



**City of Kent**  
**Wednesday, November 3, 2021**  
**City Council Committee Meetings**  
**320 S. Depeyster Street, Kent, OH 44240**

**MINUTES**

**6:55 P.M. BOARD OF CONTROL**

**7:00 P.M. Council Committee Meetings**

1. Call to Order

At 06:55 PM, Mayor Jerry T. Fiala called the City Council Committee Meetings to order.

2. Committee of the Whole

**Present:** Mr. Jack Amrhein; Mr. Michael DeLeone; Mr. Garret Ferrara; Mr. John Kuhar; Ms. Gwen Rosenberg; Ms. Heidi Shaffer Bish; Mr. Roger Sidoti; Mr. Robin Turner; Ms. Tracy Wallach

**Also Present:** Mr. Jerry T. Fiala, Mayor and President of Council; Mr. Dave Ruller, City Manager; Ms. Hope Jones, Law Director; Ms. Bridget Susel, Community Development Director; Ms. Melanie Baker, Service Director; Mr. Jim Bowling, City Engineer; Ms. Joan Seidel, Health Commissioner; Ms. Rhonda Hall, Budget and Finance Director; Mr. Gary Bishop, IT Manager; Mr. Nick Shearer, Chief of Police; Mr. Bill Myers, Fire Chief; Ms. Amy Wilkens, Clerk of Council

2.1. Boards and Commission Interviews (All)

Mayor Fiala asked Clerk Wilkens to introduce the first candidate to be interviewed for Boards and Commissions. City Council members were directed to review the candidate list and applications presented to them at their seats. Clerk Wilkens called the first candidate for the Architecture Review Board to the microphone.

Mr. Kevin Koogle approached the podium and introduced himself to Council. He has been on the board for several years and design is what he does every day for his work and likes applying this out in the community. He has been active in the community as President of the Rough Rider All Sports Booster for six years

and active in the Heritage Festival. The redevelopment of downtown Kent has been have been great and he said it's fun to be able to point out things he influenced.

Ms. Gwen Rosenberg asked Kevin Koogle about Design Guidelines and how they can help with what he does. He said it is very important for those on the board to have a design background and, ultimately, it comes down to the opinion of the board members and that it's an art, not a science. The idea of having a colored palate style is the wrong way to go. He referenced other communities that have strict guidelines and those who have none. How the guidelines are written determines how things will be allowed. He said Kent is eclectic but you still want the option of a design for each project. He said if he had a business downtown he would feel adamant about the charm of the downtown. He sees the ARB as protecting what we have. Regarding guidelines, he said we need something with teeth. He talked about the current members of the ARB, stating its members are from the community and care a lot about it. They all have the background and the knowledge to back up what they do. He highlighted how the board works with applicants through the process and feels as if the board contributes to the town.

Mr. Turner asked about educating the general public on what the Architecture Review Board does and its values. He asked if he thought this was important and how he would go about it. Mr. Koogle replied it's important for the applicant when they have to go before the board. People are unaware of zoning and building setbacks, so he is continually educating clients/people on the process. He emphasized that no one on the board is anti-business but instead that they are there to help business owners protect their investments.

Mr. Sidoti asked if he thinks the Design Guidelines are outdated. Mr. Koogle said the current guidelines in use do not consider anything after the 1950's and have not been updated. Mr. Sidoti asked if people should have input on what they like in the new guidelines. Mr. Koogle said the community should definitely be involved.

Mayor Fiala thanked Mr. Koogle for appearing at tonight's interview.

Ms. Wilkens introduced the next candidate for the Architecture Review Board, Mr. Dennis Saxe.

Mr. Saxe approached the podium and introduced himself to the Council, stating he is a lifelong member of Kent. He has been on the Architecture Review Board for three years and has enjoyed it. He thinks, with his experience and background, he has a lot to offer. He added that art is subjective and we need to have people on the board with the background to help steer things in the right direction.

Mr. Kuhar asked if the guidelines need to be flexible and diverse. He said yes, there needs to be some diversity.

Ms. Rosenberg asked if he had any problems with the appeal process. Mr. Saxe said most of the time it comes out in the meeting and they can bring back changes at the next meeting.

Mr. Sidoti thanked Mr. Saxe for his service on the board. He asked how he felt about adding a process where the board has the ability to grant a variance which would give them more flexibility.

Mr. Saxe said he thinks that has happened a lot in the meetings already. All of the ARB items are suggestions. If the process is spelled out in the new guidelines, he supposed it could be done.

