

Roll Call

A regular meeting of the Kalamazoo City Commission was held on Monday, November 8, 2021 at 7:00 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

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

2021-00

Approval of Minutes

Commissioner Cunningham, seconded by Commissioner Urban, moved to approve the minutes from the City Commission business meeting on October 18, 2021 and the Committee of the Whole meetings on June 12, July 19, August 10, September 7, September 20, October 4, and October 18, 2021.

With a roll call vote this motion passed unanimously:

AYES:

Commissioners Cunningham, Hess, Knott, Praedel, Urban, Vice Mayor Griffin, Mayor Anderson

NAYS:

None

Commissioner
Comments

Mayor Anderson gave members of the 53rd City Commission the opportunity to make final comments and remarks.

Commissioner Urban noted the 53rd City Commission was not passive. Commissioner Urban wished his colleagues farewell and stated he had learned from all of them.

Commissioner Knott shared memories and thoughts from when she was elected to the City Commission in 2015. Commissioner Knott stated it had been a pleasure serving with her colleagues, and she offered well-wishes to the new City Commissioners. Commissioner Knott offered advice on community engagement, and she urged the City Commission to press staff on a hybrid meeting format when the Commission returned to in-person meetings. Commissioner Knott spoke about her future plans and expressed support for the re-election of Governor Gretchen Whitmer.

Commissioner Cunningham described projects and initiatives he had worked on during his time on the City Commission and stated City staff were amazing. Commissioner Cunningham offered advice to the new Commissioners and stated it was their job to manage the appointees, their fellow Commissioners, community members, and themselves. Commissioner Cunningham encouraged new Commissioners to become comfortable backtracking on a decision they had made. Commissioner Cunningham urged the City to add more lights to the Bronson Park holiday displays.

Vice Mayor Griffin thanked her colleagues on the Commission and members of the community for giving her an opportunity to represent them. Vice Mayor Griffin thanked the Commission for adopting the Fair Housing Ordinance. Vice Mayor Griffin stated she would continue her work in the community and observed her departure from the Commission had given another person an opportunity to serve. Vice Mayor Griffin noted there were many City staff who were working hard, and she thanked them.

Commissioner Hess stated the new City Commission would be recognizing the outgoing Commissioners. Commissioner Hess stated much had happened over the past two years, and she read a quote from Mr. Rogers.

Commissioner Praedel commented that City Commissioners were like a family you did not choose, and he remarked on his colleagues' kindness, brilliance, and love for the Kalamazoo community. Commissioner Praedel spoke about the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic in Michigan and remembered thinking there were no other people he would rather be working with than his fellow Commissioners.

Mayor Anderson remarked on the length of time the 53rd City Commission had held virtual meetings, and he expressed hope for future Commissions. Mayor Anderson stated Commissioners made difficult decisions, and he acknowledged those decisions were not always perfect. Mayor Anderson stated being an elected official was a sacred trust of democracy.

City Clerk Borling presented the following report from the Kalamazoo County Board of Canvassers:

The Kalamazoo County Board of Canvassers has certified the following results from the Municipal Election held on November 2nd: having received 6,454 votes, David Anderson was elected Mayor; having received 5,689 votes, the highest number of votes received by a commission candidate, Don Cooney was elected City Commissioner and Vice Mayor; having received 5,095 votes, Stephanie Hoffman was elected City Commissioner; having received 4,737 votes Qianna Decker was elected City Commissioner; and having received 3,659 votes, Esteven Juarez was elected City Commissioner.

The report of the Board of Canvassers was received into the record.

At 7:42 p.m. Mayor Anderson adjourned the meeting *sine die*.

City Clerk Borling administered the Constitutional Oath of Office to newly elected City Commissioners Esteven Juarez, Qianna Decker, and Stephanie Hoffman; newly elected Vice Mayor Don Cooney; and newly elected Mayor David Anderson.

Prior to taking the oath of office, each newly elected official was given the opportunity to have a friend or loved one present to them and affix a pin bearing the City Seal.

Commissioner
Comments (cont'd)

2021-00
Report of the Board of
Canvassers

Adjournment *Sine Die*

Oath of Office Ceremony

Call to Order and
Roll Call – 54th City
Commission

At 7:49 p.m. Mayor Anderson called to order the first meeting of the 54th City Commission of the City of Kalamazoo.

