

Roll Call

The Kalamazoo City Commission met as a Committee of the Whole on Monday, May 15, 2023 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 City Manager Jim Ritsema, City Attorney Clyde Robinson, and City Clerk Scott Borling.

Public Comments

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

In Person Comments

Ben Stanley, City resident, spoke about being trespassed by the Kalamazoo Public Library and stated the Kalamazoo Department of Public Safety (KDPS) was not able to tell him the locations in the City where he was currently trespassed. Mr. Stanley reported he had submitted a Freedom of Information Act request for this information and spoke about KDPS officers removing him from the library.

Call-In Comments

None

2023-21-01

Presentation re: Updates
to Historic District
Standards and Guidelines

Historic Preservation Coordinator Luis Pena delivered a presentation entitled *Historic District Standards & Guidelines Update*. A copy of the slides from this presentation was filed with the papers for the meeting.

In response to questions and comments from City Commissioners, Historic Preservation Coordinator Pena provided the following information:

- historic district standards apply to all buildings within a historic district, both commercial and residential.
- historic home tours were conducted by Lynn Houghton; I can provide the dates of the next tours to the City Commission.
- there is a process for designating local historic districts, which includes the drafting of a report by a local historic district study committee. If a property is in a local historic district, it is a designated property. An individual property can be designated as a "single resource historic district" through the same process.
- the Historic Preservation Coordinator sends letters to new owners of homes in local historic districts, informing them of the historic district standards and the process for getting property improvements approved.

- there are 7 National Register historic districts in the City and 29 National Register Historic Sites.
- approvals for signs were usually an issue for commercial buildings, not residential structures.
- a meeting was held in February 2022 to discuss proposed changes to the historic district standards and guidelines; 1,300 postcard invitations were sent to property owners, and emails were sent to property management companies. In addition to this outreach effort, the Historic Preservation Coordinator will be meeting with affected neighborhood associations over the next two weeks to get their input on the changes.
- it was anticipated the proposed changes to the historic district standards and guidelines would be presented to the City Commission for approval by the end of the year.

Commissioner Decker expressed support for proposed changes to the review requirements for accessibility ramps.

Commissioner Praedel expressed support for proposed changes to the review requirements for window replacements.

Mayor Anderson thanked Historic District Coordinator Pena and expressed support for modernizing the historic district standards and guidelines. Mayor Anderson noted there were different perspectives on these issues.

Community Planning and Economic Development Director Antonio Mitchell delivered a presentation entitled *Social Equity Cannabis Chamber*. A copy of the slides from this presentation was filed with the papers for the meeting.

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

- on average the City should be able to spend \$250,000 annually to support social equity; the City is nearing the cap for cannabis business growth; total annual revenue should level off at between \$800,000 and \$900,000.
- there could be another growth spurt if cannabis is legalized at the federal level; large pharmaceutical and tobacco companies were poised to enter the industry if this legalization occurs.
- states have a head start on cannabis regulation; the federal government would look to the states for best practices.
- the City wanted cannabis businesses to invest in the community. The current focus of the cannabis industry was on business, not equity; an organization like the Cannabis Chamber was needed to focus the attention of businesses on equity and provide services like compiling a list of community investment opportunities.
- the shortened separation distances offered to social equity businesses would allow those businesses to have opportunities and locations that were not available to non-social equity businesses.

2023-21-01

Presentation re: Updates to Historic District Standards and Guidelines (cont'd)

2023-21-02

Presentation re: a Social Equity Cannabis Chamber

2023-21-02

Presentation re: a Social
Equity Cannabis
Chamber (cont'd)

- there were not many cannabis businesses in Shared Prosperity Kalamazoo (SPK) neighborhoods; this created additional opportunities for social equity businesses.
- the Cannabis Chamber RFP would require the managing entity to match the City's annual social equity investment; any revenue above and beyond this amount could be used for staffing and administration. It is hoped the managing entity could raise the needed revenue from the cannabis industry.
- cannabis revenue could also be used to assist the City Clerk's Office with its staffing needs, especially if the industry grew.
- some places did not want the cannabis industry due to the culture of the community or the perceived negative impacts of the industry, such as undesirable traffic patterns; some communities were taking a wait-and-see approach and letting other communities take the lead on dealing with cannabis.
- staff would need to compile data on national vs. local ownership of the City's cannabis businesses.
- there were small organizations who were interested in the cannabis industry and social equity; it was these types of organizations that might respond to the Cannabis Chamber RFP.
- the market would determine when Kalamazoo had "enough" cannabis businesses; the number of available spaces for new businesses was declining.
- the City of Kalamazoo had not experienced safety issues with its cannabis businesses.
- the Cannabis Chamber would be a lot of work and would be difficult for City staff to manage; the desire was to have a separate organization that could focus on social equity day-in and day-out.
- because the Cannabis Chamber concept was a new idea, it was better to not invest a lot of tax dollars in the form of staffing and departmental infrastructure, in case the industry failed.
- to the best of our knowledge, the City is the only entity considering something like the Cannabis Chamber; we do not know what Kalamazoo Township and the City of Portage are doing with cannabis and social equity.
- the City of Kalamazoo had placed an emphasis on social equity early on; the City was the only municipality to require the state's Silver Level social equity certification, and the City gave incentives for businesses to achieve Gold Level certification.
- it was the City's job to measure the performance of cannabis businesses regarding social equity; the current process compared actual performance to what the business had committed to. Businesses were not focused on social equity, which is where the Cannabis Chamber would help. The Chamber would take away the excuses for low performance. The City wanted all its businesses to achieve the Gold Level of state certification.

- if cannabis businesses did not comply with the City's social equity requirements, the City could deny their local permits.
- there were limits to what the City could require of businesses; for example, the City could encourage business to hire locally but could not force them to do so.
- the City wanted to encourage and incentivize social equity performance; to this end, the Cannabis Chamber could help by being a connector between businesses and the community.
- staff would bring the RFP to the City Commission for review and comment prior to issuance.

Commissioner Cooney suggested that some of the cannabis revenue be invested in the community and not just with individual businesses.

Commissioner Praedel expressed concern that locations and opportunities for social equity businesses would be gone by the time the Cannabis Chamber was operational.

Commissioner Juarez stated he was glad the City was prioritizing social equity, and he suggested the City could learn from other states, like California.

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

The meeting adjourned at 6:46 p.m.

Scott A. Borling
City Clerk

Approved by the City Commission on: _____

2023-21-02

Presentation re: a Social
Equity Cannabis
Chamber (cont'd)

Commissioner
Comments

Adjournment