



City of Kent

Regular City Council Meeting

319 S. Water Street, Kent, Ohio 44240
December 17, 2025

MINUTES

At 7:00pm, Mayor Jack Amrhein called the Regular City Council meeting to order.

Present: Mr. Jack Amrhein; Ms. Melissa Celko; Mr. Jeff Clapper; Mr. Michael DeLeone; Mr. Chris Hook; Ms. Heidi Shaffer Bish; Ms. Gwen Rosenberg; 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. Melanie Baker, Services Director; Ms. Bridget Susel; Community Development Director; Dominique Bollenbacher, Community Outreach Coordinator; Joan Seidel, Health Commissioner; Jamie Samels, Fire Chief; Jim Bowling, City Engineer

OPENING REMARKS AND PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

- Mr. Sidoti offered opening remarks expressing holiday wishes and urging consideration for less fortunate community members. He reflected on the year's productivity for citizens and hopes everyone has enjoyed the new facility. He then led Council in the Pledge of Allegiance.
- Mr. Ruller offered clarification on the proposed updates to the 35-year-old sustainability ordinance. He acknowledged the frustrations caused by legal language and aimed to clarify the intent behind the proposed changes. He explained that the updates do not intend to repeal the ordinance but to provide more authority and clearer procedural guidelines for the Sustainability Commission. He emphasized the routine nature of such updates while expressing regret for any confusion that arose during the legislative process. He also mentioned the incorporation of Robert's Rules of Order to improve meeting management and highlight the objective of maintaining a well-represented and effective government. To address concerns, Ms. Jones proposed clarifying the commission's ongoing role in an ordinance, ensuring members that the city remains committed to its goals. Mr. Ruller reassured commission members that amendments to the commission's structure are possible in the future, inviting open dialogue for any needed changes.

COMMUNICATIONS

Public Comment:

- **Mr. Martin Gilliland** of Whitewood Drive addressed Council with concerns about the Kent Police Department, which he described as having declined from being a premier department to facing significant staffing shortages, with eight officer positions unfilled. He emphasized the importance of officer retention, morale, and adequate hiring practices, suggesting that the city should improve police salaries to attract new recruits. Additionally, he pointed out the drawbacks of officers working excessively long shifts, highlighting the risks involved in making critical decisions under fatigue. He commended the city manager's efforts in revitalizing the community and urged similar improvements for the police department to ensure the safety of residents, particularly children.
- **Ms. Tracy Wallach** of Starr Ave. addressed Council and stated that the bylaws from the Sustainability Commission presented to Council on December 3rd were only a draft and not yet reviewed or voted on by the full commission. She requested that Council table the vote on these bylaws until a completed version can be presented.
- **Ms. Lorraine McCarty** of Orchard Street and member of the Kent Environmental Council expressed concerns to Council regarding the revisions to the Sustainability Plan at a recent council meeting. She highlighted ambiguities in the draft presented on December 3rd, particularly regarding procedural elements and the postponement of discussions on proposals to regular meetings, which may delay environmental improvements. She mentioned ongoing negotiations about work sessions and the absence of the Sustainability Coordinator due to budget constraints, emphasizing the need for clearer written processes. She criticized the bypassing of the full commission's review, calling for a delay in the passage of the revisions until all details are clarified and the commission can fully approve them.
- **Ms. Judy Nelson** of Whetstone Avenue expressed her gratitude to Mr. Ruller for his clarification regarding the document amendment process that has been ongoing since September 2024. She recounted her involvement with an ad hoc committee, which met five times through October, ultimately deciding that the original document was outdated and needed a complete rewrite. Nelson indicated confusion regarding the status of the bylaws and the ordinance, emphasizing that the draft presented to Council was unfinished and had not undergone the necessary thorough review and approval process. She advocated for Council to allow the Sustainability Commission to complete their original task, highlighting the significant effort previously invested in creating meaningful documents. In conclusion, she asserted the unique role of their commission in influencing the city's climate action plan and requested that they be permitted to finalize their work.

- **Mr. Garrett Ferrara** of Pioneer Avenue expressed Christmas and holiday wishes, commended the appearance of the city hall and council chambers, and acknowledged the contributions of his colleagues in their final council meetings. He thanked them for their often-thankless work and humorously suggested that retirement may be enjoyable enough for others to consider as well.

