



**City Council Regular Meeting Minutes**  
The City of Kent, Ohio  
Wednesday, September 16, 2020

At 7:30 p.m., Mayor Jerry T. Fiala called the **Regular Meeting of Kent City Council** to order. Roll was taken.

**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, Public Service Director; Mr. Jim Bowling, City Engineer; Ms. Joan Siedel, Health Commissioner; Ms. Rhonda Hall, Budget and Finance Director; Mr. Tom Wilke, Economic Development Director; Mr. Gary Bishop, IT Manager; Mr. John Tosko, Fire Chief; Mr. Nick Shearer, Chief of Police; Ms. Amy Wilkens, Clerk of Council

Mr. John Kuhar led the meeting with his opening remarks. He started by stated that the year 2020 has been a very interesting year, starting with a worldwide pandemic that has changed everyone's lives but feels that working together it can be defeated. The Black Lives Matter movement's message has been heard and many things are in the making. Now is time for them to stand down and for everyone to work together for these changes to happen. He continued by adding some people look for a cause to stand behind so they can spread hatred, great destruction and vandalism and their actions do not benefit anyone or anything. He added that all must work together to stop them. He referenced Julius Caesar whose philosophy was to divide and conquer, and Aesop who said "United we stand, divided we fall". His final idiom of the evening was that freedom is never free. He then led the Pledge of Allegiance.

**Approval of Regular Council Meeting Minutes:**

MOTION TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE REGULAR COUNCIL MEETING OF August 19, 2020 made by Mr. Turner, seconded by Mr. Kuhar, and CARRIED by a voice vote of 8-0-1 with Ms. Wallach abstaining.

**Communication:**

**Public Comment:** Mayor Fiala asked the Clerk if anyone was signed in. There were four (4) visitors who signed in with the Clerk and were given permission to talk to Council for three minutes. Mayor Fiala read a statement to the audience: *"While the law does not require Council to provide time for public comment, we have historically invited the public to make comments and we appreciate their input. This is the time where residents and others can comment on matters that concern them. However, we will not engage in debate, and as President of Council, I reserve the right to end any public communication that is disruptive, embarrassing, harassing or otherwise objectionable. We ask that when you begin speaking that you speak clearly, give your name and address and limit comments to three (3) minutes of discussion."*

Dr. Geraldine Hayes Nelson, of 795 Atmore Drive, Kent, Ohio was the first to speak to Council. She had submitted her comments in writing prior to the meeting (**Attachment #1**) and read directly from them.

Rev. Christie Anderson of 1530 South Blvd, Kent, Ohio spoke next from her prepared comments (**Attachment #2**).

Mr. Chris Myers of 220 E. Elm Street, Kent, Ohio, spoke next from his prepared statement (**Attachment #3**).

Ms. Renee Ruchotzke 237 Highland Ave. Kent, Ohio began by stating she has lived in Kent since 1985 and has worked and raised her children here. Her and her husband are invested in the community and currently serves on the City's Sustainability Commission and the League of Women Voters and the Portage County NAACP. She is here today to speak on the need to respond to racial justice. She implored all to heed the call created by the current movement and create the necessary commission and task forces to address systemic oppression and racism. Institutional and systemic racism are showing up in stories from members of the community and we owe it to them to listen and chart a path to healing. She asked City Council to create systems that promote healing in the community.

**Written Communications** were reported by Clerk Wilkens and placed on file in the Clerk's office as follows:

1. Records Commission Meeting Agenda for September 3, 2020 was received on August 28, 2020. Notification of meeting rescheduled for September 24, 2020 was received on September 8, 2020.
2. Standing Rock Meeting Minutes from August 13, 2020 were received on August 24, 2020.
3. Planning Commission Agenda for September 15, 2020 was received on September 8, 2020.
4. Architectural Review Board Meeting Agenda for September 15, 2020 was received on September 8, 2020.
5. Board of Health Minutes and Statistical report from August 2020 and Agenda for September 8, 2020 were received on September 8, 2020.