Mr. Turner asked about subjectivity and situations where opinions are used. He asked about his position on trying to insure businesses can be heard and judgments made won't damage or exclude them in the process. Mr. Saxe said they look at what was done in the past and try to stay consistent. As board members change, things may change. He said they need to be as consistent as possible.

Mayor Fiala thanked Mr. Saxe for appearing at tonight's interview.

Ms. Wilkens introduced the next candidate for the ARB, Ms. Valerie Landis.

Ms. Landis introduced herself to the Council as a new citizen of Kent. She has a BS and an MBA in Healthcare and over twenty years of entrepreneurial and business experience as well. She recently went through the ARB process and said it is a very important board. It is the first board that business owners encounter and it is very important to have members on the board who are in touch with the community. Seeing the experience through other people's eyes, she sees the system can be improved. She has organized some thoughts down on paper and would be happy to supply these ideas, even if she is not appointed. She said the ARB should be able to resolve issues on its plate and should work together. She said she is good at working with people and has taken a lot of time getting to know members of the community. She would like to join the board and believes she would bring fresh ideas and a new perspective. She hopes her experience on projects in Chicago and now in Kent will help those who are going through the process and help avoid problems they encounter.

Mr. Turner asked Ms. Landis if she viewed this as an advocacy position and asked how she would go about educating the public on the Architecture Review Board process. Ms. Landis said she does it naturally. Part of the path she is creating in Kent may help spur future growth. She lives in Kent and goes to many community events and speaks with its residents. She has a caring personality and wants to be a teacher. She plans on holding events in her space so other business owners can come and talk. She thinks about starting a more consistent voice and teaching others. She is willing to learn, ask questions and go in and try.

Mr. Ferrara asked about the solutions she mentioned and if there should be Design Guidelines. She said we do not have to reinvent the wheel and thinks the internet is a really powerful tool. Thirty minutes before the meeting, she said she googled other city Architecture Review Boards and found a list of very practical guidelines that they use in their town.

Ms. Heidi Shaffer Bish said she noticed she was interested in the Planning Commission as well. She said yes. Ms. Shaffer Bish said experience and knowledge are important and asked what her qualifications would be. Ms. Landis said she has been going through the process herself. She said life is a great teacher and until you have the practicality of going through the process. She has spent thousands of hours with her architect and feels she has learned a lot. She mentioned her willingness to learn and being able to explain it to applicants is key to this role.

Mr. Sidoti asked Ms. Landis about what mistakes she made and how she learned. She referenced a mistake she made in Chicago and coming to a community and not knowing who to turn to was what led to the errors. She said getting to know the rules and who she needed to work with helped her get through it.

Mayor Fiala thanked her for appearing at tonight's interview.

Ms. Wilkens introduced Mr. Bob Rummel for the Board of Building Appeals. Mr. Rummel introduced himself to City Council. He said he has enjoyed his time on this board and would like to continue. This board gets involved when an owner does not agree with something in the Building Division. He enjoys being on the board to help give people an avenue to gain a variance. He wants to continue to be on the board and it is a solid board.

There were no questions.

Mayor Fiala thanked Mr. Rummel for appearing at tonight's interview.

Ms. Wilkens called up Mr. Steven Protzman to interview for the Board of Zoning Appeals.

Mr. Protzman introduced himself. He came to the Kent area three years ago to serve as the minister of the Unitarian Universalist Church of Kent. His congregation expects him to be a part of the community and to invest in it. He received a letter from the Board of Zoning Appeals about a neighbor who applied for a variance. He began talking with Mr. Paul Sellman who said they are looking for members for the board. He said with his skills he would be a good member and would like to serve the community. He thinks he would be good on the board. He is aware there are zoning and setbacks and may be a good candidate for the Architecture Review Board, but is applying for the Board of Zoning Appeals.

The next position is on the Planning Commission. Ms. Wilkens called one

applicant, Ms. Valerie Landis back to the microphone. Ms. Landis said she thinks the Planning Commission is very important as a business owner, as someone who has gone through the process.

Mr. Turner said he thinks she would be a great fit for the Planning Commission and asked how she views the commission and how she would adopt strategies to help us as a community.

Ms. Landis said she was very involved in her community in Chicago. She spent time watching the City of Kent watching ARB and Planning Commission meetings and believes through the history lesson she could give a good perspective by taking what she knows from a larger city and applying to a smaller community. Stormwater and variances are very structural but believes there are solutions to every problem.

