



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

March 4, 2026

MINUTES

CALL TO ORDER

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

Present: Mr. Jeff Clapper; Mr. Eric Dreger; Mr. Chris Hook; Ms. Heidi Shaffer Bish; Mr. Benjamin Tipton; Mr. Robin Turner; Ms. Tracy Wallach; Ms. Sarah Wesley

Also Present: Mr. Jack Amrhein, Mayor and President of Council; Ms. Kathy Coleman, Clerk of Council; Mr. Dave Ruller, City Manager; Ms. Hope Jones, Law Director; Mr. Jamie Samels, Fire Chief; Mr. Jim Bowling, City Engineer; Dominique Bollenbacher, Community Outreach Coordinator; Ms. Bridget Susel, Community Development Director; Ms. Rhonda Hall, Finance Director; Ms. Angela Manley, Parks & Recreation Director; Ms. Melanie Baker, Service Director; Mr. Nick Cecil, IT Director, Mr. Jordan Snyder, IT Technician; Ms. Kailyn Cyrus, Zoning and Grants Coordinator

COMMITTEES

Committee of the Whole – Chair Amrhein/Vice-Chair Clapper

Board and Commission Interviews

- *Interview for Planning Commission – Adam Stephens*
Mr. Stephens expressed a strong interest in local government and a desire to increase his engagement with the community. He referenced a positive experience on the Charter Review Commission and mentioned contemplating a run for council at some point. He felt the Planning Commission would be a good opportunity to learn more about how Kent's government runs.
- *Interview for Civil Service Commission – Mariah Taylor*
Ms. Taylor is a senior internal auditor at the University of Akron with past experience on the governance board at Kent State. She seeks to serve on the commission to give back to her community, believing it aligns with her background in regulation and policy enforcement based on documented standards.
- *Interview for Civil Service Commission – Darlene Rocco*
Ms. Rocco reported an interest in this commission due to her enlightening experience on the Charter Review Commission last year, which fueled her desire to engage more in the local community. She has over 20 years of executive leadership experience in the healthcare industry and currently leads a quality department focused on developing policies and procedures for compliance and standardization, with extensive knowledge of federal and state regulations.

- Interview for Civil Service Commission – **Robert Hamer**

Mr. Hamer expressed his desire to serve on a committee due to nearly 30 years of experience in human resources and government relations. He aims to leverage his skills to give back to his community, emphasizing the importance of government transparency, equitable treatment, and merit-based systems.

The candidates were all advised that voting would take place at the March 18, 2026 regular Council meeting and they would be notified of the results by email.

KSU Update

Ms. Dana Lawless-Andric introduced **Ivory Kendrick**, the undergraduate student government president at Kent State University. He spoke about fostering stronger connections between the university and the city of Kent. As a public health major and elected president since May 2025, Mr. Kendrick emphasized the importance of collaboration to enhance community engagement and culture. He encouraged Council members to work together with students to further mutual interests and improve the relationship between the university and the City, promoting a sense of unity and teamwork.

Ms. Lawless-Andric continued with updates from KSU, including challenges in enrollment, collaborative community events to engage and support the community, leadership stability, academic restructuring, building updates, housing priorities and commencement ceremonies from May 7-10, 2026.

City Staff Updates

DePeyster St. Church Update

- **Ms. Manley** provided an update on the former Kent Church of Christ building at 319 South DePeyster, which Council voted to purchase. She noted that significant renovations are needed to bring the building up to code. Meetings with contractors are underway to estimate repair costs, which will influence the building's future usage. Potential plans include recreational and educational programming, adding it as a rental space due to high demand in the area, and relocating existing programs there. Initial estimates for necessary repairs range from \$50,000 to \$100,000, with the final cost impacting how the space will be utilized. The building has two floors, but the basement may not be accessible to the public. Various questions regarding capabilities and previous ownership transitions were addressed, affirming interest in senior programming and clarifying the structure's layout and parking availability.