Written Communication:

- On November 20, 2025, a notification of a new liquor license request was received from the Ohio Liquor Control Board. The application is for Kent Mart, Inc. at 1110 S. Water St. Chief Shearer has no objections.

MOTION TO RETURN NOTICE TO LCB WITH NO HEARING REQUESTED was made by Mr. DeLeone, seconded by Ms. Rosenberg, and carried by unanimous voice vote.

- On November 25, 2025 the Clerk’s office received notice that there will be no Planning Commission meetings in December.
- On November 26, 2025, the minutes from the Standing Rock Cemetery November regular meeting and the special meeting were received, along with the agenda for the December meeting. These were posted online.
- On December 5, 2025, the Clerk’s office received certificates of election results from the Board of Election. These are on file in the Clerk’s office.
- On December 5, 2025, the Clerk’s office received notification to November 2025 election candidates to file post-general campaign finance reports. This notice was shared with the three new at-large Council members.

CITY MANAGER’S REPORT

MOTION TO APPROVE ITEMS 1-5 OF THE CITY MANAGER’S REPORT was made by Mr. DeLeone, seconded by Mr. Clapper, and carried by unanimous voice vote.

CONSENT AGENDA

Ms. Shaffer Bish requested that DRAFT 2025-112 be removed from the consent agenda.

MOTION TO SUSPEND THREE READINGS OF DRAFTS 2025-100 through 2025-111, 2025-113 through 2025-118, and 2025-127 through 2025-128 was made by Mr. Hook, seconded by Mr. Clapper, and carried by unanimous roll call vote, 8-0-0.

MOTION TO APPROVE THE CONSENT AGENDA as amended was made by Mr. Hook, seconded by Mr. Sidoti and carried by unanimous roll call vote, 8-0-0.

- Approval of November Regular Council Meeting minutes
- Approval of December Council Committee Meeting minutes
- **DRAFT 2025-109 AN ORDINANCE AUTHORIZING THE FINANCE DIRECTOR, UPON THE ISSUANCE OF A CERTIFICATE OF AVAILABILITY OF FUNDS, TO PAY**

CERTAIN PURCHASE ORDERS MADE THAT EXCEED \$3000.00; AND DECLARING AN EMERGENCY.

- **DRAFT 2025-110** AN ORDINANCE APPROVING THE CURRENT REPLACEMENT PAGES TO THE CITY OF KENT CODIFIED ORDINANCES AND DECLARING AN EMERGENCY.
- **DRAFT 2025-111** AN ORDINANCE APPROPRIATING FROM THE VARIOUS FUNDS OF THE CITY OF KENT TO INDIVIDUAL ACCOUNTS FOR THE CURRENT EXPENSES OF THE CITY FOR THE FISCAL YEAR ENDING DECEMBER 31, 2026, AND DECLARING AN EMERGENCY.
- **DRAFT 2025-113** AN ORDINANCE AMENDING ORDINANCE NO. 2024-131, THE CURRENT APPROPRIATION ORDINANCE, PASSED DECEMBER 18, 2024; SO AS TO ADJUST APPROPRIATIONS, TRANSFERS AND ADVANCES FROM THE VARIOUS FUNDS OF THE CITY OF KENT TO INDIVIDUAL ACCOUNTS FOR THE CURRENT EXPENSES OF THE CITY FOR THE FISCAL YEAR ENDING DECEMBER 31, 2025; AND DECLARING AN EMERGENCY.
- **DRAFT 2025-114** AN ORDINANCE AUTHORIZING THE CITY MANAGER TO CONTRACT, ON BEHALF OF THE CITY OF KENT, WITH THE OFFICE OF THE PUBLIC DEFENDER, PORTAGE COUNTY, FOR THE PROVISION OF LEGAL COUNSEL TO INDIGENT PERSONS CHARGED WITH POTENTIAL PENALTY OF INCARCERATION FOR OFFENSES COMMITTED IN VIOLATION OF THE ORDINANCES OF SAID CITY FOR THE PERIOD JANUARY 1, 2026 THROUGH DECEMBER 31, 2026, AND DECLARING AN EMERGENCY.
- **DRAFT 2025-115** AN ORDINANCE AMENDING CHAPTER 901 OF THE CODIFIED ORDINANCES OF THE CITY OF KENT, ENTITLED "STREETS, CURBS AND DRIVEWAYS ", SO AS TO AMEND SECTION 901.03 ENTITLED "REPAIR AND REPLACEMENT STANDARDS" TO ALLOW FOR IMPROVEMENTS TO NEIGHBORHOOD STREETS CONSISTENT WITH TODAY'S STANDARDS AND DECLARED AN EMERGENCY.
- **DRAFT 2025-116** AN ORDINANCE AUTHORIZING THE CITY MANAGER OR HIS DESIGNEE TO APPROVE A NEW PROGRAM FOR THE ROTARY CLUB OF KENT TO ALLOW FOR FLAGS TO BE INSTALLED IN ORDER TO PROMOTE COMMUNITY PRIDE AND PATRIOTISM.
- **DRAFT 2025-117** AN ORDINANCE AMENDING SECTION 915.72 OF THE KENT CODIFIED ORDINANCES, INCREASING THE SEWER RATES OF THE CITY OF KENT, OHIO BY THREE PERCENT (3%) BEGINNING WITH THE FIRST BILLING CYCLE IN JANUARY, 2026, AND DECLARING AN EMERGENCY.
- **DRAFT 2025-118** AN ORDINANCE AMENDING SECTION 913.05(d) OF THE KENT CODIFIED ORDINANCES, INCREASING THE WATER RATES OF THE CITY