Ms. Shaffer Bish said there may be frequent Planning Commission meetings and it would require a lot of time. She said a remote meeting would work for her. She works from home and works remotely as well. Ms. Bridget Susel, in the audience, confirmed the meetings are in person and no longer remote. Ms. Landis replied she makes her own schedule and will plan accordingly to be at the meetings.

Ms. Wilkens said there are two applicants for the Shade Tree Commission. Mr. Andrew Scholl introduced himself as a current member of the Shade Tree Commission. He has enjoyed the work that he does and would like to continue.

Ms. Hope Jones stated that under new Board and Commission rules, applicants can only serve on one board at a time and Mr. Scholl is currently on two. Mr. Scholl said he was not aware of this change. Ms. Jones said if he decides he wants to be on the Shade Tree Commission, he would need to step down from the Sustainability Commission, or vice versa. He said he would let Clerk Wilkens know before November 17th. There were no further questions from Council.

Clerk Wilkens verified Ms. Hanna Frederick was not in attendance.

Mayor Fiala thanked all of the applicants and said that they would vote to appoint them on November 17, 2021. He said every applicant needed five votes to be elected and wished them all good luck.

## 2.2. City/KSU Town Gown Update- Dana Lawless Andrick

Mr. Ruller introduced Kent State University Associate Vice President, Dr. Dana Lawless Andrick, to provide a Town Gown update to City Council.

Ms. Dana Lawless Andrick thanked the Council and added she was excited to address them this evening. When she had an opportunity to move into her current role, she was excited. She added that there is a great history between KSU and the City of Kent. She provided a high level overview of upcoming events. She highlighted a few items of note specifically working together with

the City, Main Street Kent and the Chamber of Commerce. She also created the Town Gown Listserv to keep everyone informed. She is really excited about the second 'Blue, Gold and Grateful' partnership between Kent State and downtown businesses, and added it is a real testament to KSU's leadership. She is most excited about 'Kent Skates', which is really as town and gown as you can get.

Ms. Shaffer Bish said she appreciates everything she is doing and that the City and Kent State University are completely intertwined. She asked about efforts in the past to help community members and if there are any programs on campus. Dr. Lawless Andrick said there is a whole group on campus called Community Engagement and that she would need to look into this. She said student engagement looks very different now. Opportunities and other creative outlets may be beneficial.

Mr. Sidoti asked Dr. Dana Lawless Andrick if she thinks it is more difficult today for us to connect in the 'One Kent' spirit. She said she thinks there is a lot that can be done. She said it may be more simple than we realize and something as simple as getting out and seeing one another helps.

Ms. Gwen Rosenberg asked about online vs in-person classes. Dr. Lawless Andrick said in 2022 they are hoping to go back to 20% online unless something major were to occur.

Mr. Turner asked if she anticipates outreach in the city and identifying neighborhoods and areas in need and then applying assets to those areas. He added we need to break down barriers and walls so we can implement things consistently. Dr. Lawless Andrick said that part of her role is outreach to engage the community. She said she really has big ideas and would love to hear suggestions and thinks half the battle is how to connect everyone. They are in the middle of a community needs assessment and have received a large grant to target adults and veterans.

Mr. Ferrara thanked Dr. Dana Lawless Andrick and said Covid really has hindered communication. He said, hopefully, we can get back to face-to-face meetings.

Mr. Ruller thanked Dr. Lawless Andrick for her update and let Council know he would like to bring her back a couple of times a year to keep the conversation going.

### 2.3. New City Hall Project (Melanie Baker)

Dave Ruller introduced Ms. Melanie Baker who disseminated a listing of the most current bids for the New City Hall. He added that Council has already approved going out to bid for the new City Hall and that they are bringing the results of the second round of bids to Council. He said there is a lot of volatility in pricing of materials and labor availability that is translated into dollars. He said we are ready to take the next step, having received the low bid that meets all

qualifications.

Ms. Melanie Baker said she is excited to come before the Council and believes we are at the point of getting things going. She reviewed the bid sheet passed out to Council and the ten bids received. There were three bids that were within the required 10%. The lowest bid came in at \$8.7 million (almost \$8.8 million). She said they had the opportunity to vet the company and that it has been in operation for 71 years. They have done work with Brandstetter, the architect, and have worked on comparable projects and are very suited for the job. We are now ready to go to the bond market for financing.

Ms. Shaffer Bish asked if the company is local and if they would be hiring locally. Ms. Baker said this is a prevailing wage job but is certainly a conversation that we can have.