**Communications Received after Agenda Publication** were reported by Clerk Wilkens and placed on file in the Clerk's office as follows:

1. Letter from Ms. Debbie Berry of 1002 Lake Street, Kent Ohio regarding the building of new city hall was received on September 11, 2020.
2. Parks and Recreation Board packet for the September 17, 2020 meeting was received on September 11, 2020
3. Notification of Community Development's 9<sup>th</sup> work session for the City's Zoning Code update scheduled for September 15, 2020 was received on September 11, 2020.

**City Manager's Report** was called for by Mayor Fiala.

1. Mr. Kevin Schwartzhoff asked for Council's authorization to accept a \$100 donation from Pete and Lois Orlando for the purchase of a Memorial Tree in memory of Mary Helen Neuzil. (Draft #2020-096)
2. Ms. Bridget Susel asked for Council's authorization to extend the lease of the Haymaker Farmer's Market property on Franklin Avenue, and the corresponding street closure approval, for an extra month from October 31st to November 30th.
3. Ms. Rhonda Hall has requested Council's certification of the City's tax rates for 2021 and authorization to file the rate schedule with Portage County. (Draft #2020-095)
4. Chief Nick Shearer has requested Council's authorization to renew the City Police/KSU Police Mutual Aid Agreement. (Draft #2020-092)
5. Mr. Tom Wilke has requested Council's authorization to continue the DORA after the first 90 days for the remainder of the first year of operation.
6. Ms. Rhonda Hall has requested Finance Committee time to present the proposed 2021-24 Capital Improvement Plan for Council's consideration.
7. Mr. Jim Bowling has requested Finance Committee time for Council's authorization to submit the City's next round of Ohio Public Works Commission (OPWC) project requests.
8. Mr. Jim has Bowling requested Finance Committee time for Council to consider authorization of the easements required for the Southwest Sanitary Sewer Pump Station project.
9. Ms. Rhonda Hall has requested Finance Committee time for Council's consideration of a 2020 Budget Appropriations Amendment.
10. Ms. Bridget Susel has requested Land Use Committee time for Council's consideration of a request for the dedication of the Riverbend East subdivision, Phase 5.
11. Ms. Hope Jones has requested Land Use Committee time to present Council with a resident request for the City to vacate unused/surplus City owned land on Adrian Avenue.
12. Staff is requesting Committee of the Whole time to discuss the implementation options for the Health Equity in all Policies Resolution in conjunction with social equity and Black Lives Matter initiatives.
13. Ms. Suzanne Stemnock has requested Committee of the Whole time to share an update on the status of advancing diversity hiring in City Departments.

MOTION TO APPROVE ITEMS #1-13 OF THE CITY MANAGER'S REPORT made by Mr. Amrhein, seconded by Mr. DeLeone, and CARRIED by a voice vote of 9-0.

### **Standing Committees/Legislation**

<b>1) Committee of the Whole:</b>
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MOTION TO APPROVE MEETING MINUTES of September 2, 2020 made by Mr. Turner, seconded by Mr. DeLeone, and CARRIED by a voice vote of 8-0-1, with Ms. Wallach abstaining.

MOTION TO APPROVE THE COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE ACTION ITEMS made by Mr. Amrhein, SECONDED by Mr. Sidoti and CARRIED by a voice vote of 9-0.

**Recommended Actions:**

1. Authorize the changes to Boards and Commissions as proposed and presented.
2. Authorize proceeding with City Hall plans as is without the third floor build out.

**Draft No. 2020-89** AN ORDINANCE AMENDING AND ENACTING CERTAIN SECTIONS OF THE CODIFIED ORDINANCES AND STANDING RULES REGARDING BOARDS AND COMMISSIONS, AND DECLARING AN EMERGENCY was read by title only by Clerk Wilkens per Mayor Fiala's request.

MOTION TO SUSPEND THE THREE READINGS made by Mr. DeLeone, seconded by Mr. Kuhar. On roll call, voting "Yes": Mr. Amrhein, Mr. DeLeone, Mr. Ferrara, Mr. Kuhar, Ms. Rosenberg, Ms. Shaffer Bish, Mr. Sidoti, Mr. Turner and Ms. Wallach.

MOTION TO ADOPT DRAFT NO. 2020- 89 made by Mr. DeLeone and seconded by Mr. Kuhar. On roll call, voting "Yes": Mr. Amrhein, Mr. DeLeone, Mr. Ferrara, Mr. Kuhar, Ms. Rosenberg, Ms. Shaffer Bish, Mr. Sidoti, Mr. Turner and Ms. Wallach.

