



Side by Side

The City of Kent faces a test of leadership with fiscal resources stretched beyond their limits around a growing set of community expectations that show no signs of slowing soon. How this problem gets solved will shape the Kent community for years to come.

Whatever the final outcome, one thing is clear: the city does not have the luxury of robust revenues to save the day. Instead, the best thing the city can do for itself is to make an all-out commitment to performance. Everyone has to contribute more, work smarter, and take their performance to the next level.

Council members don't have big salaries of their own to offer to cut but as the most visible part of the city government they do have the attention of city employees who will take their lead from Council's actions. This is the time for Council to send a message to everyone that the community comes first by demonstrating their seriousness to work together to solve our way out of this difficult problem.

As we challenge all of our employees to elevate their performance, Council can lead the way and show everyone the strength of working side by side.

city leadership

Problems can be tough, issues frustrating, meetings stressful, hours long, schedules unrealistic, and gratitude rare – so why do it? Because cities don't become communities by chance; communities emerge after careful planning and thoughtful decisions by people that are willing to give back to the place they call home. It takes a special person to answer the call of community and do a tour of civic duty, and those that do it share a belief that one person can make a difference in the lives of others and be a leader worth following.

leadership worth following

Political leadership aims to find the right answers for the community. It listens with respect and humility at the risk of being wrong for the sake of doing right. It looks for common ground where personal differences are set aside for community gain. Leading cities is rarely about choosing between right and wrong; it's about having to face two "rights" and picking one for the good of the whole.

Leadership comes in many shapes and sizes but in city government it's about having the courage to make unpopular decisions when they have to be made. It's about standing-up for what you believe and doing what needs to be done. Leadership is more than making promises, it's about delivering on promises.

the promise of leadership

From the time of the ancient Greeks, civic leaders have raised their hands and swore an oath to leave the city in a better state than when they arrived. They made a promise to look beyond the horizon and be ready for the future. A promise to be there when needed, to make roads better, water cleaner, and neighborhoods safer. That's our promise to everyone that trusts us to get the leadership thing right. We strive to be worthy of that trust every day.

But with peoples lives, livelihoods and future generations at stake, it's not enough to strive, we must achieve. The best plans are just good intentions until we execute them to produce results. We lead by what we do, not what we say, and at the end of the day it's only our performance that matters.

City leaders don't do the work, but they make the work possible – so Council's performance matters as much as anyone else. Community building is a team sport and if Kent is going to win the game, Council has to perform at a high level, setting the bar high for themselves and becoming a body that is admired and emulated.

best practices

Peter Drucker, arguably the most notable leadership guru of our time argues that "self assessment is the first requirement of leadership." As leaders we have an obligation to be eager to find out how to do things better, constantly re-sharpening and refocusing not just for ourselves but for everyone we serve.

In the corporate world 90% of large company boards and 73% of all boards complete self-assessments or are rated by an independent 3rd party for effectiveness every year. Companies ask themselves hard questions to make a buck, shouldn't we do it to make a difference in the lives of thousands of people?

legacy work

Self assessment is asking yourself "how do you want to be remembered?" The actions we take every week in Council chambers can have a profound impact on the people we serve. These impacts form lasting impressions that over time come to define us – they become a statement of who we are and what is important to us – they're our legacy. You don't do legacy work with the expectation of immediate gratification, legacies are measured in lifetimes. They happen when vision, talent and character combine and inspire people to build a better tomorrow.

Self-Assessments are about developing ourselves individually, as a governing body, and as a city organization. The process helps to renew, refresh and redirect us, pushing us to see what we can become. Evaluations are not a panacea. But catching and correcting your own shortcomings can't hurt.

Even Tiger Woods still takes golf lessons.

As a Council, we...

Our Performance

DO WELL	NEEDS WORK	BROKEN
DO WELL	NEEDS WORK	BROKEN
DO WELL	NEEDS WORK	BROKEN
DO WELL	NEEDS WORK	BROKEN
DO WELL	NEEDS WORK	BROKEN
DO WELL	NEEDS WORK	BROKEN
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DO WELL	NEEDS WORK	BROKEN

Role of Council

We spend the time necessary to clearly define our roles and responsibilities.

We agree on those roles and responsibilities.

We regularly check our decisions and requests against those roles and responsibilities.

We fulfill our responsibility to set direction and provide policy guidance.

We provide new Council members with sufficient orientation to get them up to speed quickly.

We have policies and procedures in place to deal with ethical issues such as conflict of interest.

We have clear financial policies in place that we use to guide our spending decisions.

We have a strategic planning process that we use to focus our efforts each year.

Meetings Process

DO WELL	NEEDS WORK	BROKEN
DO WELL	NEEDS WORK	BROKEN
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DO WELL	NEEDS WORK	BROKEN
DO WELL	NEEDS WORK	BROKEN

We share responsibility among Council members to get work done.

