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

November 5, 2025

MINUTES

CALL TO ORDER
Mayor Jack Amrhein called the meeting to order at 7:00pm.

Present: Mr. Jack Amrhein; Mr. Jeff Clapper; Mr. Chris Hook; Ms. Gwen Rosenberg; Ms. Heidi Shaffer Bish; Mr. Roger Sidoti; Mr. Robin Turner

Also Present: Ms. Kathy Coleman, Clerk of Council; Mr. Dave Ruller, City Manager; Ms. Hope Jones, Law Director; Ms. Bridget Susel; Community Development Director; Ms. Dominique Bollenbacher, Community Outreach Coordinator; Ms. Melanie Baker; Service Director; Ms. Rhonda Hall, Budget and Finance Director; Mr. Jim Bowling, City Engineer; Mr. Jamie Samels, Fire Chief; Joan Seidel, Health Commissioner; Police Chief Nick Shearer

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COMMITTEES

Committee of the Whole – Chair Amrhein

Board/Commission Vacancy

Loan Review Board: Ms. Sara McCarty was interviewed for a position on the Loan Review board. She discussed her qualifications and answered questions from Council. She was advised that Council would vote on her application at the November 19, 2025 regular Council meeting.

Departmental Updates

Community Development: Ms. Susel introduced Blake Moore, the new building services supervisor, who transitioned into the role following Bob's retirement. Previously an on-call electrical inspector with recent certification as an electrical plans examiner, Blake has demonstrated professionalism, intelligence, and effective communication skills, particularly in delivering difficult information. Since starting in mid-October, he has successfully brought order to chaotic projects.

Community Engagement: Ms. Bollenbacher reported that on November 29th, the Chamber and Main Street will host a combined Small Business Saturday and Festival of Lights event in Kent, featuring Santa to launch the holiday shopping experience. Eerie Street will be closed in the early afternoon and evening for movies and other festivities to attract visitors downtown.

Council Self-Audit: Mr. Ruller distributed a self-audit survey to Council to assess strengths and areas for improvement, aiming to refine training efforts for new council members. The collected data will influence the training planned for early next year. Members can submit their feedback at their convenience, ensuring it remains anonymous, if preferred.

City of Kent Strategy Report: Mr. Ruller distributed the annual strategic update, outlining past developments, current status, and future initiatives, including a multi-year plan beyond the typical single-year focus. The document aims to consolidate and articulate various city plans based on community feedback and previous reports, focusing on key initiatives like safe communities, quality of life, and government efficiency. He emphasized the importance of good data for informed decision-making and intends this report to serve as a resource for current and future council members. Additionally, it reflects on the progress of the bicentennial plan, particularly the social and cultural elements, and highlights the consideration of revitalizing initiatives like Heart and Soul that were previously stalled due to various challenges.

Community Development Committee-Chair Rosenberg/Vice-Chair Clapper

Proposed CRA II Agreement for Enterprise Rent-A-Car

Mr. Helmstedter presented a project concerning the CRA 2 agreement for Enterprise Rent-A-Car, which plans to renovate a newly purchased property at 1225 West Main Street for its permanent location. The project, costing over $14.4 million, includes a real property tax exemption of about $2.3 million for 12 years, pending council approval. Enterprise will retain nine full-time and one part-time jobs and create an additional three full-time jobs and 77 part-time jobs, resulting in an annual payroll increase of approximately $1.4 million. John Zukla from Enterprise expressed gratitude for the support received and highlighted the excitement surrounding their transition from tenant to owner-operator in Kent.

MOTION TO APPROVE CRA II PROJECT and authorize staff to execute the CRA Agreement as presented, with the emergency clause, was made by Mr. Clapper, seconded by Ms. Shaffer Bish and **carried** by unanimous voice vote.

Community Housing Update

Ms. Susel reported that discussions on housing issues indicate a need for improved communication regarding current developments. There are 273 housing units under construction in Kent, including owner-occupied condos and rental units, alongside 325 units in surrounding townships. A housing study from 2016 determined an oversupply of rental bed inventory in proximity to the university, forecasting a market softening by 2024-2025, which is now being observed with declining occupancy rates in major complexes. A new housing study is deemed necessary to assess potential future conversions of existing facilities to better meet community needs, given demographic declines in the region.

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

Update on the City's 2025 Capital Projects

Mr. Bowling reported that, during a busy year focused on capital infrastructure improvements, multiple projects were initiated based on strategic values set by the community and council, stemming from the centennial plan. Notably, the paving program addressed not only street repaving but also enhancements to sidewalks, curb ramps, and curbs. Priority was given to sewer and water utilities, particularly the water reclamation facility, which underwent significant upgrades including the rehabilitation of primary clarifiers and digester heat exchangers, aimed at reducing energy use and promoting sustainability. Future projects include a $10 million headworks renovation and a sewer relocation along the Cuyahoga River, with extensive public planning to follow. Additionally, initiatives are in place for addressing drinking water infrastructure, including pump station valve replacements and the development of new wellfields to ensure a reliable water supply.

Discussion of Enforcement of Repeat Parking Violations

Council and Chief Shearer discussed the issue of repeat parking violations stemming from Ordinance 2025-022, which limits the number of vehicles parked on the street to three per residence. Concerns have been raised about the ineffectiveness of the current fine structure, which remains at $15, leading some residents to disregard compliance. To address this, a proposal was made to implement an escalating fine system that would increase the fine to $100 for vehicle owners who accumulate three or more parking violations within a three-month period. This proposed change aims to deter noncompliance by making the cost of repeated violations more significant. The escalated fines would reset after a continuous three-month period without further violations, with the intention of providing a reasonable starting point for enforcement in the affected areas. The necessity for potential adjustments based on the ordinance's effectiveness was also acknowledged.