**ORDINANCE 2020-89** PASSED as stated by Clerk Wilkens.

<b>2) Community Development Committee:</b>
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MOTION TO APPROVE THE COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT MEETING MINUTES OF September 2, 2020 made by Mr. Kuhar, SECONDED by Mr. DeLeone and CARRIED by a voice vote of 8-0-1, with Ms. Wallach abstaining.

MOTION TO APPROVE THE COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT ACTION ITEM made by Mr. Kuhar, SECONDED by Mr. DeLeone and CARRIED by a voice vote of 9-0.

**Recommended Actions:**

1. Authorize the City's representation on the newly proposed Hometown Foundation.

Ms. Shaffer Bish said it is really important the City has representation on this Board (Hometown Foundation) and asked for clarification that the vote is to assure the City has representation and is not definitive on who is representing.

**Draft No. 2020-90** AN ORDINANCE APPROVING THE CITY'S PARTICIPATION ON THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES FOR THE HOMETOWN FOUNDATION, AND DECLARING AN EMERGENCY was read by title only by Clerk Wilkens per Mayor Fiala's request.

MOTION TO SUSPEND THE THREE READINGS made by Mr. Kuhar, seconded by Mr. Ferrara. On roll call, voting "Yes": Mr. Amrhein, Mr. DeLeone, Mr. Ferrara, Mr. Kuhar, Ms. Rosenberg, Ms. Shaffer Bish, Mr. Sidoti, Mr. Turner and Ms. Wallach.

MOTION TO ADOPT DRAFT NO. 2020-90 made by Mr. DeLeone and seconded by Mr. Kuhar. On roll call, voting "Yes": Mr. Amrhein, Mr. DeLeone, Mr. Ferrara, Mr. Kuhar, Ms. Rosenberg, Ms. Shaffer Bish, Mr. Sidoti, Mr. Turner and Ms. Wallach.

**ORDINANCE 2020-90** PASSED as stated by Clerk Wilkens.

**3) Streets, Sidewalks and Utilities Committee:**

MOTION TO APPROVE THE STREETS AND SIDEWALKS COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES OF September 2, 2020 made by Mr. Sidoti, seconded by Mr. DeLeone and CARRIED by a voice vote of 8-0-1 with Ms. Wallach abstaining.

MOTION TO APPROVE THE COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT ACTION ITEM made by Mr. Sidoti, SECONDED by Mr. DeLeone and CARRIED by a voice vote of 7-2, with Ms. Shaffer Bish and Ms. Wallach voting no.

**Recommended Actions:**

1. Authorize a resolution amendment to the “smoker” unit agreement from Cajun Dave’s to the Water Street Tavern.

**Draft No. 2020-91**, AN ORDINANCE AMENDING ORDINANCE 2010-70 AUTHORIZING THE CITY MANAGER, OR HIS DESIGNEE, TO CHANGE THE LICENSEE FROM R.P.S.1, LLC (dba CAJUN DAVE’S) TO MIKE BEDER AND WATER STREET TAVERN, AND DECLARING AN EMERGENCY.

MOTION TO SUSPEND THE THREE READINGS made by Mr. Ferrara, seconded by Mr. Amrhein. On roll call, voting “Yes”: Mr. Amrhein, Mr. DeLeone, Mr. Ferrara, Mr. Kuhar, Ms. Rosenberg, Mr. Sidoti, and Mr. Turner. On roll call, voting “No”: Ms. Shaffer Bish and Ms. Wallach.

MOTION TO ADOPT DRAFT NO. 2020-91 made by Mr. Sidoti and SECONDED by Mr. DeLeone.

Discussion on adopting draft 2020-91 began by Ms. Wallach explaining she will be voting against this ordinance because the last time the smoker was downtown in that spot it caused a lot of problems and a lot of businesses were not happy with the residue of the smoker. She would be fine if it would be in a different position, but the planned position she is opposed to and therefore will oppose the transfer of the license.

Ms. Shaffer Bish added the space downtown is small and the smoke from this smoker goes everywhere and is not looking forward to the complaints from residents who can no longer open their windows and businesses who worry about the smoke damaging the businesses’ façades. The interest of one against the many is prompting her to vote no at this time.