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT:

Mayor David Anderson
Vice Mayor Don Cooney
Qianna Decker
Jeanne Hess
Stephanie Hoffman
Esteven Juarez
Chris Praedel

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT:

None

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

Invocation

The invocation was given by Dr. Addis Moore of Mt. Zion Baptist Church.

2021-00
Proclamations

Mayor Anderson read a proclamation *Honoring Jack Urban for Dedication and Service to the City of Kalamazoo*.

Commissioner Praedel read a proclamation *Honoring Eric Cunningham for Dedication and Service to the City of Kalamazoo*.

Commissioner Hess read a proclamation *Honoring Erin Knott for Dedication and Service to the City of Kalamazoo*.

Mayor Anderson read a proclamation *Honoring Patrese Griffin for Dedication and Service to the City of Kalamazoo*.

Mayor Anderson thanked the outgoing Commissioners for their service and announced they would be receiving presentation copies of their proclamations and a gift as an expression of appreciation.

Public Comments

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

Shona Espinosa, City resident, asked the City Commission to hold the Mayor and City Manager accountable for the City's treatment of the homeless.

Jeff Messer, City resident, spoke about the 53rd City Commission not meeting in person and Erin Knott's performance as a City Commissioner. Mr. Messer's written remarks were filed with the papers for this meeting.

Sara Jones, City resident, expressed concerns about the City's approach to addressing the homeless encampments and the harassment of female employees of the Parks and Recreation Department by male employees within the department.

Kimberly Jones, non-resident, expressed concerns about the City's handling of protests in 2020, the City's approach to addressing the homeless encampments, and the removal of Patrese Griffin from the November 2nd ballot.

Alfonso Harris, City resident congratulated the newly elected members of the City Commission.

City Commissioner
Comments (cont'd)

An anonymous speaker offered remarks on former Commissioners Knott and Urban.

An anonymous speaker asked Mayor Anderson to resign and the City Commission to fire City Manager Ritsema. The speaker commented on the Foundation for Excellence and expressed concerns about the City's treatment of those in homeless encampments

Brand- Crawford-Johnson, non-resident, expressed concerns about the air quality in Kalamazoo and City's response to this problem.

An anonymous speaker asked the City Commission to fire City Manager Ritsema and make former Vice Mayor Griffin the Acting City Manager.

Finally, an opportunity was given for miscellaneous comments and concerns of City Commissioners.

Commissioner Juarez noted he had come out of generational poverty, and he spoke about the need for people to love each other and bear each other's burdens. Commissioner Juarez expressed his commitment to move Kalamazoo forward and challenged the City to work together.

Commissioner Praedel welcomed the new Commissioners and stated he would be there to help and answer questions. Commissioner Praedel offered advice to the new Commissioners and encouraged them to remember their family and loved ones during difficult times. Commissioner Praedel stated there would be people who thought they had all the answers, including members of the community and former City Commissioners, but there were only six other people who would really know what you were going through as a Commissioner.

Commissioner Hess observed the turnout had been low for the Mayor's race. Commissioner Hess remarked on businesses that had recently opened and the new addition at Kalamazoo Gospel Ministries. Commissioner Hess thanked Public Services crews for the fall leaf pick-up, and she recognized the work of Public Services employee Scott Hassing to clean out a sewer blockage on her street.

Commissioner Decker expressed gratitude for the people who had voted for her. Commissioner Decker spoke about the importance of effective communication, love, and unity. Commissioner Decker stated she would work to move Kalamazoo forward and noted a rising tide lifted all boats.

Commissioner Hoffman thanked the community for electing her.

Vice Mayor Cooney stated the city had both great challenges and great opportunities. Vice Mayor Cooney indicated the goal must be to move the City into a position where every family thrived. Vice Mayor Cooney identified economics, equity, and racism as problems to address, and he remarked on need to bring together the community's resources and partnerships to do the work of enabling people to live fully human lives.

Mayor Anderson welcomed new Commissioners and encouraged everyone to work with and support the City team. Mayor Anderson noted the first business meeting would take place next week, and the 2022 budget would be presented to the Commission by December 1st. Mayor Anderson spoke about the need for Commissioners to work together.

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 8:38 p.m.



Scott A. Borling
City Clerk

Approved by the City Commission on: November 15, 2021.

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