



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

August 6, 2025

MINUTES

Due to technical difficulties, this meeting was not recorded/live-streamed.

At 7:05pm, Mayor Jerry T. Fiala called the City Council Committee meeting to order.

Present: Mr. Jack Amrhein; 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; 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. Rhonda Hall, Budget and Finance Director; Mr. Jim Bowling, City Engineer; Mr. Jamie Samels, Fire Chief

Motion to excuse Ms. Celko was made by Mr. DeLeone; seconded by Mr. Hook, and carried by unanimous voice vote.

BOARDS AND COMMISSIONS INTERVIEW

Mr. Randall Houska was interviewed for a position on the Fair Housing Board. He was notified that Council would vote at the August 20, 2025 meeting and he would be notified of the result by email.

COMMITTEES

Committee of the Whole – Chair Fiala/Vice Chair Amrhein

Inaugural Community Yard Beautification Awards (Dominique Bollenbacher)

Ms. Bollenbacher presented the first of the Community Yard Beautification Awards, recognizing residents for outstanding yard maintenance. The awardees were Jonathan Secaur & Linda Idoine (Ward 6), Albert Grimes (Ward 2), Allen Smalley (Ward 3), Tammy & Mark Clewell (Ward 1). She noted that the awards were distributed across city wards and received positive community feedback.

Departmental Updates (Nick Cecil, Bridget Susel, Jim Bowling, Chief Samels, Angela Manley)

IT Department Updates:

- Implementation of the Enterprise Permitting & Licensing System and Citizen Self-Service Portal, streamlining permit and license processes;
- Launch of new Time & Attendance and Utility Billing systems, reducing manual work and increasing transparency;
- Recognition of key staff contributions to successful rollouts.

In response to a question from Mr. Turner, Mr. Cecil stated he would follow up on data processing workflow for website form submissions

Community Development updates:

- Discussion of tree hazards on private rental property and proposal that a more formalized complaint-based protocol be established;
- Oak Haven condos have submitted an initial site plan;
- CD has entered into contracts with two different consulting firms to do plan review and chief building officer services due to the retirement of the previous CBO and lack of suitable applicants for the position;
- Plan review time has gone from 30 days to about half that due to the new electronic system;
- Former City grants manager Dan Morganti started this week as Assistant CD Director

Engineering updates:

- Mr. Bowling provided updates on ongoing street and utility projects, including East Main Street construction and water system improvements.

Fire Department updates:

- Chief Samels reported that the new fire truck, which was ordered in 2022, has been received. It will be a month or so before it's in service because it needs to be customized for use and staff needs to be trained. The old truck will be auctioned on GovDeals.com and the proceeds put into the FD's vehicle replacement fund.

Parks & Recreation updates:

- Ms. Manley reported that the 32nd annual Art in the Park event is scheduled for the weekend after Labor Day and hopes that everyone will stop down.

Amendment to Public Meetings Ordinance

Ms. Jones requested Council's approval to update the public meeting ordinance to change the location of the physical posting of meeting notices from 930 Overholt to City Hall. **Motion to approve the update with the emergency clause was made by Mr. Sidoti, seconded by Mr. Hook, and carried by unanimous voice vote.**

Community Development Committee-Chair Rosenberg/Vice-Chair Clapper

Rental Registration and Tree Inspection Follow Up (Bridget Susel)

Ms. Susel provided an overview of her findings on Council's referral to consider adding tree inspection to the rental licensing and inspection program. Her study showed that, while it would not be feasible to commit to inspecting all of the trees on over 2,000 rental units due to staffing limitations, with improved internal sharing of information among Health, CD, and Service departments, tree "inspections" through a referral-based approach could begin to address Council's concerns for the conditions of street trees at rental properties.

Update on the Kent Convention and Visitor's Bureau (Eric Helmstedter)

Mr. Helmstedter, along with Dennis Campbell of the Kent City Chamber of Commerce, provided Council with an update on the activities of the Kent Convention and Visitor's Bureau. After a period of inactivity due to COVID, the Bureau has been revitalized with the launch of a new website, email and data analytics through Placer.ai to better target tourism efforts.

