

Roll Call

The Kalamazoo City Commission met as a Committee of the Whole on Monday, September 7, 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
Jeanne Hess
Erin Knott
Chris Praedel
Jack Urban

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT:

Eric Cunningham

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.

Commissioner Excused

Commissioner Hess, seconded by Commissioner Praedel, moved to excuse the absence of Commissioner Cunningham. With a voice vote the motion passed.

Public Comments

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

Jeff Messer, City resident, listed institutions and venues that had resumed in-person gatherings as well as options he had given the City Commission for meeting in-person. Mr. Messer urged individual City Commissioners to take matters into their own hands, attend meetings in person in the City Commission Chambers, and invite the public.

Benjamin remarked that the Parks and Recreation Advisory Board bylaws provided that board members “shall have access” to materials, items, and documents, and he asked how a member could get those materials and documents without submitting a freedom of information request.

Casey Coker, City resident, asked that the City Commission appointee reviews and pay increases be moved from the Consent Agenda to the Regular Agenda.

Doug Kirk, non-resident and President of the Kalamazoo Bicycle Club, spoke about the lack of traffic enforcement in the City and asked that the Public Safety Department be directed to enforce speed limits and the prohibition against the use of cell phones while driving.

Review of Items on
Upcoming City
Commission Agendas

Deputy City Manager Chamberlain reviewed items for upcoming City Commission meeting agendas, including items on the agenda for the 7:00 business meeting and the following topics for the September 20th Committee of the Whole (CoW) meeting: the work of the Parks and Recreation Department and youth programming.

2021-00
KDPS Response to the
OIR Group Report

City Manager Ritsema provided introductory remarks on the response of the Kalamazoo Department of Public Safety (KDPS) to the report and recommendations from the OIR Group. City Manager Ritsema noted the Public

Safety Transparency page on the City's website included an addendum to the OIR Group Report regarding KDPS's response to records requests during the review process.

Public Safety Chief Vernon Coakley delivered a presentation entitled *OIR Recommendations Implementation Plan, September 7, 2021*. A copy of the slides from this presentation was filed with the papers for this meeting.

City Manager Ritsema and Chief Coakley presented a tracking spreadsheet that would be available on the Public Safety Transparency page, showing the OIR Group recommendations, the staff/office assigned to address each recommendation, the action steps being taken, and the current status of the action steps. A copy of this spreadsheet was filed with the papers for this meeting.

Commissioner Praedel referred to pages 75/76 of the report that talked about live narration of the KDPS actions to be captured by the body cameras.

Chief Coakley stated narration could happen, and he noted he had been doing something similar on social media to explain officers' intentions. Chief Coakley agreed that KDPS needed to get better at communicating, both before, during, and after events.

Commissioner Praedel questioned whether the City's mutual aid partners should be included in the trainings that the OIR Group recommended. Commissioner Praedel observed there was a high likelihood that large events would involve mutual aid partners, and they needed to be on the same page as KDPS.

In response to Commissioner Praedel, Chief Coakley stated KDPS regularly invited its mutual aid partners to participate in trainings.

Vice Mayor Griffin asked City Manager Ritsema for his thoughts. Vice Mayor Griffin remarked that Chief Coakley was not the Chief for most of 2020, and the plan he presented was a good plan. Vice Mayor Griffin stated the Commission needed to know there was full and complete understanding coming from the City Manager.

Commissioner Urban thanked KDPS staff for the tracking spreadsheet and its availability online. Commissioner Urban asked whether it was reasonable to expect that the To-Be-Determined (TBD) items could be completed within one year.

In response to Commissioner Urban, City Manager Ritsema stated individual response steps would be completed sooner than one year, but the overall outcome should be completed within a year.

Commissioner Urban remarked that the City would be tested again with first amendment events. Commissioner Urban noted the tracking spreadsheet was an internal document that contained jargon, and he expressed hope that the Public Information Officer and others would prepare a final report that provided an interpretation of the spreadsheet for the public.

City Manager Ritsema stated he was part the KDPS command structure last year, he was aware and approved of the actions taken, and he relied on the training and expertise of Public Safety staff. City Manager Ritsema stated he would hold Chief Coakley accountable for the report and recommendations from the OIR Group, and

2021-00

KDPS Response to the
OIR Group Report
(cont'd)

2021-00KDPS Response to the
OIR Group Report
(cont'd)

he expected the City Commission to hold him accountable. City Manager Ritsema stated the City would be tested again. City Manager Ritsema remarked he was looking forward to working with the community and City Commission to address the recommendations, but he acknowledged he was the one who was ultimately accountable.

Commissioner Urban recommended that staff provide examples when trying to explain the tracking spreadsheet to the community, but he acknowledged that people could take an example and cling to it as a precedent.

Commissioner Praedel discussed the challenge of being an elected official and stated Commissioners were not trying to be critical or disrespectful of staff with their questions. Commissioner Praedel indicated Commissioners knew the work was hard, but they needed to ask the questions the public was asking them. Commissioner Praedel spoke of the need for Commissioners and staff to work together.

Chief Coakley thanked Commissioner Praedel and all Commissioners for their support.

Commissioner
Comments

Next an opportunity was given for comments from City Commissioners.

Mayor Anderson asked City Manager Ritsema to provide an update on the City's hybrid meeting plan. Mayor Anderson noted the City was trying to keep everyone safe and healthy, and if Commissioners did not want to attend meetings in person it was due to health concerns rather than a disregard for transparency and accessibility.

City Manager Ritsema explained the City was following the recommendations of the Kalamazoo County Health Department to the County Board of Commissioners regarding meetings of public bodies.

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 5:51 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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