Kent/Ravenna Emergency Interconnect MOU

- **Ms. Baker** addressed Council regarding the emergency water interconnect between the City and Ravenna, located at the intersection of Powdermill and Summit. A contractual agreement from 2002 exists, but has not been updated despite recent changes in Ravenna's housing developments. Consequently, discussions on operational updates were initiated to improve collaboration, including a memorandum of understanding for reviewing the existing water line and valve operations. A six-month trial period aims to ensure water quality and operational efficiency, with ongoing meetings to

address any necessary adjustments. She stated that she would report back in mid to late summer with the contractual agreement again for Council to review and approve.

Phone System Update

- **Mr. Cecil** reported on a periodic update to the city's network and phone systems. This year's update focuses on network equipment and the phone system. IT is collaborating with department heads to better understand their unique usage needs, resulting in improvements to auto attendants and direct lines for staff. The update is being conducted building by building, minimizing disruption, and is currently about halfway complete. The update aims to ensure the reliable delivery of data across departments, maintaining system performance effectively.

Community Development Committee-Chair Shaffer Bish/Vice-Chair Wallach

CDBG Program Year 2026 Projects

- **Ms. Cyrus** provided Council with an overview of the 2026 CDBG programs. She reported that in January, a request for proposals was issued, and funds for various projects totaling \$34,000 were proposed, though final approvals will not occur until May following a public hearing and comment period. The proposals align with a five-year consolidated plan focusing on infrastructure improvements, housing programs, and supportive services for low to moderate income individuals. Key projects include a \$157,000 reconstruction of Elm Street, a \$43,000 furnace inspection and replacement program, and various other services such as small business counseling and fair housing support. The total funding recommendations reflect allocations based on prior funding amounts, acknowledging that actual funding for 2026 remains uncertain.

MOTION TO APPROVE STAFF RECOMMENDATIONS REGARDING CDBG FUNDING PROPOSALS was made by Mr. Clapper, seconded by Ms. Wallach and carried by unanimous voice vote.

Haymaker Farmers' Market 2026 Sublease Renewal

- **Ms. Susel** discussed the renewal of the Haymaker Farmers' Market sublease. She reported that the area is owned by the Wheeling Lake Erie Railroad and the City leases the property for public parking and then subleases it to the farmers market for a nominal fee of one dollar, covering the period from the first Saturday in April to the last Saturday in November. The sublease is subject to annual approval and is based on a multi-year agreement with the railroad that includes scheduled increases, with the next increase anticipated next year.

MOTION TO APPROVE THE RENEWAL OF THE HAYMAKER FARMERS' MARKET SUBLEASE was made by Ms. Wesley, seconded by Mr. Hook, and carried by unanimous voice vote.

KCO "Chapter 1337: Flood Damage Control" Amendments

- **Ms. Susel** reported that in March 2025, the Ohio Department of Natural Resources monitored Kent's flood plain program, which recently passed inspection despite issuing only three flood plain permits in 12 years. The regulations, established in 2009, required updates to align with FEMA's new definitions and erosion standards after the flood insurance rate maps were updated in 2017. The city does not currently have flood plain management regulations, which are necessary for federal insurance eligibility. A notable change is the designation of a community development director as the flood plain administrator, supported by a licensed senior engineer, to improve management of flood-

related permits. The city's approach prioritizes efficiency and expertise in handling flood and storm water management, balancing the needs of the community with regulatory requirements.

MOTION TO AUTHORIZE AMENDMENTS TO KCO 1337: FLOOD DAMAGE CONTROL was made by Mr. Clapper, seconded by Ms. Wesley and carried by unanimous voice vote.

Celebrate Kent! 2026 Grant Funding Awards

- **Ms. Susel** discussed the Celebrate Kent awards, traditionally funded by Council under the Community Development budget to support events that attract visitors to downtown Kent. The program, initiated years ago by former economic development director Dan Smith, has an annual budget of \$15,000. This year, \$18,000 in funding requests were received, with one application for a South End block party. They allocated \$13,800 for various events after considering attendee numbers and previous allocations. Notably, all applicants received funding, including first-time applicant Kent State for their "Flashes First Friday." Funding supports operational costs for events, mostly involving volunteer initiatives, and excludes administrative expenses. The economic impact of the events is linked to attendee numbers, with positive feedback from local businesses, although a recent comprehensive survey hasn't been conducted. Future initiatives to gather feedback from businesses about these events are planned. This agenda item was informational only.