Finance Committee – Chair DeLeone/Vice-Chair Celko

Public Safety Staffing Needs Presentation (Chief Shearer, Chief Samels)

Police Chief Shearer presented a request for three additional officers, citing increased community engagement, transparency, mental health calls, and overtime concerns. Fire Chief Samels requested three additional firefighters, referencing rising call volumes, overtime, and staff wellness. SAFER grant application status was discussed.

Motion to receive cost analysis and further financial details from Budget & Finance and the City Manager, with the emergency clause, was made by Ms. Rosenberg; seconded by Ms. Shaffer Bish, and carried by unanimous voice vote.

Certified Liens to the County for Outstanding Payments (Rhonda Hall)

Ms. Hall presented the annual list of addresses for certification and submission to Portage County to be added to property tax records as tax liens against the property due to lack of payment.

Motion to certify and authorize the submission of the proposed property tax liens as presented with the emergency clause was made by Ms. Rosenberg, seconded by Mr. Clapper, and carried by unanimous voice vote.

Budget Amendment Request #4 (Rhonda Hall)

Ms. Hall requested Council's approval of the latest budget appropriations. **Motion to approve was made by Mr. Amrhein, seconded by Ms. Rosenberg, and carried by unanimous voice vote.**

Consideration of a new Tax Increment Financing (TIF) for the Davey Tree Seed Campus (Rhonda Hall)

Ms. Hall presented a proposed new Tax Increment Financing (TIF) agreement based on the pre- and post-development property tax value of the new Davey Tree Seed Campus on SR 43, which will enable the City to optimize the gains in property taxes for the site while keeping the City schools, Parks & Rec, and Franklin Township whole. **Motion to authorize approval of the proposed new TIF for the Davey Tree Seed Campus as presented, with the emergency clause, was made by Ms. Shaffer Bish, seconded by Mr. Clapper, and carried by unanimous voice vote.**

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

Kent Schools SRO MOU (Chief Shearer)

Chief Shearer requested Council's authorization to renew the City/Kent Schools agreement for the use and funding of a School Resource Officer position in the 2025-26 academic year. **Motion to authorize the renewal of the School Resource Officer as presented, with the emergency clause, was made by Mr. Sidoti, seconded by Mr. Clapper and carried by unanimous voice vote.**

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

Proposed Text Amendments to Zoning Code (Bridget Susel)

Ms. Susel reviewed updates to the Architectural Design Review Overlay District. Clarifications and revisions were made based upon public and Planning Commission feedback. The updates converted 80 percent of the design guidelines into enforceable regulations. **Motion to approve the proposed Zoning Code amendments as presented, with the emergency clause, was made by Ms. Rosenberg, seconded by Mr. DeLeone, and carried by unanimous voice vote.**

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

Proposed New KSU Homecoming Parade Route (Eric Helmstedter)

Mr. Helmstedter presented a request from Kent State University to modify the KSU Homecoming parade route and street closure plan due to the reconstruction work on East Main Street at that time. The parade route will start at the intersections of Loop Rd., Johnston Dr. and Rhodes Rd. The route will proceed southbound on Loop Rd. to Summit St., then continue westbound on Summit, where it will conclude at the intersection of Summit St. and Terrace Dr. **Motion to authorize the proposed parade route and street closure plan as presented, with the emergency clause, was made by Ms. Rosenberg, seconded by Mr. Hook, and carried by unanimous voice vote.**

County Solid Waste Plan Update Approval (Melanie Baker)

Ms. Baker presented a request from the Portage County Solid Waste District to approve the updated Portage County Solid Waste Plan. The Plan includes elements that impact the City, e.g., recycling, hazardous disposal facility, etc., and the County is required to get member jurisdictions' approval every 5 years for the updated plan. **Motion to authorize the proposed update to the Portage County Solid Waste Plan as presented, with the emergency clause, was made by Ms. Shaffer Bish, seconded by Ms. Rosenberg, and carried by unanimous voice vote.**

EXECUTIVE SESSION

At 9:37pm, Mr. Amrhein made a motion to move into Executive Session to discuss Board appointment and continue discussion on City Manager evaluation. The motion was seconded by Mr. Hook and carried by unanimous voice vote.

RETURN TO REGULAR SESSION AND ADJOURN

At 9:51, Council returned to regular session. There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 9:52.



Kathleen Coleman, Clerk of Council