Mr. Sidoti asked if she had ever worked with this group. She has not, but Brandstetter, the architect, has worked on two projects with them.

Mr. Turner asked about the timeline of raising the old police station. Ms. Melanie Baker is hoping for February/March for the old building to come down and construction to start.

Ms. Shaffer Bish asked if it had been conveyed to them how anxious we are to get this built. Ms. Baker confirmed there are liquidated damages if they do not meet the contract.

Mr. Ruller said we are living in a new world where timelines need to be a little flexible. Once bond money is secured, we can get everything rolling but some patience may be needed.

**MOTION TO PROCEED WITH THE PROPOSED BID MADE BY Mr. Ferrara, SECONDED by Mr. Sidoti and PASSED by a voice vote of 9-0-0.**

Mr. Kuhar said he has talked to many people and this is one of the companies recommended.

### 3. Community Development

**Present:** Mr. Jack Amrhein; Mr. Michael DeLeone; Mr. Garret Ferrara; Mr. John Kuhar; Ms. Gwen Rosenberg; Ms. Heidi Shaffer Bish; Mr. Roger Sidoti; Mr. Robin Turner; Ms. Tracy Wallach

**Also Present:** Mr. Jerry T. Fiala, Mayor and President of Council; Mr. Dave Ruller, City Manager; Ms. Hope Jones, Law Director; Ms. Bridget Susel, Community Development Director; Ms. Melanie Baker, Service Director; Mr. Jim Bowling, City Engineer; Ms. Joan Seidel, Health Commissioner; Ms. Rhonda Hall, Budget and Finance Director; Mr. Gary

Bishop, IT Manager; Mr. Nick Shearer, Chief of Police; Mr. Bill Myers, Fire Chief; Ms. Amy Wilkens, Clerk of Council

Chair Kuhar opened the Community Development Committee meeting at 8:31 pm. He called Ms. Bridget Susel to the microphone.

### 3.1. Kent Sportswear Appeal of ARB(Bridget Susel)

Mayor Fiala introduced Ms. Bridget Susel to speak on the Kent Sportswear ARB appeal. Ms. Susel greeted Council and referenced her memo and supporting documentation included in the packet. She introduced Mr. Mike Beder.

Mr. Beder thanked Council and began his comments by stating his business partnered with Kent State to create this team shop which includes the brick and mortar building. Mr. Beder said he was not aware he needed to go to ARB, which he had only done once. He was not familiar with the overlay district, so he painted the building and then was notified he needed to go before the Architecture Review Board for approval. He continued by stating the building does not have a historic designation and there are plenty of businesses downtown with vibrant colors and his business doesn't violate any codes. He is shocked that they view blue and gold as inappropriate in downtown Kent.

Ms. Rosenberg asked about the colors of paint from Sherwin Williams, who has Kent State Blue and Kent State Gold. Mr. Beder said he used a professional designer and painter for this project and the landlord did not have a problem with the color. Ms. Susel said the code palette is not specified. She said the Design Guidelines were adopted in 2011 and prior to that they were just a recommendation board. Some colors may predate this period. Ms. Rosenberg asked if choosing those painted colors would help his business succeed. He said it is a very literal interpretation of what we do. It is vibrant and attention-getting but consistent with the color scheme of Kent State University. He added that in the 11th hour of the ARB meeting they offered the idea of painting a panel a different color. His initial interaction with them was them wanting him to paint the trim white. He said it was a very arbitrary decision.

Mr. Sidoti asked about the color of the blue and gold and if they were true colors.

Ms. Shaffer Bish asked what was the consequence of not getting a certificate . It would be considered a violation and there would be fines. He said he could easily change the paint color but feels it was an arbitrary decision made by the ARB. He said the city needs to decide who it wants to be and what it wants to look like.

Mr. Turner asked Ms. Susel what standards are being enforced. Ms. Susel said it is in regards to the design guidelines. Mr. Turner asked if changing the colors would damage his business. Mr. Beder said the damage would be somewhat minimal. In terms of his treatment, he has done a fair number of projects and this is the first time he needed to come to Council. The relationship was good



and he feels like they were trying to punish him for not going to them first.

Ms. Wallach asked if he got any feedback from neighbors. She can see where the ARB is coming from and the colors are very bright. He said he has gotten only positive input but is not sure if he would hear from others if they didn't like it.

