

Roll Call

The Kalamazoo City Commission met as a Committee of the Whole on Monday, September 19, 2022 at 5:00 p.m. in the City Commission Chambers at City Hall.

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT:

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

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT:

Qianna Decker
Esteven Juarez

Also present were Chief Operating Officer Laura Lam, City Attorney Clyde Robinson, and City Clerk Scott Borling.

Commissioners Excused

Commissioner Hoffman, seconded by Vice Mayor Cooney, moved to excuse the absences of Commissioners Decker and Juarez. With a voice vote, the motion passed.

Public Comments

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

In-Person Comments

Astoria Pulliam, City resident, questioned whether the City water system was safe. Ms. Pulliam indicated her service lines had been replaced, but she still wondered if there was lead in the water.

Kay thanked Commissioner Hess for responding to her email and spoke about the disconnect between City leadership, the Kalamazoo Department of Public Safety (KDPS), and the community. Kay stated the City Commission trusted KDPS, but the community did not.

Call-In Comments

Brandi Crawford-Johnson, non-resident, asked the City to stop Graphic Packaging International and the Wastewater Treatment Plant from poisoning people.

2022-00

Presentation: Economic Development

Community Planning and Economic Development (CPED) Director Antonio Mitchell, Business Development Assistant/Special Projects Coordinator Melody Daacon, and Molly Trueblood from the United Way of South Central Michigan delivered a presentation entitled *Economic Development, City of Kalamazoo*. A copy of the slides from this presentation was filed with the papers for the meeting.

In response to a request from Commissioner Hess, Joshua Grey, Co-Founder of Room 35, stated their goal for 2023 was to work with 900-1000 businesses, with three rounds of the Blueprint program, two rounds of the Core 60 program, and a pilot program focused on bookkeeping.

In response to Commissioners' questions and comments, Director Mitchell, Business Development Assistant Daacon, and Ms. Trueblood provided the following information:

- thanks to the Foundation for Excellence (FFE), the City was focusing on helping small businesses.
- in 2024, CPED would ask for funding for home-based startup businesses. The aim was to offer assistance to people who otherwise would not get assistance.
- The City wanted to impact the Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed (ALICE) population, in terms of both housing and business development.
- when the City started trying to assist local, minority owned businesses there was no data to work with – the City did not even have a list of businesses. The City has some data now, and the next step is to use the data to collaborate with local businesses, like Bronson and Borgess hospitals, to create partnerships with BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, People of Color) businesses.
- the lack of investment in an ecosystem for BIPOC businesses was one of the reasons flagship community investment programs like the Foundation for Excellence (FFE) and The Kalamazoo Promise are not having a bigger impact. Creating jobs with a living wage was a key, whether that happened through entrepreneurship or workforce development.
- the City needed to find a way to work with schools to train entrepreneurs. Some ideas included the participation of youth businesses in pop-up vending opportunities, like food truck rallies and Lunchtime Live.
- one barrier for small businesses was access to capital. The United Way loan program was one attempt to address this barrier, and the City's goal was to position businesses where they could go to banks and get funding on their own. Other ways the City was trying to reduce barriers was through information/document sharing with partners like the United Way; wrap around support for businesses and owners with food and housing instability; and programs to promote home ownership.
- CPED has limited funds to help businesses, but people were starting to figure out the City could actually help them, which was increasing the demand for assistance. CPED did not have the capacity to meet this demand and was looking to leverage funds with other organizations. The City needed to look at funding from other sources; other organizations were needed to partner with the City and close the gaps.
- barriers in the United Way loan program included financial literacy and administration, which was both a barrier and a capacity issue. Programs like Room 35 were critical for addressing these barriers.

Vice Mayor Cooney encouraged staff to look at efforts in other cities, like Ted Howard's co-op in Cleveland, which provided food to the Cleveland Clinic. Vice Mayor Cooney suggested the book, *Going Local*.

Commissioner Praedel stated small businesses and home-based businesses were a key to increasing community prosperity. Commissioner Praedel expressed appreciation for Director Mitchell's emphasis on removing barriers.

Commissioner Hoffman stated she would like to find more funding for CPED.

2022-00

Presentation: Economic Development (cont'd)

Commissioner
Comments

An opportunity was given for general comments from City Commissioners, but no comments were offered.

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 6:22 p.m.

Scott A. Borling
City Clerk

Approved by the City Commission on: _____

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