Mr. Kuhar agreed with Ms. Wallach and Ms. Shaffer Bish.

On roll call, voting “Yes”: Mr. Amrhein, Mr. DeLeone, Mr. Ferrara, Ms. Rosenberg, Mr. Sidoti, and Mr. Turner. On roll call, voting “No”: Ms. Shaffer Bish, Mr. Kuhar and Ms. Wallach.

**ORDINANCE 2020-91** PASSED as stated by Clerk Wilkens.

**4) Health and Safety Committee:**

NO MINUTES OR RECOMMENDED ACTIONS TO BE APPROVED.

**Draft No. 2020-92:** AN ORDINANCE AUTHORIZING THE CITY MANAGER, OR HIS DESIGNEE, TO EXECUTE AN AGREEMENT WITH KENT STATE UNIVERSITY SO AS TO PROVIDE FOR THE MUTUAL ASSISTANCE, INTERCHANGE, AND USE OF POLICE PERSONNEL AND EQUIPMENT, FROM SEPTEMBER 23, 2020, UNTIL TERMINATED BY EITHER PARTY, AND DECLARING AN EMERGENCY

MOTION TO SUSPEND THE THREE READINGS made by Mr. Ferrara, seconded by Mr. DeLeone. On Roll call, voting "Yes": Mr. Amrhein, Mr. DeLeone, Mr. Ferrara, Mr. Kuhar, Ms. Rosenberg, Ms. Shaffer Bish, Mr. Sidoti, Mr. Turner and Ms. Wallach.

MOTION TO ADOPT DRAFT NO. 2020-92 made by Mr. Kuhar and seconded by Mr. DeLeone. On Roll call, voting "Yes": Mr. Amrhein, Mr. DeLeone, Mr. Ferrara, Mr. Kuhar, Ms. Rosenberg, Ms. Shaffer Bish, Mr. Sidoti, Mr. Turner and Ms. Wallach.

**Ordinance 2020-92** has PASSED as stated by Clerk Wilkens.

<b>5) Finance Committee:</b>
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MOTION TO APPROVE THE FINANCE COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES OF September 2, 2020 made by Mr. DeLeone, seconded by Mr. Sidoti, and CARRIED by a voice vote of 8-0-1 with Ms. Wallach abstaining.

MOTION TO APPROVE THE FINANCE COMMITTEE ACTION ITEM made by Mr. DeLeone, seconded by Mr. Sidoti and CARRIED by a voice vote of 9-0.

Recommended Actions:

- 1) Authorize the submission of bridge safety repair funds for the necessary safety improvements to the bridge on Sunrise Drive.
- 2) Authorize the donation of the surplus gun locks to the Mogadore Police Department.

Ms. Wallach had a question regarding the gun locks but was referring to different gun locks provided to residents in the lobby of the police station.

**Draft No. 2020-93** AN ORDINANCE AUTHORIZING THE CITY OF KENT TO SUBMIT A FUNDING APPLICATION TOTALING \$612,000 AND TO EXECUTE THE SUBSEQUENT AGREEMENTS WITH THE OHIO DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION'S (ODOT) MUNICIPAL BRIDGE PROGRAM, AND TO ACCEPT THE GRANT, IF AWARDED, WITH CORRESPONDING APPROPRIATION OF FUNDS FOR THE SUNRISE DRIVE BRIDGE OVER FISH CREEK, AND DECLARING AN EMERGENCY, was read by title only by Clerk Wilkens per Mayor Fiala's request.

MOTION TO SUSPEND THE THREE READINGS made by Mr. Kuhar, seconded by Mr. DeLeone. On Roll call, voting "Yes": Mr. Amrhein, Mr. DeLeone, Mr. Ferrara, Mr. Kuhar, Ms. Rosenberg, Ms. Shaffer Bish, Mr. Sidoti, Mr. Turner and Ms. Wallach. The Motion CARRIED by a roll call vote of 9-0.

MOTION TO ADOPT DRAFT NO. 2020-93 made by Mr. DeLeone and seconded by Mr. Ferrara. On roll call, voting "Yes": Mr. Amrhein, Mr. DeLeone, Mr. Ferrara, Mr. Kuhar, Ms. Rosenberg, Ms. Shaffer Bish, Mr. Sidoti, Mr. Turner and Ms. Wallach. The Motion CARRIED by a roll call vote of 9-0.