OF KENT, OHIO BY THREE PERCENT (3%) BEGINNING WITH THE FIRST BILLING CYCLE IN JANUARY, 2026, AND DECLARING AN EMERGENCY.

- **DRAFT 2025-127** AN ORDINANCE AUTHORIZING AN AGREEMENT WITH PINGREE 2000 REAL ESTATE HOLDINGS, LLC AND CLERAC, LLC (aka ENTERPRISE HOLDINGS, LLC) PROVIDING FOR A REAL PROPERTY TAX EXEMPTION PURSUANT TO THE OHIO COMMUNITY REINVESTMENT AREA PROGRAM (CRA) TO PERFORM RENOVATIONS TO THE EXISTING BUILDING LOCATED AT 1225 WEST MAIN STREET, AND DECLARING AN EMERGENCY.
- **DRAFT 2025-128** AN ORDINANCE AMENDING ORDINANCE NO. 2025-54 THE POSITION ALLOCATION, THE GENERAL COMPENSATION PLAN AND AFSCME CONTRACT, AND DECLARING AN EMERGENCY.

Consent agenda passed.

STANDING COMMITTEES AND LEGISLATION

Committee of the Whole – Chair Amrhein

- *Voting on Board/Commission Appointees*
 - **MOTION TO APPOINT Greg Seifert to the Board of Building Appeals** was made by Mr. Clapper, seconded by Mr. DeLeone, and carried by unanimous voice vote.
 - **MOTION TO APPOINT Louise Frederick and Lyndsay Nowak to the Board of Health** was made by Mr. Hook, seconded by Ms. Celko, and carried by unanimous voice vote.
 - **MOTION TO APPOINT Randall Smith to the Board of Zoning Appeals** was made by Mr. Sidoti, seconded by Mr. DeLeone, and carried by unanimous voice vote.
 - **MOTION TO APPOINT Susan Roxburgh and Jennifer Nichols to the Fair Housing Board** was made by Mr. Clapper, seconded by Mr. DeLeone, and carried by unanimous voice vote.
 - **MOTION TO APPOINT Denise Mote to the Income Tax Review Board** was made by Mr. Clapper, seconded by Mr. Sidoti, and carried by unanimous voice vote.
 - **MOTION TO APPOINT Kathleen Wiler to the Parks and Recreation Board** was made by Ms. Celko, seconded by Ms. Rosenberg, and carried by unanimous voice vote.
 - **MOTION TO APPOINT Jason Knowles and Tom Kiepura to the Shade Tree Commission** was made by Mr. Clapper, seconded by Mr. DeLeone, and carried by unanimous voice vote.
 - **MOTION TO APPOINT Lynn Gregor to the Sustainability Commission** was made by Mr. Clapper, seconded by Ms. Rosenberg, and carried by voice vote 7-0-1, with Mr. DeLeone abstaining.

