray of Ranfield Rd. and Todd Packer of Rockwell St. provided spoken comments to Council.

PUBLIC HEARING – PROPOSED DORA BOUNDARY EXPANSION

No public comment.

CALL TO ORDER

Following the public hearings, 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; Ms. Kathy Coleman, Clerk of Council; Mr. Dave Ruller, City Manager; Ms. Hope Jones, Law Director; Mr. Nick Cecil, IT Director; 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. Rhonda Hall, Budget and Finance Director; Mr. Jim Bowling, City Engineer; Mr. Jamie Samels, Fire Chief; Joan Seidel, Health Commissioner; Dan Morganti, Community Development Assistant Director

COMMITTEES

Committee of the Whole – Chair Fiala/Vice Chair Amrhein

Community Yard Beautification Awards (Dominique Bollenbacher)

Ms. Bollenbacher presented Community Yard Beautification Awards, recognizing residents for outstanding yard maintenance/landscaping. The awardees were Mary Bass of 1137 Norwood St. in Ward 2, and John and Kathleen Koch, 1102 Erin Dr. in Ward 1.

Departmental Updates

Community Development:

Bridget Susel introduced Community Development Assistant Director Dan Morganti, who previously worked for the Community Development Department in the capacity of program coordinator. Mr. Morganti reviewed his experiences and expressed enthusiasm for working towards the goals of the Community Development department.

Health Department:

Ms. Seidel provided updates on Project DAWN activities. The project used an \$8,000 stipend to host Overdose Awareness Day at Kent State in partnership with healthcare providers, student organizations, law enforcement, and campus staff. Outreach included distributing labels, coasters, and posters at local bars and restaurants, which were well-received. The initiative also provided 100 doses of Narcan, 110 fentanyl test strips, and hygiene supplies, with strong student and community engagement. Overall, the events built awareness, strengthened partnerships, and expanded access to lifesaving resources.

KSU, Town-Gown Update

Dana Lawless-Andric provided a presentation to Council. She reported that Kent State University currently has 20,000 students enrolled and continues to strengthen ties between campus and community through events like "Flash's First Friday," which drew over 1,000 students downtown. Upcoming highlights include Parents and Family Weekend on September 12–13, Homecoming with a new parade route on October 11, and an Aerospace and Engineering Expo Saturday, September 6. KSU also supports community and business engagement with programs such as "Food Truck Wednesdays."

The university is undergoing a major academic restructuring initiative, "Transformation 28," following the August retirement of Dr. Mark Politaiko, former Senior Vice President for Finance and Administration. She also mentioned that one-third of Kent residents are alumni.

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

Proposed Zoning Map Amendment

A representative from Grey Fox Capital provided a PowerPoint detailing the company's approach to potential residential development on the former Davey Drill site between Mogadore Road and Franklin Avenue. The presentation detailed the developer's rationale, which centered on meeting housing demand and supporting downtown. Council and audience members expressed concerns regarding cleanup, public safety, and the potential negative impact on existing industrial businesses. The Planning Commission had unanimously voted down the request to change the property zoning from Industrial to High Density Residential, but a proposed "overlay district" was introduced as a compromise solution to ensure environmental remediation standards are met before development can proceed.

Audience members who addressed Council on this topic were: Anne Courtney Davis, Franklin Ave.; Doria Daniels, Cedar St.; Sally Burnell, Lake St.; Mary Jo Steinert Miner, Franklin Ave.; Jeffrey Tharp, Franklin Ave; Brian Gray, Ranfield Rd.; Donna Gray, Ranfield Rd.; Carol Tharp, Franklin Ave.; Ben Garmier, Oak St.; Todd Packer, Rockwell St.; Jeff St. Clair, W. Williams St.; Travis Copen, Rabich Rd; John Spindler, Franklin Ave.; and William Garmire, W. Oak St.

A motion to uphold the Planning Commission's recommendation with the emergency clause was made by Mr. Clapper; seconded by Ms. Celko, and carried by unanimous voice vote.

A motion to further explore the idea of an overlay district with the emergency clause was made by Ms. Rosenberg; seconded by Mr. Clapper and carried by unanimous voice vote.

Public Art Appeal/Variance Request

Ms. Susel introduced Grace Nestor Louie, an artist who worked with the Kent Public Art Advisory Board on developing a proposed nature-inspired mural across from the bus station at 195 E. Erie Street. The mural aims to be a landmark of sorts, an Instagram-like experience which encourages people to take pictures in front of it and share them online. The mural has been approved by Main Street Kent, the business chamber, the board, and the building owner. The owner of Lazizza and business manager and store owners of Acorn Alley are on board. The issue is with the zoning code which requires property line frontage to be consistent across different locations and does not permit public art on frontages. The Community Development department does not want to waver from the definition of frontage in the code, and therefore has no objection to the variance being put forward.