Ms. Rosenberg asked if a certificate of appropriateness isn't given in this case, is there a liability potentially. She read through the minutes of the ARB meeting and did not see a firm decision based on what she would consider steady groundwork. Ms. Susel replied the Certificate of Appropriateness is in the code itself, not the Design Guidelines. That authority to issue the Certificate of Appropriateness is codified in the zoning code and is required to be met by the ARB. They did vote on and approve the Certificate with the change they specified. If the appeal is not granted, the Certificate of Appropriateness as it was approved would need to be met or the business would be in non-compliance with that section of the zoning code. Ms. Rosenberg asked for clarification if there is anything mentioning color right now and Ms. Susel confirmed there is not.

Mr. Sidoti asked about tabling this at this point pending the review of our Design Guidelines if the ARB and Mr. Beder would be protected from any kind of action against either side. Ms. Susel said if the continuance was based on the Design Guidelines being approved by Council, she would say no. Ms. Hope Jones confirmed the colors on the business will remain until this Council makes a decision. Mr. Sidoti's concern is that the decision making process doesn't seem to follow guidelines and thinks maybe we need to wait to get those decided on. Ms. Jones suggested instead of tabling to perhaps move to consider it at another time, and that time would be once we have our new Design Guidelines.

Mr. Beder asked, at that point, if his building would be subject to some sort of approval. Ms. Jones said Council will not be reviewing his building against the new Design Guidelines per se, and would be using the old guidelines. She said Mr. Sidoti would like to see what comments and new procedure comes out of that so they can make a better decision.

No members of the audience had questions or comments.

**MOTION TO DELAY DECISION ON THE APPEAL UNTIL NEW GUIDELINES ARE ESTABLISHED** MADE by Garrett Ferrara and SECONDED by Roger Sidoti and CARRIED by a voice vote of 5-4-0, with Mr. Kuhar, Mr. Deleone, Mr. Turner and Ms. Wallach voted 'No'.

Mr. Ferrara said his discussion with the Law Director was whether to table the item or postpone. If tabled, it would cut off the discussion and he didn't want to do that. We are faced with several issues, one being letting a local business person operate their business and not disrupting it significantly, but more importantly than that, setting a dangerous precedent of letting people think that just because they don't agree with a decision that's made by the ARB that Council is always going to want to hear that. He stated if we could better

respond to this appeal based on criteria established, it would prevent people thinking they can always go to the Council and they will bend to their whims.

Mr. Sidoti agreed and said we need to have a deep discussion based on the subjectivity of decision making. It is frustrating when board members say it's all a matter of personal opinion. He said he's not so sure now what its goals are. He says it's not fair to business owners and not fair to the ARB members themselves. He suggested possibly having a guideline that states if it is Kent State related, they can use Kent State colors.

Mike DeLeone asked about the timeline to leave him hanging and how long he would have to wait on the decision.

Mr. Amrhein does not want Council to be the defacto ARB and that Council will be bogged down to the point of not accomplishing anything.

Mr. Turner said he understood what Mr. Amrhein was saying, but that is where we are right now and what we are tasked with. If things are muddled up, they are muddled up on our side, not Mr. Beder's. We are in a situation where we didn't clarify things and are working to do that. He thinks we need to make a decision and move forward because that is the task we are required to do. He thinks if we want to change those rules, we can make that decision at a different time. He said this isn't an extreme deal and we should just accept that we need to do a better job at establishing better protocols. We need to move forward with the issue in front of us.

Ms. Shaffer said we are in between a rock and a hard place. Recent examples show that work needs to be done. It does come down to personal taste. We really need to have some way of guiding decisions that don't seem arbitrary. She appreciates the issues that have come up because they show what needs to be worked on.

Ms. Rosenberg said we are setting a precedent for those wanting to open a business in town . We should be concerned about setting a precedent. She is going to vote for the motion but we should be very concerned that a minimal amount of paint color should delay business progress downtown.

### 3.2. Historic Designation Request (Bridget Susel)

Ms. Bridget Susel addressed Council on the topic of the Historic Designation Request.

Ms. Susel said a year ago she was approached by Todd Packer of Todd Packer and Associates who is doing research on the Liquid Crystal Institute and was looking for a funding source to support an intensive study and research of liquid crystals and its history in Kent. The Ohio History Connection offers a Certified Local Government grant that would provide financial support. Normally, as a Certified Local Government we have property owners that come asking for a historic designation, however we also support other research and studies. Mr.

Packer is going to give a brief summary on his work and what he is asking for tonight is the City's support and sponsorship to submit the grant on his behalf.