- **MOTION TO AUTHORIZE INSERTION OF NAMES INTO DRAFTS 2025-119 through 2025-126** was made by Mr. DeLeone, seconded by Mr. Clapper and carried by unanimous voice vote.

CONSENT AGENDA

- **DRAFT 2025-119** AN ORDINANCE APPOINTING GREG SEIFERT TO THE BOARD OF BUILDING APPEALS AND DECLARING AN EMERGENCY.
- **DRAFT 2025-120** AN ORDINANCE APPOINTING LOUISE FREDERICK AND LYNDISAY NOWAK TO THE BOARD OF HEALTH AND DECLARING AN EMERGENCY.
- **DRAFT 2025-121** AN ORDINANCE APPOINTING RANDALL SMITH TO THE BOARD OF ZONING APPEALS AND DECLARING AN EMERGENCY.
- **DRAFT 2025-122** AN ORDINANCE APPOINTING SUSAN ROXBURGH AND JENNIFER NICHOLS TO THE FAIR HOUSING BOARD AND DECLARING AN EMERGENCY.
- **DRAFT 2025-123** AN ORDINANCE APPOINTING DENISE MOTE TO THE INCOME TAX REVIEW BOARD AND DECLARING AN EMERGENCY.
- **DRAFT 2025-124** AN ORDINANCE APPOINTING KATHLEEN WILER TO THE PARKS AND RECREATION BOARD AND DECLARING AN EMERGENCY.
- **DRAFT 2025-125** AN ORDINANCE APPOINTING JASON KNOWLES AND TOM KIEPURA TO THE SHADE TREE COMMISSION AND DECLARING AN EMERGENCY.
- **DRAFT 2025-126** AN ORDINANCE APPOINTING LYNN GREGOR TO THE SUSTAINABILITY COMMISSION AND DECLARING AN EMERGENCY.

MOTION TO SUSPEND THREE READINGS OF DRAFTS 2025-119 through 2025-126 was made by Mr. Sidoti, seconded by Mr. Hook and carried by unanimous roll call vote.

MOTION TO ADOPT DRAFTS 2025-119 through 2025-126 was made by Mr. Clapper, seconded by Mr. Hook, and carried by unanimous roll call vote.

Drafts 2025-119 through 2025-126 passed.

- ***Discussion of DRAFT 2025-112 – Changes to Sustainability Commission Ordinances***
Discussion included the importance of collaboration among the sustainability commission, Council, and staff, emphasizing the need to work as a cohesive team. It was noted that proposed changes would address community concerns but also recognized that commission members feel a need for greater involvement in the bylaws' development. It was suggested that discussing the matter in committee could help advance the process, acknowledging the significant changes required.

MOTION TO TABLE THE VOTE AND RETURN THE ISSUE TO COMMITTEE was made by Ms. Shaffer Bish, seconded by Mr. Hook, and passed by voice vote.

Finance Committee – Chair DeLeone/Vice-Chair Celko

No action.

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

No action.

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

No action.

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

No action.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

None.

NEW BUSINESS

New Council members Benjamin Tipton, Tracy Wallach, and Sarah Wesley were sworn in.

COUNCIL MEMBERS' COMMENTS

Ms. Celko thanked and recognized departing Council members DeLeone, Rosenberg, and Sidoti, and welcomed the incoming Council members.

MAYOR'S REPORT

Mayor Amrhein recognized departing council members DeLeone, Rosenberg, and Sidoti, who made significant contributions to Kent and thanked them on behalf of the administration and residents. Noting their lasting influence, he presented them with commemorative plaques. He extended warm holiday wishes to the community, emphasizing reflection, gratitude, and shared resilience in facing challenges, while looking forward to a hopeful future together.

ADJOURN

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 8:07pm.



Kathleen Coleman
Clerk of Council



Jack Amrhein
Mayor and President of Council

