

Roll Call

The Kalamazoo City Commission met as a Committee of the Whole on Monday, December 6, 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 Don Cooney
Qianna Decker
Jeanne Hess
Stephanie Hoffman
Esteven Juarez
Chris Praedel

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT:

Esteven Juarez*

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 Vice Mayor Cooney, moved to excuse the absence of Commissioner Juarez. With a voice vote the motion passed.

Public Comments

Next, an opportunity was given for general public comments, but no comments were offered.

*Commissioner Juarez arrived at 5:04 p.m.

Review of Business
Meeting Agenda

Deputy City Manager Chamberlain reviewed items on the agenda for the 7:00 business meeting. Deputy City Manager Chamberlain announced there would be a work session to review the 2022 proposed budget on Monday, December 13th at 6:00 p.m.

2021-00

Presentation re:
Drinking Water Quality
and Testing

Public Services Director James Baker and Kalamazoo County Environmental Health Director Vern Johnson delivered a presentation entitled *Drinking Water Quality and Testing, Monday, December 6, 2021*. A copy of the slides from this presentation was filed with the papers for this meeting.

In response to questions and comments from City Commissioners, Director Baker provided the following information:

- the City had two iron removal plants: one at the Central Well Station and one at Station 11. One of goals of optimized corrosion control was to help with iron removal, as the same chemical addressed both issues. Automated corrosion control would help keep iron levels in balance. The City reported all water quality complaints to the Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy (EGLE).
- the water system was managed geographically through pressure districts, which were based on elevation, not jurisdictions or neighborhoods. Regarding water treatment, there were only two quality set points for the entire system:

one set point for the area from Richland to Oshtemo, and a second set point for the City of Parchment.

- the four treatment technique violations were at stations primarily feeding into the Parchment district. The violations were related to the implementation of new set points in 2018, and at no time did the system fall below the 2003 set points.
- the question of whether the City was able to increase the number of lead service lines replaced each year was a policy question for the City Commission and Utility Policy Committee. The City was already using a contractor to do this work at a cost of \$7 million for the current project. In 2022 another project would begin with a \$5 million grant from EGLE. The Northside replacement project will have a total cost of \$20 million. Water system rates paid for all this infrastructure work. The City had found a sweet spot by using contractors for big projects and City crews to address needs as they arose.
- the Public Services Department was collaborating with Dr. Matt Reeves and his students at Western Michigan University for chemistry research. The City intended to continue this collaboration.
- the annual budget for the water system was \$20 million for operations and \$37 million for new capital projects in 2022.
- most water systems in Michigan used surface water rather than groundwater. The Kalamazoo and Lansing water systems were the largest groundwater systems in the state. Lansing had more customers than Kalamazoo, but Kalamazoo was able to put more water on the ground.
- the City was doing a lot from a lot of different angles to address lead, but when lead action levels go from 15 ppb to 13 ppb in a few years it could result in more action level exceedances.
- residents who were concerned about discolored water should run their cold water for five minutes, document the result with the date and time, and call the City to report this information. Water quality complaints seemed to increase right before the spring and fall flushing events.
- water affordability was a concern for the City. The Public Services Department received a water affordability planning grant, and that work was in process. Water improvements were paid for by the water system. City staff were always looking for state and federal programs, but the system was funded primarily through rates.
- customers should know there are many system improvements in process, whether they can see them or not.

Mayor Anderson explained that borrowing funds for capital projects increased operating expenses, which in turn could lead to water rate increases. Mayor Anderson highlighted the fact that rate income from the water system could not be used for other purposes. Mayor Anderson stated the City's groundwater was safe, but parts of the system infrastructure created issues with lead. Mayor Anderson noted the City responded to lead issues at the home level, and he urged

2021-00

Presentation re:
Drinking Water Quality
and Testing (cont'd)

2021-00

Presentation re:
Drinking Water Quality
and Testing (cont'd)

homeowners to contact the Public Services Department for free lead testing, service line replacement, and free filters.

Commissioner Praedel stated he was aware of the impact of rate increases on residents, but he also knew the City needed to address capital needs before they became emergencies.

Commissioner
Comments

Next an opportunity was given for comments from City Commissioners.

Commissioner Praedel thanked Director Baker and stated 847 service line replacements by November 30th was amazing. Commissioner Praedel stated he was encouraged to hear the words “proactive” and “planning” so much. Commissioner Praedel urged new Commissioners to sit with Director Baker and ask him questions about the City’s infrastructure.

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 6:31 p.m.

Scott A. Borling
City Clerk

Approved by the City Commission on: _____

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