



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

December 3, 2025

MINUTES

BOARD/COMMISSION INTERVIEWS

Prior to the start of the Committee meeting, Council held interviews with applicants interested in sitting on a board or commission for the City. Applicants were given the opportunity to introduce themselves, explain their reasons for wanting to join, or to remain on, their chosen board/commission and answered questions from Council. The following individuals were interviewed:

Greg Seifert – Board of Building Appeals
Lindsay Nowak – Board of Health
Randall Smith – Board of Zoning Appeals
Susan Roxburgh – Fair Housing
Jason Knowles – Shade Tree
Tom Kiepura – Shade Tree
Judy Nelson – Sustainability
Lynn Gregor – Sustainability

Voting will take place at the December 17, 2025 meeting and applicants will be notified by email.

CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Jack Amrhein called the Committee meeting to order at 7:00pm.

Present: Mr. Jack Amrhein; Ms. Melissa Celko; Mr. Jeff Clapper; Mr. Chris Hook; Mr. Michael DeLeone; Ms. Gwen Rosenberg; Ms. Heidi Shaffer Bish; Mr. Roger Sidoti

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. Melanie Baker; Service Director; Ms. Rhonda Hall, Budget and Finance Director; Mr. Jamie Samels, Fire Chief; Joan Seidel, Health Commissioner; Police Chief Nick Shearer; Ms. Suzanne Stemnock, Human Resources Director; Mr. Nick Cecil, IT Director; Ms. Angela Manley; Parks & Recreation Director

Motion to excuse Mr. Turner was made by Mr. DeLeone, seconded by Ms. Rosenberg, and carried by unanimous voice vote.

COMMITTEES

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

Rotary Presentation on Neighborhood Flag Fundraiser

The Rotary Club of Kent presented a new initiative where subscribers would donate annually to have an American flag placed in their "Devil Strip" or tree lawn for five holidays: Memorial Day, Flag Day, Independence Day, Labor Day, and Veterans Day. The flags would be put up a few days before and removed a few days after each holiday. The program aims to enhance community aesthetics and pride, foster patriotism, support local projects, and promote collaboration. High school booster clubs, Girl Scouts, and Boy Scouts would assist with flag placement and receive a portion of the proceeds. The Rotary Club would manage flag care, storage, delivery, and pickup, and handle subscriptions through a website and mailers. Discussions included concerns about flag placement in areas with narrow tree lawns, potential confusion with city signage regulations, and the possibility of including businesses in the program. There was also a question about potentially incorporating Kent flags for different holidays.

MOTION TO APPROVE THE ROTARY NEIGHBORHOOD FLAG FUNDRAISER was made by Ms. Rosenberg, seconded by Mr. Clapper, and passed by unanimous voice vote.

Proposed Revision to Ordinance 901.03

Ms. Baker presented Council with a proposed amendment to section 901.03 regarding repair and replacement standards for culvert pipes. The revision would change the standard from replacement in "type and kind of materials" to "in accordance with the standards and specifications of the deputy service director and superintendent of engineering." This change is part of an ongoing process to update the city's construction drawings and standards.

MOTION TO APPROVE THE REVISION WITH THE EMERGENCY CLAUSE was made by Mr. DeLeone, seconded by Ms. Rosenberg, and passed by unanimous voice vote.

Committee of the Whole – Chair Amrhein

Departmental Updates

- **IT:** Mr. Cecil provided an update on cybersecurity. He explained that new Ohio Revised Code House Bill 96 mandates stricter policies due to a rise in data breaches in smaller municipalities. He presented six required policy categories developed to meet these requirements and emphasized that while data breaches are statistically inevitable, Kent's security measures are robust, aided by a cyber security firm that monitors logs 24/7 for attempted access. The importance of staff training on cybersecurity was also highlighted. The IT department also sought feedback on replacing current laptops with iPads for council members to encourage better engagement and ensure public records are routed through backed-up systems.

Community Development Committee-Chair Rosenberg/Vice-Chair Clapper

Proposed Update to the Sustainability Commission Ordinance

- Ms. Susel discussed proposed updates to the Sustainability Commission ordinance, which has had three ordinances since 1995 that are now outdated. The goal is to move specificity from the ordinance to bylaws and rules of procedure, allowing for easier adaptation. A key change is shifting the commission's focus to activities promoting the climate action plan. The proposal suggests quarterly meetings instead of monthly ones, with work sessions and special meetings convened as needed, to be more strategic with staff time and budget due to overtime issues. A council member expressed concerns about the reduction in meeting frequency and the cohesiveness of the group, and wanted more time for consideration. The commission's chair also voiced concerns about limiting their ability to provide input and do work.

MOTION TO AUTHORIZE THE REVISIONS TO THE SUSTAINABILITY ORDINANCE WITH THE EMERGENCY CLAUSE was made by Mr. Clapper, seconded by Mr. Hook, and carried by voice vote, 7-0-1, with Ms. Shaffer Bish abstaining.

Finance Committee – Chair DeLeone/Vice-Chair Celko

Proposed 2026 City Operating Budget and Position Allocation

Ms. Hall and Mr. Ruller provided an overview of the 2026 budget, describing it as largely "status quo" with minor tweaks. He noted that the budget does not address major staffing gap issues, which will be a continuing conversation into 2026. Most increases are due to rising costs of energy, supplies, materials, and labor. He mentioned that while income tax revenue was strong earlier in the year, it is expected to end around last year's level. The city budgets conservatively, assuming low-end revenues and high-end costs.

MOTION TO AUTHORIZE THE PROPOSED 2026 CITY OPERATING BUDGET, INCLUDING THE 3 PERCENT WATER AND SEWER RATE INCREASES, WITH THE EMERGENCY CLAUSE was made by Ms. Shaffer Bish, seconded by Ms. Rosenberg, and carried by unanimous voice vote.

Proposed 2025 Budget Appropriation Amendment

Ms. Hall requested Council's approval for the 2025 budget appropriations amendment, and noted that the final appropriations document will be provided, along with the final year-end reconciliation, at the December 17, 2025 meeting for their approval.

MOTION TO AUTHORIZE THE 2025 BUDGET APPROPRIATION AMENDMENTS AND THE FINAL YEAR-END RECONCILIATION FOR 2025, WITH THE EMERGENCY CLAUSE was made by Mr. Sidoti, seconded by Ms. Shaffer Bish and carried by unanimous voice vote.

Renewal of Annual Public Defender Contract with Portage County

Ms. Jones asked for Council's approval of the renewal for the annual public defender's contract with Portage County.

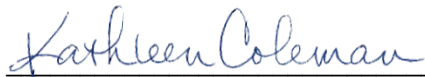
MOTION TO APPROVE THE RENEWAL OF THE PUBLIC DEFENDER'S CONTRACT WITH THE EMERGENCY CLAUSE was made by Ms. Rosenberg, seconded by Mr. Sidoti and carried by unanimous voice vote.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

Mayor Amrhein asked to move into Executive Session to review the proposed changes to the City's 2026 position allocation ordinance and General Compensation plan, as well as discuss the appointment, employment, dismissal, discipline, promotion, demotion, or compensation of a public employee or official. MOTION TO MOVE INTO EXECUTIVE SESSION was made by Mr. Clapper, seconded by Mr. Sidoti, and carried by unanimous voice vote.

RETURN FROM EXECUTIVE SESSION AND ADJOURN

Council returned from executive session at 8:52pm; there being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 8:53pm.



City of Kent Clerk of Council