

Roll Call

The Kalamazoo City Commission met as a Committee of the Whole on Monday, February 21, 2022 at 5:00 p.m. in the City Commission Chambers at City Hall.

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT:

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

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT:

Esteven Juarez*

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 Decker, 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.

In Person Comments

Iris Potter, City resident, expressed opposition to killing deer to cull the local population.

Thomas Allen, non-resident, presented himself as a candidate for judge of the 8th District Court.

Jackie Easton, City resident, spoke about the problem of deer in the City and in her neighborhood and suggested birth control and relocation as solutions to deal with the problem.

*Commissioner Juarez arrived at 5:07 p.m.

Call-In Comments

A person who identified themselves as a veterinarian expressed opposition to culling as a deer management strategy, as culling created a young population, which resulted in social pathologies. The caller stated the key to deer management was keeping the population healthy and mature.

Richard Stewart, City resident, spoke about the value of deer to the Southtown Neighborhood and stated deer were an asset not a problem.

Rebecca Silence, City resident, expressed opposition to any management plan that included killing deer.

Sheryl, a City resident, asked that the City make available its documents on deer management, and she suggested City staff prepare educational resources for residents.

Patricia Hollis, City resident, asked that the City follow the recommendations of the Environmental Concerns Committee (ECC) regarding the deer population.

Zach Lassiter, City resident, expressed opposition to the video surveillance of vehicles as a violation of privacy.

Peter Kushner, President of the Oakland/Winchell Neighborhood Association and Chair of the Neighborhood Association Ad Hoc Committee, delivered a presentation on the report *Addressing the Urban Deer Population in Kalamazoo: Comprehensive Deer Management Program – Report and Recommendations*. A copy of the report was filed with the papers for this meeting.

In response to questions and comments from Commissioners, Mr. Kushner and Community Planning and Economic Development Director Rebekah Kik provided the following information:

- there was probably no cost for the Michigan Department of Natural Resources to help the community navigate the deer management question.
- the committee could be asked about their willingness and ability to work with an informational website, but the issue was not just creating a website; the website had to be promoted, highlighted, monitored, and kept up to date. The important part was to create a common base of facts and science from which everyone could work.
- research and education were the most likely opportunities for collaboration with neighboring jurisdictions, but in terms of solutions the City would need to take care of its own business.
- the Oakland/Winchell neighborhood was heavily involved in the deer issue because their proximity to two nature preserves (Kleinstuck and Asylum Lake).
- lessons learned from other communities included: be transparent; be proactive and ahead of the curve; get information out early before decisions were made; and engage with the community.
- the success of the committee was starting the conversation.
- the City did not have a response to the report at this time. The City Administration was comfortable having staff digest the report and present recommendations and next steps.
- the City would be able to take the following steps without City Commission approval or an additional allocation of resources: creating an educational website; educating residents about the existing fence rules; assisting with the reporting of feeding violations; and removing deer carcasses.
- the City had been doing deer carcass removal, but in the past property owners were required to move the carcass to the right-of-way. That step was no longer necessary.

Public Comments
(cont'd)

2022-00

Presentation and
Discussion re: Deer
Management

2022-00

Presentation and
Discussion re: Deer
Management
(cont'd)

- staff would like to work with the committee to create a scope of work, action steps, and a budget for Phase II.

Mayor Anderson thanked Mr. Kushner and the other volunteers on the committee for their time and effort, and he remarked that it was rare for people to dedicate as much time as the committee did on their own.

Commissioner Hess remarked that the work of the committee was democracy in action.

Commissioner Decker offered that more people could be reached with information if residents were part of the educational efforts.

Commissioner Praedel noted the Oakland/Winchell Neighborhood was divided in its opinion on this issue, and he commended Mr. Kuser and the committee for sticking with facts. Commissioner Praedel remarked that it was important for the City to address issues that were important to residents. Commissioner Praedel spoke about the need to address conflicts over the science and research involved, and he remarked on the need to balance listening to the community with following good science and research.

Commissioner Praedel suggested door hangers as a communication tool.

Commissioner Hess requested an update in six months, although it did not need to involve a full Committee of the Whole meeting.

Commissioner
Comments

Next an opportunity was given for comments from City Commissioners.

Commissioner Hess acknowledged emails from residents on the deer issue.

Commissioner Decker expressed excitement about the implementation of Phase I and the opportunity to learn more about deer management.

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 6:12 p.m.

Scott A. Borling
City Clerk

Approved by the City Commission on: _____

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