A motion to approve the public art variance request with the emergency clause was made by Ms. Rosenberg; seconded by Mr. Sidoti, and carried by unanimous voice vote.

Stream and Wetlands Foundation Land Donation

Ms. Manley introduced Greg Snowden from the Serena Wetlands Foundation. They are currently the owners of three parcels which are located south of Fairchild, west of Majors Lane. They are interested in donating those three parcels. The only additional maintenance at this point would be a sidewalk on Fairchild. The park board is unanimously in favor of accepting this funding.

Motion to accept the land donation with the emergency clause was made by Ms. Celko, seconded by Mr. Amrhein and carried by unanimous voice vote.

Community Development Committee-Chair Rosenberg/Vice-Chair Clapper

Franklin-Kent JEDD Income Tax Agreement Renewal and Amendment

Ms. Susel advised Council that the JEDD board and city need to renew their income tax agreement, which includes language for the board to consider using RITA for tax collection. Brimfield's will be presented next month.

Motion to approve the Franklin-Kent JEDD income tax agreement renewal and amendment with the emergency clause was made by Mr. Sidoti, seconded by Ms. Celko, and carried by unanimous voice vote.

Proposed DORA Boundary Expansion

Mr. Helmstedter reported that Blind Squirrel Pub submitted a request for Kent City Council to consider authorizing the expansion of the city's DORA boundary to include its location at 802 North Main Street. River Merchant at 911 North Mantua and Bottles 101 at 114 -115 North Willow Street have also made requests. They are all valid liquor permit holders that want to take advantage of the DORA and all it has to offer. We think this is a reasonable request after consulting with Chief Shearer about the proposed expansion. A safe route was established to include all three businesses and it is included in the application.

Motion to authorize expansion of the DORA Boundary with the emergency clause as described was made by Ms. Celko, seconded by Mr. Amrhein and carried by unanimous voice vote.

Community Housing Update

Postponed.

Finance Committee – Chair DeLeone/Vice-Chair Celko

Certify Tax Rates and Amounts to Portage County

Ms. Hall requested Council's authorization to submit the City's projected 2026 tax rates and amounts to the Portage County Auditor. This is an annual process that is required by Ohio Revised Code, sections 5705.34 and 5705.35 to be submitted to the County Auditor before October 1 of each year. There are no proposed changes in the City's tax rates.

Motion to authorize and certify the tax rates and amounts for submission to the Portage County Auditor with the emergency clause was made by Mr. Sidoti, seconded by Ms. Rosenberg, and carried by unanimous voice vote.

Budget Amendment Request #5

Ms. Hall requested authorization of the amendments to the 2025 budget appropriations as presented.

Motion to approve the 2025 budget appropriations amendments with the emergency clause was made by Ms. Rosenberg, seconded by Ms. Shaffer Bish, and carried by unanimous voice vote.

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

No business.

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

Correct ordinance 2024-088 to add water surcharge to Petros Development Group property

Ms. Jones requested Council to amend the language in ordinance 2024-088 that was approved to extend water services to the Petros Development Group for their Woodland Reserves project in Brimfield. The ordinance incorrectly stated that the property would not be subject to the City's 50 percent surcharge for water customers outside the City limits. Staff is asking Council to correct that error. The developer is aware of the correction to be made.

Motion to authorize the correction to ordinance 2024-088 with the emergency clause was made by Ms. Celko, seconded by Mr. Hook, and carried by unanimous voice vote.

ODOT SR261 Consent Legislation

Mr. Bowling requested Council's approval of consent legislation from the Ohio Department of Transportation to resurface .28 miles of SR261 located within city limits, as part of a 1.5 mile resurfacing. No City funds will be used in the project.

Motion to authorize the consent legislation for the ODOT resurfacing project as presented with the emergency clause was made by Ms. Rosenberg, seconded by Mr. Amrhein, and carried by unanimous voice vote.

Sunrise Boulevard Rehabilitation

Mr. Bowling requested Council's approval for the Resolution of Intent for the Sunrise Boulevard Rehabilitation Project. The Ohio Public Works Commission requires a resolution of intent to receive reimbursements from awarded no-interest loans. The City received a \$294,500 grant and a \$50,000 no-interest loan for the project.

Motion to approve the Resolution of Intent to receive reimbursement for the eligible Sunrise Boulevard Rehabilitation costs with the emergency clause was made by Ms. Rosenberg, seconded by Ms. Shaffer Bish, and carried by unanimous voice vote.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 9:58pm.



Kathleen Coleman, Clerk of Council