

Roll Call

The Kalamazoo City Commission met as a Committee of the Whole on Monday, April 4, 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
Esteven Juarez
Chris Praedel

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT:

None

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

Public Comments

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

2022-00

Presentation from Cradle Kalamazoo

Komal Razvi, Director of Community Health for the YWCA of Kalamazoo, delivered a presentation entitled *Cradle Kalamazoo Overview*. A copy of the slides from this presentation was filed with the papers for this meeting.

In response to questions and comments from Commissioners, Ms. Razvi provided the following information:

- the City could take the following actions to make a difference with regard to infant mortality and social determinants of health: hire for diversity, equity, and inclusion; align spending to directly benefit community members; provide health coverage for City employees; and hold people accountable for using community resources to further racial equity.
- black people made up the majority of the “People of Color” category; data was available for other ethnic groups within the category.
- the Cradle Kalamazoo team was drilling down into the data to identify policies that addressed the needs of specific groups. The team was doing environmental mapping of resources in various cultural communities, and the Fetal Infant Mortality Review (FIMR) teams were collecting demographic information with each case.
- other determining factors for infant mortality included unsafe sleeping environments, congenital abnormalities and defects, inadequate birth spacing, and lack of involvement by the father.
- the Kalamazoo FIMR framework was unique. The number of cases that were reviewed (50% of all infant death cases), the depth of the reviews, and multi-sector representation on FIMR teams were all unique compared with other urban areas. Cradle Kalamazoo mapped individual situations onto the Cradle strategy to make connections.

- the sector/strategy where investment would have the highest impact was housing. Services were great, but if a mother and/or child went from a clinical setting to a home that was not safe, it was a problem.
- support for unfunded services (doula services, abortions, LGBT services) was also important.

Vice Mayor Cooney commended Ms. Razvi and Cradle Kalamazoo for accomplishing a collective response with clear results.

Commissioner Hoffman stated addressing poor quality housing through inspections and enforcement was in City's sphere of responsibility.

Dorla Bonner, Director of Diversity Equity and Inclusion (DEI), provided introductory remarks for a presentation on the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Assessment of the City organization. A copy of the slides from these remarks was filed with the papers for this meeting.

Ryan Rowe, Outreach and Engagement Manager for the Michigan Public Health Institute (MPHI), delivered a presentation entitled *The City of Kalamazoo Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Assessment*. A copy of the slides from this presentation was filed with the papers for this meeting.

Commissioner Decker remarked that the City was trying to change and stated she would be looking for ways to use funds to support training and education.

Commissioner Hoffman stated she was not shocked by the report, because People of Color (POC) lived the experiences in the report every day. Commissioner Hoffman noted this was the fourth DEI survey of City employees, and she stated people should not be forced to live and work in this environment. Commissioner Hoffman indicated City leadership had the ability and obligation to change the situation. Commissioner Hoffman noted the audience at this meeting was the biggest audience since the City Commission started meeting in-person again.

Commissioner Hess thanked Director Bonner for her work and stated the City needed an American Rescue Plan for the spirit.

Commissioner Juarez offered remarks on the importance of taking responsibility for wrongdoing, forgiveness, and need for acceptance and growth. Commissioner Juarez spoke about his desire to represent his people group and have a seat at the table, and he stated he would be the City's first Hispanic Mayor. Commissioner Juarez expressed appreciation for Director Bonner and the hard conversations she had experienced over the years. Commissioner Juarez expressed hope that Director Bonner's work would be a catalyst for change.

Commissioner Praedel commented that the City's approach to DEI up to this point had been transactional rather than transformational. Commissioner Praedel observed that City Hall was the epicenter of arts, culture, and governing for the Kalamazoo area, and he stated the City needed to lead in the area of DEI.

Vice Mayor Cooney indicated everyone on the City Commission wanted to work for justice and wanted Kalamazoo to be a national model for DEI. Vice Mayor Cooney noted there was work to be done at both the policy and personal levels,

2022-00

Presentation from Cradle Kalamazoo (cont'd)

2022-00

Presentation re:
Diversity, Equity, and
Inclusion

2022-00

Presentation re:
Diversity, Equity, and
Inclusion (cont'd)

and he stated people needed to listen to and respect each other. Commissioner Cooney stated people had been socialized into a system that said white people were superior.

In response to questions and comments from Commissioners, Director Bonner and Mr. Rowe provided the following information:

- the organizational assessment report was available on the City's website, and the presentation slides from this meeting would be added to the DEI webpage.
- there was a connection between internal and external DEI work. Leaders needed to work on the City organization, but they also needed to work on themselves as an act of service to the community. The work needed to be transformational, and there needed to be trust and safe spaces where people could work on themselves.
- City Commissioners needed to support the City Manager as a white male trying to move the City to be an anti-racist organization, in an organization where white males opposed this work.
- MPHI was contracted for another month to conduct a second round of listening sessions.
- next steps included answering questions like, "How should we prioritize the recommendations?" and "What does change look like?" It could take up to five years to make real change. The question right now was, "How do we set the foundations for institutional change, so that the change lasts beyond the current leadership. The change that was needed was not going to happen during the tenure of the current leadership because behavior and attitudes were too engrained.
- the listening sessions should be completed by the end of April. Beyond the listening sessions, time was needed to normalize the organization and create a plan. DEI work was not like the City's traditional work. It was not linear; it required a change of desires, mindsets, and ideas. The City organization was not ready to move forward with transformational organizational change.

Commissioner Hoffman stated white privilege wanted to know what to do next and when it would be done. Commissioner Hoffman indicated the work was going to be hard and raggedy.

Commissioner
Comments

Due to the time, Mayor Anderson asked that Commissioners reserve their miscellaneous comments until the end of the business meeting.

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 6:46 p.m.

Scott A. Borling
City Clerk

Approved by the City Commission on: _____

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