Finance Committee – Chair Celko/Vice-Chair Tipton

NOPEC Community Event Sponsorship Grant 2026

- **Ms. Baker** reported on the NOPEC Community Event Sponsorship Grant for 2026, providing new Council members with information about NOPEC (Northeast Ohio Public Energy Council). Founded in 2000, NOPEC serves over 240 communities in Northeast Ohio, enabling bulk buying for competitive electricity and natural gas pricing. Kent has historically received a \$2,000 grant, which is intended to be allocated to the Heritage Festival in July to support community engagement. The event meets the necessary criteria of being free, open to all residents, and beneficial for NOPEC's community connection.

MOTION TO AUTHORIZE ACCEPTANCE OF THE 2026 NOPEC COMMUNITY EVENT SPONSORSHIP GRANT was made by Mr. Clapper, seconded by Ms. Shaffer Bish and carried by unanimous voice vote.

NOPEC Energized Community Grant 2026

- **Ms. Baker** reported on the NOPEC community grant awarded for 2026, which amounted to \$49,965. Previous funding from this grant has supported projects like a water reclamation facility, an HVAC replacement, and installation of energy-efficient door openers. The current request is for council approval to accept the grant and place the funds in escrow until suitable projects are identified, potentially including energy efficiency upgrades at the 319 Depeyster location. The funds can serve as matching funds for future grants, and there is a deadline of three years to allocate the funds.

MOTION TO ACCEPT THE GRANT AND PLACE FUNDS IN ESCROW was made by Mr. Hook, seconded by Ms. Wallach and carried by unanimous voice vote.

Proposed 2026 Budget Appropriations Amendment #2

- **Ms. Hall** presented the second budget appropriation amendment of 2026 to Council.

MOTION TO APPROVE THE BUDGET APPROPRIATIONS AMENDMENT was made by Mr. Clapper, seconded by Mr. Hook, and carried by unanimous voice vote.

Health and Public Safety – Chair Hook/Vice-Chair Clapper

No report.

Land Use – Chair Clapper/Vice-Chair Hook

No report.

Streets, Sidewalks, and Utilities Committee-Chair Wallach/Vice-Chair Tipton

Codified Ordinance 353.02 Parking Regulation – Change of language for Nathan and Phillip Drives

Ms. Baker reported that the Traffic Engineering and Safety Committee reviewed streets around Nathan Drive and Philip Drive in December 2025 due to improperly placed no-parking signs. It was determined that these streets require a review to ensure safety and proper signage as per city ordinances. Findings indicate that Adrian Avenue is marked correctly but needs more signs; Bruce Drive and Cottage Gate are also compliant, though Cottage Gate has two misplaced signs. Nathan Drive and Philip Drive need adjustments, changing no-parking from the south side to the north side due to nearby hydrants. The council is requested to approve these changes for proper sign placement and compliance with codified ordinances.

MOTION TO AUTHORIZE CHANGES TO CODIFIED ORDINANCE 352.02 PARKING REGULATION was made by Mr. Clapper, seconded by Ms. Wesley, and carried by unanimous voice vote.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

At 8:26, Mr. Clapper moved, and Mr. Hook seconded, to go into executive session to consider the appointment, employment, dismissal, discipline, promotion, demotion, or compensation of a public employee or official. MOTION TO EXCUSE MS. CELKO was made by Ms. Shaffer Bish, seconded by Mr. Hook, and carried by unanimous voice vote. MOTION TO MOVE INTO EXECUTIVE SESSION carried by unanimous roll call vote.

RETURN TO REGULAR SESSION

Council returned from executive session at 9:02pm.

MOTION TO AUTHORIZE CHANGES TO THE POSITION ALLOCATION was made by Mr. Turner, seconded by Ms. Wallace, and carried by unanimous voice vote.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 9:03pm.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Kathleen Coleman". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

City of Kent Clerk of Council