**ORDINANCE 2020-93 PASSED** as stated by Clerk Wilkens.

**Draft No 2020-94** AN ORDINANCE REQUESTING A DONATION OF TWO (2) GUN LOCKS TO THE MOGADORE POLICE DEPARTMENT FROM THE KENT POLICE DEPARTMENT, AND DECLARING AN EMERGENCY was read by title only by Clerk Wilkens per Mayor Fiala's request.

MOTION TO SUSPEND THE THREE READINGS made by Mr. Ferrara and seconded by Mr. Kuhar. On roll call, voting "Yes": Mr. DeLeone, Mr. Ferrara, Mr. Kuhar, Ms. Rosenberg, Ms. Shaffer Bish, Mr. Sidoti, Mr. Turner, Ms. Wallach, and Mr. Amrhein. The Motion CARRIED by a roll call vote of 9-0.

MOTION TO ADOPT DRAFT No. 2020-94 made by Mr. Kuhar and seconded by Mr. Ferrara. On roll call, voting "Yes": Mr. DeLeone, Mr. Ferrara, Mr. Kuhar, Ms. Rosenberg, Ms. Shaffer Bish, Mr. Sidoti, Ms. Wallach, Mr. Turner and Mr. Amrhein. The Motion CARRIED by a roll call vote of 9-0.

**ORDINANCE 2020-94 PASSED** as stated by Clerk Wilkens.

**Draft No. 2020-095** RESOLUTION ACCEPTING THE AMOUNTS AND RATES AS DETERMINED BY THE BUDGET COMMISSION AND AUTHORIZING THE NECESSARY TAX LEVIES AND CERTIFYING THEM TO THE COUNTY AUDITOR was read by title only by Clerk Wilkens per Mayor Fiala's request.

MOTION TO SUSPEND THE THREE READINGS made by Mr. DeLeone and seconded by Mr. Ferrara. On roll call, voting "Yes": Mr. DeLeone, Mr. Ferrara, Mr. Kuhar, Ms. Rosenberg, Ms. Shaffer Bish, Mr. Sidoti, Mr. Turner, Ms. Wallach, and Mr. Amrhein. The Motion CARRIED by a roll call vote of 9-0.

MOTION TO ADOPT DRAFT No. 2020-95 made by Mr. DeLeone and seconded by Mr. Ferrara. On roll call, voting "Yes": Mr. DeLeone, Mr. Ferrara, Mr. Kuhar, Ms. Rosenberg, Ms. Shaffer Bish, Mr. Sidoti, Ms. Wallach, Mr. Turner and Mr. Amrhein. The Motion CARRIED by a roll call vote of 9-0.

**ORDINANCE 2020- 95 PASSED** as stated by Clerk Wilkens.

**Draft No. 2020-096** AN ORDINANCE ACCEPTING A DONATION IN THE AMOUNT OF \$100.00 TO THE CITY OF KENT PARKS & RECREATION DEPARTMENT TOWARDS THE PURCHASE OF A MEMORIAL TREE IN MEMORY OF MARY HELEN NEUZIL, AND DECLARING AN EMERGENCY was read by title only by Clerk Wilkens per Mayor Fiala's request.

MOTION TO SUSPEND THE THREE READINGS made by Mr. Ferrara and seconded by Mr. DeLeone. On roll call, voting "Yes": Mr. DeLeone, Mr. Ferrara, Mr. Kuhar, Ms. Rosenberg, Ms. Shaffer Bish, Mr. Sidoti, Mr. Turner, Ms. Wallach, and Mr. Amrhein. The Motion CARRIED by a roll call vote of 9-0.

MOTION TO ADOPT DRAFT No. 2020-96 made by Mr. Ferrara and seconded by Mr. Kuhar. On roll call, voting "Yes": Mr. DeLeone, Mr. Ferrara, Mr. Kuhar, Ms. Rosenberg, Ms. Shaffer Bish, Mr. Sidoti, Ms. Wallach, Mr. Turner and Mr. Amrhein. The Motion CARRIED by a roll call vote of 9-0.