Mr. Todd Packer stated the goal to seek approval to submit an application for grant and, if awarded, can use staff for an in-kind match. The project is about a technology that the city has been profoundly involved in developing. For the past 50 years at KSU's Liquid Crystal Institute, the core science that went into liquid crystal technology has been being developed. The global pandemic has forced us to realize how important this technology is to us and he thinks this story should be told. Last fall they were able to collect funding and want to collect. This grant in partnership with the Kent Historical Society will create an exhibit about this story and develop a tour of different significant sites and how to leverage history to bring visitors to Kent. It would not be a cash grant from the city but we be a grant request of \$20,000 to support a \$35,000 project that would involve these aspects.

Gwen Rosenberg asked if the city matching would come from hours that the City spends on working and managing the funds of the grant. Ms. Susel said it would be an in-kind match and Community Development tracks time.

Mr. Ferrara asked what KSU's involvement had been. Mr. Packer said Matt Crawford from History dept. has been identified as an advisor. There is an opportunity to have a student intern as well. He's been in contact with the Geography Department as well. He will work with Kent State on the approval process, build a budget accordingly and map out the in-kind process. To that extent, there is involvement. Mr. Crawford will work with Special Collections and the Liquid Crystal Institute.

MOTION TO AUTHORIZE THE HISTORIC DESIGNATION REQUEST made by Mr. Ferrara, SECONDED by Ms. Shaffer Bish and CARRIED by a voice vote of 9-0-0, with none abstaining.

### 3.3. Main Street Contract Renewal (Bridget Susel, Tom Wilke)

Mr. Kuhar introduced Ms. Susel to speak on the topic of the Main Street Kent agreement renewal.

Ms. Susel said during the last two contract cycles there was a two-year contract with a one-year extension. This contract will be slightly reduced due to the budget constraints in the 2022 budget in response to the pandemic with a 5% reduction. 2022 will be reduced and return to the prior contract amount in 2023. Main Street Kent has been a partner for so many ways. MSK was right there to get people downtown and transitioning to more involved events as restrictions were lifted. Ms. Susel worked closely with Heather Malarcik on the closing of Franklin Ave., which went very smoothly. She is asking for approval of the MSK contract as presented in her memo to the City Manager.

Ms. Shaffer Bish said this is the first time she has been aware that we are reducing commitments. She asked if this was setting a precedent. Ms. Susel

said all of the locally funded city programs were reduced, some being cut as high as 20%. There are a lot of questions and things can change very quickly, so they are being cautious and feel comfortable that they can be stabilized by 2023.

Mr. Turner asked Ms. Malarcik how this will diminish ability to function. Ms. Heather Malarcik, Executive Director of Main Street Kent, approached the microphone and said when originally it was 20% and came back to 5%, they felt a little better. They are here to do anything they can for the city and this is why we are here. Heritage Ohio is the first to say that Kent is so lucky to have the strength and quality of staff on Main Street Kent. She added the past two years have been incredibly challenging but they are going to do whatever they have to do to make it work. They were able to pull in \$1700 at a Quick Pitch Party at the recent conference they attended which helps. This is a long recovery period and isn't over and the recovery of businesses is a long road ahead.

There were no questions or comments from the audience.

#### **MOTION TO APPROVE THE MAIN STREET KENT CONTRACT**

**RENEWAL** made by Mr. Turner, **SECONDED** by Ms. Shaffer Bish and **CARRIED** by a voice vote of 9-0-0.

Mr. Turner said Main Street Kent has been a tremendous asset and deserves huge credit. During the Covid Pandemic, there was great initiative and the staff thought very highly of you as a partner.

Ms. Shaffer Bish said she feels the same. She feels bad there had to be a cut, but supports this contract. She thinks Main Street Kent is a tremendous asset to the community and supports what they do.

Mr. Amrhein couldn't thank them enough for everything they do and has talked with a few people from Main Street Organizations in other communities and Kent really is the model. He is proud of living in Kent and proud of the work that they do.

