

Roll Call

The Kalamazoo City Commission met as a Committee of the Whole on Monday, September 20, 2021 at 5:00 p.m. This meeting was held as an electronic meeting under the authority of the Michigan Open Meetings Act (PA 267 of 1976) as amended by PA 254 of 2020.

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT:

Mayor David Anderson
Vice Mayor Patrese Griffin
Eric Cunningham
Jeanne Hess
Erin Knott
Chris Praedel
Jack Urban

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT:

None

All members present indicated they were physically located in the City of Kalamazoo.

Also present were City Manager Jim Ritsema, Deputy City Manager Jeff Chamberlain, City Attorney Clyde Robinson, and City Clerk Scott Borling.

Public Comments

Next, when an opportunity was given for general public comments, the following people addressed the City Commission:

Roxanna Maier, non-resident, spoke about the tent city near Hotop Avenue and asked the City for a plan to relocate people in the camp by September 29th.

Catherine Neima, non-resident, expressed concern about the unhoused in the City of Kalamazoo and asked the City Commission to talk about housing and getting people “back on their feet.”

Dick Shiltz, non-resident, spoke about his efforts to help the homeless and asked where they would go after September 29th.

Review of Business Meeting Agenda

Deputy City Manager Chamberlain reviewed items on the agenda for the 7:00 business meeting.

2021-00

Presentation re: Youth Programs

City Manager Ritsema provided introductory remarks for a presentation on the City’s youth programs.

Parks and Recreation Director Sean Fletcher, Youth Development Coordinator Chad Wendt, and Parks and Recreation Program Coordinator Pete Aerts delivered a presentation entitled *Youth Development, Monday, September 20, 2021*. A copy of the slides from this presentation was filed with the papers for this meeting.

Commissioner Hess thanked the presenters for their work with Kalamazoo’s youth and for the partnership with KYDNet. Commissioner Hess offered that youth development programs were a great use for Foundation for Excellence (FFE) funds. Commissioner Hess stated Kalamazoo College students loved working with Swim for Success programs.

In response to questions from Commissioner Hess, Mr. Aerts and Mr. Wendt provided the following age ranges for the various youth programs: Camp K-Zoo – Kindergarten to 12 years old; all other camps – 7 to 12 years old; All Things

Possible – 12 to 14 years old (entering high school); and Counselors in Training (CIT) – 13 to 17 years old. Children aged 5 to 6 years were not allowed in the youth programs because they could not handle the full-day schedule. Financial assistance was available for Camp K-Zoo in the form of a 75% scholarship, and there was no cost for the All Things Possible program. Once an All Things Possible participant completed their first year of high school, they could be eligible to have the City pay for their driver's education class.

Commissioner Cunningham stated the City needed to do more for the 13–18-year-old age group. Commissioner Cunningham stated he was glad to see the Kalamazoo Department of Public Safety (KDPS) as a youth development partner. Commissioner Cunningham offered remarks on the need to do better with black and brown kids, the need for cultural competence, the need to invest in more than just sports, the need for partnerships, and the need for the City to be intentional with its youth programs. Commissioner Cunningham stated community leaders needed to do this work, as kids did not know what they needed. Commissioner Cunningham questioned what data was available on the number of youths participating in City programs and the cost for each program. Commissioner Cunningham stated the City needed to start with young people in its efforts to address gun violence. Commissioner Cunningham commented the community could not allow KDPS to bear the burden of gun violence alone.

Commissioner Praedel thanked the presenters and remarked on the joy of seeing activity at South Side Park.

In response to questions from Commissioner Praedel, Director Fletcher stated there was a form to complete to get financial aid for youth programs. Director Fletcher explained the criteria for receiving aid were being in the federal free/reduced price lunch program and being a City resident. Director Fletcher reported these funds came to the Parks and Recreation Department as a reimbursement from the Friends of Recreation and usually totaled \$12,000-\$20,000 each year.

In response to a question from Commissioner Praedel, Mr. Aerts stated the CIT program fed itself as kids transitioned from being campers to wanting to be CIT's. Mr. Aerts indicated staff knew families and teens in the community who might be interested in being CIT's, and they had started doing some marketing in middle schools.

Commissioner Praedel urged the City to eliminate barriers to youth programs and suggested 100% scholarships, as 25% of the cost was still a challenge for some people. Commissioner Praedel stated having 9-5 childcare for the summer was a "game changer." Commissioner Praedel remarked that he was proud of the work the City was doing and the investment the City was making in human capital.

Next an opportunity was given for comments from City Commissioners.

Commissioner Urban spoke about the Graphic Packaging tax abatement item on the business meeting agenda and stated people should be aware that the question before the Commission was whether the abatement should be approved for 5 years or 11 years.

2021-00

Presentation re: Youth Programs (cont'd)

Commissioner
Comments

Commissioner
Comments (cont'd)

City Manager Ritsema agreed with Commission Urban and indicated there was a narrow set of criteria under state statute that would disqualify a business from receiving a tax abatement, and those criteria were related to employment and the company fulfilling its commitments.

Commissioner Cunningham asked if the closed session could be moved up in the agenda.

In response to Commissioner Cunningham, City Attorney Robinson stated the City Commission could move items around on its agenda by a majority vote.

Mayor Anderson questioned whether moving the closed session to the beginning of the meeting would affect people who wanted to participate in the scheduled public hearings, as the hearings would be moved back until later in the meeting.

Commission Cunningham asked for an explanation of the narrow reasons for revoking a tax abatement.

Mayor Anderson asked City Attorney Robinson to be prepared to answer the revocation question during the business meeting.

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 6:16 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Scott A. Borling
City Clerk

For City Commission approval on November 8, 2021

Approved by: _____

David F. Anderson, Mayor

Dated: November 8, 2021

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