**ORDINANCE 2020-96 PASSED** as stated by Clerk Wilkens.

**Special Committees Report:** NONE

**Unfinished Business:** NONE

### **New Business**

MOTION TO MOVE INTO COMMITTEE A DISCUSSION OF FORMING A NEW CITY COMMISSION TO PROACTIVELY DEAL WITH RACISM, HATRED AND DIVERSITY made by Ms. Wallach and seconded by Mr. DeLeone and CARRIED by a voice vote of 9-0.

Ms. Wallach said the residents (that spoke at tonight's meeting) brought up good points about implementing a plan to deal with things as they turn up. The Commission could come up with ideas in regards to diversity, which is a thing city government has been struggling with for years.

Ms. Shaffer Bish said there should be further discussion on this and this is a way of not pushing too fast but is also very timely. She added that members want to see Kent be the most welcoming city and to have action items that might create more of that welcoming feel. She is going to wholeheartedly support this future discussion and possibly invite members of the community into the discussion.

Mr. Ferrara said he was going to vote to oppose the motion. He believes Kent has proven time and time again to be an inclusive, caring community and think this may end up causing more divisiveness between the races. The City, the University and the School System has always been an inclusive place and continues to be. He added he thinks it is only relevant because of the issues going on nationally but does not believe there is systemic racism in Kent. He said not that it isn't important, but is extremely important.

Mr. Turner said he supports the motion and that not acknowledging that something exists doesn't mean it doesn't exist. Now is an opportunity for education. He agreed that Kent is not the same city as Los Angeles or Minneapolis, but there are issues that need to be addressed. By putting this topic into committee, it would enable education about needs and deficiencies in the community. It does not mean Kent is a bad community or creates fissures. Acting as though these don't exist doesn't change the reality that there is something there that needs addressed and to have a discussion. We are acknowledging with this there are issues in society that need to be looked at and he supports wholeheartedly.

Mr. Sidoti added he doesn't mind moving this to committee and reminded all there was a similar discussion three years ago when being a compassionate city was discussed. Heart and Soul was developed to have real, honest conversations in the community. He believes there are issues in the community that need to be addressed. He said it's a bit frustrating that after 3.5 years these conversations have not come from the community but he doesn't mind talking about this in committee.

Mr. Kuhar said he is going to support the motion and thinks Kent is great place to live. He sees racism from both black and white people and every time we notice someone is not the same as



we are we are showing some signs of racism. We need to get rid of hatred and to a point where a person is a person. He is open for supporting committee discussion.

Mr. Ferrara added Mr. Turner brought up some great points in his comments and believes it should be discussed in committee and will vote for it. He thanked Mr. Turner for his comments.

### **Councilmembers' Comments**

Mr. DeLeone reminded Councilmembers he is still waiting on evaluation paperwork from some members.

Mr. Turner responded to Mr. Myers comment. He was one of the three council people at the ceremony regarding the rock at Kent State Campus. He believes there is a misunderstanding of what transpired and was reported in the Record Courier. Three council people went to the rally to support the students and to let them know this is a welcoming community. They did not go there to discuss public policy and were totally unprepared for the students viewing it differently. They were spirited and reacted to the City not having established policies regarding an issue Council had no authority to address. That issue related to campus policy. Council members gave students their contact information so there could be further discussion. Council did not misspeak and there was no issue of them speaking out of turn, they were there as individuals and appropriately represented themselves. He is proud of his fellow council people and what has been done as a council and administration. This is a process and is an opportunity to move the community forward and effect a positive change. He addressed Mr. Myers and said he respected his opinion and that he has a right to know what transpired at this event. He thinks he would have been proud of how they behaved at that occurrence.


Mr. Sidoti added that many people at this rally were former students of Kent Roosevelt High School and he heard they could not believe what they read in the paper that City Council created an issue. His reason for being at the rally was to observe, to learn and try to understand where the students were coming from and that they are welcome in the city of Kent. They were all wearing masks and were well behaved. Council members made it clear they were there as citizens and welcomes all to the community.


### **Mayor's Report:**

Mayor Fiala thanked Clerk Wilkens for putting together a proclamation for Lance Kylo and Zach Brown who on August 26, 2020 alerted their family of a fire and got everyone out. He went to St. Patrick's School to present them the proclamations, signed and pens given.