#### **4. Streets, Sidewalks & Utilities Committee**

**Present:** Mr. Jack Amrhein; Mr. Michael DeLeone; Mr. Garret Ferrara; Mr. John Kuhar; Ms. Gwen Rosenberg; Ms. Heidi Shaffer Bish; Mr. Roger Sidoti; Mr. Robin Turner; Ms. Tracy Wallach

**Also Present:** Mr. Jerry T. Fiala, Mayor and President of Council; Mr. Dave Ruller, City Manager; Ms. Hope Jones, Law Director; Ms. Bridget Susel, Community Development Director; Ms. Melanie Baker, Service Director; Mr. Jim Bowling, City Engineer; Ms. Joan Seidel, Health Commissioner; Ms. Rhonda Hall, Budget and Finance Director; Mr. Gary Bishop, IT Manager; Mr. Nick Shearer, Chief of Police; Mr. Bill Myers, Fire Chief; Ms. Amy Wilkens, Clerk of Council

Chair Sidoti opened the Streets, Sidewalks and Utilities Committee at 9:31 P.M.

#### 4.1. Curbside Recycling Contract Status Report (Melanie Baker)

Mr. Ruller introduced the topic by saying we are here looking for guidance from Council on the changes made by Portage County and the current contract. He said part of the process is to try to keep it cost-effective, sustainable, customer supportive, which is not easy. The question at hand is whether to stick with the County with a little bit of uncertainty. The alternative would be a private hauler.

Ms. Melanie Baker reminded Council the contract was changed in June to service every other week. There is a new contract being presented by Portage County Recycling. It would be \$5.50 a month for service every other week. We have the ability within 60 days to cancel the contract. She checked with a private hauler that would be \$5.35 a month every other week. Local communities, Streetboro and Aurora, combined their trash and recycling, which gave them a small price break. She is looking for directions on whether to stay with Portage County or transition to Republic Waste.

Mr. Kuhar said they are picking up trash for a little over \$2 per week and that they have to pay to dump the trash. Now we are getting half the service from recycling but they want full price and are getting paid when they dump recycling. He is having a hard time dealing with that. Ms. Baker asked Dawn Collins from Portage County to address this question.

Ms. Dawn Collins from Portage County said they are no longer paying to recycle so it has balanced out. Ms. Baker said it is starting to go up. The trash is required to pay tipping fees, state fees, among others that are required by the State. Dumping fees for recycling are different.

Ms. Wallach said we used to have a guarantee that recycling would not go into the landfill. She added that with a private trash hauler there is no guarantee that recycling wouldn't be dumped into a land fill. She asked if there was still that guarantee in place and Ms. Collins replied she could guarantee that. Ms. Wallach said this guarantee is worth the fifteen cent difference in cost.

Mr. Ferrara asked about long term sustainability and its commitment to recycling. He doesn't want to address this issue year after year. Ms. Collins said they brought support tonight and have commitment. We are making positive changes and believe we can show this to you in the future. Mr. Ferrara said his bin overflows with the two-week pick-up schedule. Ms. Collins said drivers do jump out of the truck and load recycling. If they place recycling in a cardboard box, it will be picked up.

Mr. DeLeone said the biggest complaint he receives is that the bins are too small. He has received this complaint from a lot of people. Ms. Collins restated that it is their job to get out of the truck and pick up the recycling.

Mr. Kuhar asked if we could get this in writing. He is hearing from Republic drivers that recycling in cardboard boxes are being put in the trash. Ms. Collins said if he had a picture of this it would be addressed immediately. She promised him that all of their employees value their jobs and they have a great team.

Ms. Wallach asked if there were extra containers. Ms. Collins said they did not at this time.

Mayor Fiala asked if recycling was resold. Ms. Collins said no matter the state of the market, they take the recycling and resell it with none going to the landfill.

Ms. Wallach asked about communities that went to private trash haulers. Ms. Collins said four years ago it was bid out and went for a year or two but came back two years later.

**MOTION TO AUTHORIZE A NEW CONTRACT WITH THE PORTAGE COUNTY SOLID WASTE DISTRICT** MADE BY Ms. Tracy Wallach  
SECONDED by Ms. Shaffer Bish and CARRIED by a voice vote of 8-1-0 with Mr. Kuhar voting 'No'.

Ms. Wallach said companies tend to bid low and then raise their prices.

Ms. Shaffer Bish said we can look at slight differences in prices but there are more values as this is something that was developed in Kent. The County has gone out of the way to develop this market and it is now lucrative. As long as the service level stays high, the price difference is miniscule.

Mr. Kuhar said he is not voting for this. He said he thinks we owe it to our citizens to bid this out competitively and include the County in those bids. He added he was irritated they gave themselves a 100% raise.

Mr. Turner said his big concern of not accepting the contract would hasten the collapse of County Recycling. He is concerned they will survive but giving them the opportunity is in line with the City's value system.