MOTION TO AMEND ORDINANCE 2025-022 TO INCLUDE AN ESCALATING FEE SCHEDULE was made by Ms. Rosenberg, seconded by Ms. Shaffer Bish, and **carried** by hand vote, 5-2-0.

Finance Committee – Chair DeLeone/Vice-Chair Celko

Proposed 2026-2030 Capital Plan Update

Ms. Hall reviewed the 2026-2030 Capital Plan which outlines a five-year forecast of necessary projects for city viability. Key points include an initial water fund balance of $2.1 million, with a notable project, wellfield development, pushed to 2028 due to funding prioritization. The sewer fund is set to begin with nearly $4 million, alongside a $9.6 million loan for a headworks building, benefiting from lower bid costs and unexpected grants. While the plan for 2026 is clear, future years show some financial challenges, with a commitment to balance budgets and maintain at least a 25% fund balance policy. The stormwater fund is anticipated to start with $1.8 million, and potential rate increases may be discussed for solid waste as it may dip below the fund balance threshold. Overall, the focus remains on managing infrastructure needs while ensuring financial stability.

MOTION TO APPROVE THE PROPOSED 2026-2030 CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PLAN with the emergency clause was made by Ms. Rosenberg, seconded by Mr. Sidoti, and **carried** by unanimous voice vote.

Kent Social Services Emergency Grant Consideration

Ms. Susel discussed the Social Service Emergency Grant, primarily aimed at assisting with food assistance amid rising living costs. Despite the governor allowing supplemental funding for SNAP (Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program) during the government shutdown, a $3,000 grant could significantly aid those in need. Council members expressed pride in proactively addressing community food security, emphasizing the fundamental right to food for all individuals.

MOTION TO AUTHORIZE UP TO $3,000 IN EMERGENCY FUNDING TO KENT SOCIAL SERVICES to assist in proving funding for indigent food services in Kent, with the emergency clause, was made by Mr. Clapper, seconded by Ms. Shaffer Bish and **carried** by unanimous voice vote.

Resolution Requesting Transfer of Taxes from Portage County

Ms. Hall presented the annual process in which the city requests the county to advance property taxes, as permitted by section 321.34 of the Ohio Revised Code. The advancement occurs four to six weeks before the actual settlements, which typically happen in February and September.

MOTION TO ADOPT THE RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING THE TRANSFER OF COUNTY TAX PROCEEDS as presented, with the emergency clause, was made by Mr. Sidoti, seconded by Ms. Rosenberg, and **carried** by unanimous voice vote.

2025 Budget Appropriations Amendment

Ms. Hall provided a hard copy of the sixth 2025 budget appropriations amendment, which noted an inadvertent omission of the last item and mentions that a final cleanup ordinance will be issued in December, alongside several requested items from the past months.

MOTION TO APPROVE THE 2025 BUDGET APPROPRIATIONS AMENDMENT as presented with the emergency clause was made by Mr. Sidoti, seconded by Ms. Rosenberg, and **carried** by unanimous voice vote.

Auction and Disposal of City Vehicles

Ms. Baker requested authorization for the disposal of eight items, including six vehicles equipped with various tools such as leaf collectors and plows, an aquitech for a sewer vehicle, and a fire pumper. These items have been replaced with new equipment from 2023 and 2024, a process that took over a year and a half. The disposal will involve Edinburg auctions for certain items and an online government auction site for the fire department.

MOTION TO APPROVE THE SALE OF THE SURPLUS CITY EQUIPMENT as presented, with the emergency clause, was made by Ms. Rosenberg, seconded by Mr. Clapper, and **carried** by unanimous voice vote.

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

Public Safety Video Technology Contract

Chief Shearer and Council revisited the topic of a new public safety video technology contract with Flock Cameras. The chief emphasized the absence of new information since the council's previous deferral. The main concerns center around the risk of inappropriate use of this technology rather than its value. The Chief highlighted that Flock has achieved SOC2 and SOC3 compliance, which indicates that they have undergone independent audits relevant to data security and integrity—a crucial factor for ensuring reliable data exchanges between the technology provider and the city. Despite this compliance, the IT director noted that SOC2 standards do not prevent government entities from compelling data access. The Chief also discussed data sharing policies with adjacent counties, which would require compliance with specific safeguards, particularly regarding sensitive issues like immigration and reproductive rights. Transparency of data sharing would be made available on their website. Questions raised by the council included inquiries about public records and the implications of SOC compliance.

MOTION TO APPROVE THE ADOPTION OF THE FLOCK CAMERA CONTRACT WITH THE PROVISION THAT COUNCIL BE INVOLVED IN DEVELOPING THE INFORMATION-SHARING POLICY was made by Ms. Rosenberg, seconded by Mr. Sidoti, and **failed** by a 3-4-0 hand vote, with Mr. Clapper, Ms. Shaffer Bish, Mr. Hook, and Mr. Amrhein voting against the motion.

Proposed Firefighter Residency Ordinance Change

Chief Samel discussed a proposed change in Kent's fire department residency requirement, emphasizing the need to adapt to modern recruitment challenges. Historically, firefighters were required to live within a 10-minute drive from the city center, but legal changes allowed for residency in adjacent counties. Current challenges in recruitment and retention, highlighted by a significant drop in civil service test candidates, necessitate an expansion of the residency area from 7 to approximately 16 counties. This change aims to attract more candidates and retain current firefighters, addressing staffing issues while fostering a positive departmental culture.

MOTION TO AUTHORIZE THE PROPOSED RESIDENCY ORDINANCE CHANGE as presented with the emergency clause was made by Ms. Shaffer Bish, seconded by Ms. Rosenberg, and **carried** by unanimous voice vote.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 9:31pm.

Kathleen Coleman

City of Kent Clerk of Council