We have effective, useful meetings.

We are able to set aside personal positions when compromise is necessary.

We listen to each other and invite diverse views, opinions and comments.

We work as a team with staff to accomplish the city's goals.

We recap our discussions periodically and make sure everyone has a chance to speak.

We handle disagreements well and resolve conflicts in an open and constructive manner.

We routinely work with senior staff to provide a mutually understood framework for their work.

Once we pass a vote, we move forward and don't re-open old arguments.

Performance and Results

DO WELL	NEEDS WORK	BROKEN
DO WELL	NEEDS WORK	BROKEN
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DO WELL	NEEDS WORK	BROKEN

We regularly evaluate our strengths and weaknesses as a Council.

We maintain a good balance between long term vision and immediate needs.

We are admired as a Council in the community for our leadership.

We have earned the trust of the community to make the right decisions.

In our words and actions, we communicate a clear, consistent and united message to the community about where we're heading as a city.

We work closely with peer Boards and Councils, e.g., school board, chamber, University, etc.

We fulfill the Council's responsibility to ensure there are sufficient financial resources to achieve strategic goals.

We use the time and talents of Council members well.

If each Council member named the top organizational priorities the answers would be very similar.

We reach decisions quickly and effectively on issues that require decisive action.

Staff Development and Interaction

DO WELL	NEEDS WORK	BROKEN	We publicly acknowledge and celebrate the good work of our staff.
DO WELL	NEEDS WORK	BROKEN	We handle disagreements or problems with our staff privately.
DO WELL	NEEDS WORK	BROKEN	We take the time to routinely meet with our staff to better understand their needs and challenges.
DO WELL	NEEDS WORK	BROKEN	We work hard to build trust with our staff.
DO WELL	NEEDS WORK	BROKEN	We treat our staff with the same level of respect that we expect them to show to our residents.
DO WELL	NEEDS WORK	BROKEN	We give staff clear direction on policy priorities and performance expectations.
DO WELL	NEEDS WORK	BROKEN	We model the behavior that we expect from our staff.
DO WELL	NEEDS WORK	BROKEN	We direct staff with a unified voice so there can be no confusion of what we want from them.
DO WELL	NEEDS WORK	BROKEN	We promote innovation, encourage risk taking, and support our staff when new ideas fail.
DO WELL	NEEDS WORK	BROKEN	We give staff clear policy direction and let them execute the policies based on their expertise.

As a Council Member, I...

DO WELL	NEEDS WORK	BROKEN	I work to create an atmosphere of mutual trust.
DO WELL	NEEDS WORK	BROKEN	I demonstrate honest, ethical behavior.
DO WELL	NEEDS WORK	BROKEN	I lead by example and do what I ask others to do.
DO WELL	NEEDS WORK	BROKEN	I communicate a clear vision of what I think we need to do for the future of Kent.
DO WELL	NEEDS WORK	BROKEN	I arrive prepared for Council meetings, having read the agenda, minutes and reports.
DO WELL	NEEDS WORK	BROKEN	I know how to get an item on the agenda.
DO WELL	NEEDS WORK	BROKEN	I understand the administrative process, e.g., Robert's Rules of Order.
DO WELL	NEEDS WORK	BROKEN	I am an effective communicator of my ideas.
DO WELL	NEEDS WORK	BROKEN	I influence Council decisions.
DO WELL	NEEDS WORK	BROKEN	My input has a positive impact on resolving difficult issues.
DO WELL	NEEDS WORK	BROKEN	I leave the Council meetings with a clear sense of what was decided.
DO WELL	NEEDS WORK	BROKEN	I state expectations clearly and confirm understanding with my colleagues.
DO WELL	NEEDS WORK	BROKEN	I focus on finding solutions rather than listing problems.
DO WELL	NEEDS WORK	BROKEN	I set aside my personal ambitions for the best interests of the community.
DO WELL	NEEDS WORK	BROKEN	I feel comfortable asking questions when I don't understand something.
DO WELL	NEEDS WORK	BROKEN	I take responsibility for decisions without finger pointing.
DO WELL	NEEDS WORK	BROKEN	I praise people for work well done.
DO WELL	NEEDS WORK	BROKEN	I view problems as opportunities.
DO WELL	NEEDS WORK	BROKEN	I appropriately provide authority to others to make decisions.
DO WELL	NEEDS WORK	BROKEN	I support innovation as a method to improve performance.
DO WELL	NEEDS WORK	BROKEN	I manage my stress level on Council.
DO WELL	NEEDS WORK	BROKEN	I promote the good things we do as a City Council to the public.
DO WELL	NEEDS WORK	BROKEN	I am an important advocate for Kent, e.g., with state, with University, with peer cities, etc.