Ms. Wallach wished a happy one-year anniversary with the City of Kent to Clerk Wilkens.

The Regular Meeting adjourned at 8:30 P.M.

  
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Amy Wilkens  
Clerk of Council

  
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Jerry T. Fiala  
Mayor and President of Council

## Kent City Council Meeting:

I am coming to this group because the time has come where we as a community must join together to continue the path of Peace and Unity in Our Beloved Community. I am the President of the Portage County NAACP, but more importantly I am a resident of this community, and my children all attended Kent City Schools and went on to attend and graduate from Kent State University. I have 2 granddaughters who are currently attending Kent City Schools. I have seen our community as it faced many different challenges related to racism and inclusiveness. Our challenges are no different than those faced by many other communities of our size, but one thing that is significant is the rich diversity that is a part of the fabric of our community. We have come a long way, but yet there remains work to be done.

I am proposing that the time has come to move the needle, to the next level. The Portage County NAACP is a vital stakeholder in this community, as well as the oldest civil rights organization in the Nation. We want to partner with the City and its leadership to continuing to promote “Unity” and “respect.” We must recognize and dismantle our own “unconscious biases” and any preconceived perception that exist within ourselves and our community. Together we can begin to dismantle some of the falsehoods (at least recognize that racism exists and work towards dismantling the walls of hatred.) Together as a community we can say proudly, “Not in Our Town” will there be room for the acceptance of hate speech, discrimination, bullying, and various modes of unacceptance. Working together we can build a city where the cycles and systems that oppress and discriminate will not be tolerated. Making the commitment towards equity and anti-racism involves a shift in thinking, changes in practice and removing policies and systems that create barriers.

Today, we have a vibrant and thriving city. Our challenge is to build and look too the future for our children, and our children’s children. We must continue in the struggle to address “freedom, tolerance, and civility. We owe it to the children to continue to provide a Caring City where they feel proud to be a part of a multicultural community. A place where they can grow to become adults who are open-minded, caring, collaborative, and productive citizens, with a pride and love for their community. If not now, then when, I ask. It is time to make some noise, and begin the lifting and, to quote Congressman John Lewis, If you know me- **I**

**am never ever afraid to make some noise and get in good trouble, necessary trouble.** Thank you for listening.

I represent the Kent InterFaith Alliance for Racial Reconciliation and Justice, known as KIFA. We are a group of leaders and members of 10 faith communities whose efforts are devoted to racial justice.

I am here to urge you to develop a strategy that will prevent and minimize harm – harm caused by hate crimes and serious conflict between groups of people attending protests and rallies.

Kent is certainly not immune to hate crimes. You may recall that the Islamic place of worship on Lake Street was vandalized when a rock was thrown through its glass door. Several years ago, Spellman AME Chapel, home to a predominately Black congregation, was desecrated by graffiti. In both cases, some people in the community stepped up and demonstrated their support for these two congregations.

We can respond to acts of hate more effectively by being proactive, as exemplified by Dayton. In March 2019, a KKK group announced their intent to hold a downtown rally. Think about that. How would we respond? Dayton City leaders organized public meetings inviting citizens to offer their thoughts on how to best respond. There was disagreement, especially between the White and Black residents. Professional mediators facilitated additional meetings, resulting in a strategy that satisfied residents, City leaders and the police. This proactive plan backed by strong support from Dayton residents, was widely publicized and prompted the KKK to cancel their plans.

I am suggesting that Kent prepare intentional strategies for responding to incidents of hate – strategies that goes beyond the use of law enforcement. We can be a proactive community that visibly shows we will not tolerate hate. For example, the bars downtown could have signs in their windows that say, “No shirt, no shoes, no hate.” Or similar to neighborhood crime watch signs, neighborhood groups could post signs that state “This is a hate watch neighborhood.” City leaders should have at their fingertips a phone number list for clergy, mediators, mental health counselors, NAACP leaders, who have pledged their willingness to help with community healing or calling for calm when there's unrest.

I'm calling on you to consider our many community assets that can complement the work of law enforcement. I recommend that under the guidance of the City, a campaign be initiated as soon as possible, to craft ways to be visible and strategic in stating that the residents of Kent will not tolerate hate.