#### 4.2. Authorization of Grant Funding Request for E. Main Street (Jim Bowling)

Mr. Bowling approached the podium to speak on the topic of the grant funding request for the E. Main Street project. He said they are requesting to submit to AMATS for a grant to complete East Main Street.

Ms. Rosenberg asked if this was for the large project with the roundabouts. Mr. Bowling confirmed this.

Ms. Wallach asked if Brady's Cafe is staying where it is and not being moved. Mr. Bowling shook his head no. She asked when this project would begin. Mr. Bowling said the project is set to start in 2025.

There were no questions or comments from members of the audience.

**MOTION TO AUTHORIZE THE GRANT FUNDING REQUEST FOR EAST MAIN STREET** made by Mr. Kuhar SECONDED by Mr. Ferrara and CARRIED by a voice vote of 9-0-0.

4.3. Authorization of Grant Funding Request for Hike & Bike Trail (Jim Bowling, Angela Manley)

Mr. Bowling said they are submitting a request to AMATS for a grant for the Hike and Bike Trail for \$480,000.

Ms. Rosenberg asked if there was any portion of this that Kent Parks and Recreation would be responsible for paying. Mr. Bowling said yes, there would be a local share required and that Ms. Angela Manley, Director of Parks and Recreation has been a part of those conversations.

Ms. Rosenberg asked if she and the Board were in support of this. Mr. Bowling replied 'Yes'.

**MOTION TO AUTHORIZE THE GRANT FUNDING REQUEST FOR THE HIKE AND BIKE TRAIL** made by Mr. Kuhar, SECONDED by Mr. Ferrara and CARRIED by a voice vote of 9-0-0.

5. Finance Committee

**Present:** Mr. Jack Amrhein; Mr. Michael DeLeone; Mr. Garret Ferrara; Mr. John Kuhar; Ms. Gwen Rosenberg; Ms. Heidi Shaffer Bish; Mr. Roger Sidoti; Mr. Robin Turner; Ms. Tracy Wallach

**Also Present:** Mr. Jerry T. Fiala, Mayor and President of Council; Mr. Dave Ruller, City Manager; Ms. Hope Jones, Law Director; Ms. Bridget Susel, Community Development Director; Ms. Melanie Baker, Service Director; Mr. Jim Bowling, City Engineer; Ms. Joan Seidel, Health Commissioner; Ms. Rhonda Hall, Budget and Finance Director; Mr. Gary Bishop, IT Manager; Mr. Nick Shearer, Chief of Police; Mr. Bill Myers, Fire Chief; Ms. Amy Wilkens, Clerk of Council

Chair DeLeone opened the Finance Committee meeting at 9:55. He called the first speaker to the microphone.

5.1. Transfer of Taxes from Portage County (Rhonda)

Ms. Rhonda Hall said this is a housekeeping item in accordance with ORC 321.34 we have to request the County to provide property taxes in advance of the settlement date of February.

**MOTION TO THE AUTHORIZE THE TRANSFER OF TAXES FROM PORTAGE COUNTY** made by Mr. Sidoti, SECONDED by Mr. Ferrara and

CARRIED by a voice vote of 9-0-0.

6. EXECUTIVE SESSION

**MOTION TO ENTER INTO EXECUTIVE SESSION** MADE BY Mr. Amrhein, SECONDED by Mr. Sidoti. Roll call was taken.

**Present:** Mr. Amrhein, Mr. DeLeone, Mr. Ferrara, Ms. Shaffer Bish, Ms. Wallach, Ms. Rosenberg, Mr. Sidoti, Mr. Turner and Ms. Wallach.

- 6.1. In accordance with ORC §121.22 Section G, Item (1): "To consider the appointment, employment, dismissal, discipline, promotion, demotion, or compensation of a public employee or official." Items to be discussed: Board and Commission Appointments

7. Adjourn

**MOTION TO RETURN TO THE COUNCIL COMMITTEE MEETING AND ADJOURN** MADE BY Mr. Amrhein, SECONDED by Mr. Sidoti and PASSED by a voice vote of 9-0-0.

Any person who requires an auxiliary aid or service for effective communication or a modification of policies and procedures to participate in any City or City Council public meeting or event should contact the Clerk of Council at 330-676-7555 or [councilclerk@kent-ohio.org](mailto:councilclerk@kent-ohio.org). Any request for auxiliary aid or other accommodation should be made as soon as possible, but no later than forty-eight hours prior to the event.