

Roll Call

The Kalamazoo City Commission met as a Committee of the Whole on Monday, February 20, 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
Esteven Juarez
Chris Praedel

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT:

Stephanie Hoffman

Also present were City Manager Jim Ritsema, City Attorney Clyde Robinson, and City Clerk Scott Borling.

Commissioner Excused

Commissioner Decker, seconded by Commissioner Praedel, moved to excuse the absence of Commissioner Hoffman. With a voice vote the motion passed.

Public Comments

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

2023-08-01

Presentation by
Housing Development
Partners

Matt Milcarek, Beth McCann, and Apryl Munyanshongore from Kalamazoo Neighborhood Housing Services (KNHS); Jacob Beach from Housing Resources, Inc. (HRI); Kaylen Humes from Community Homeworks; and Jodi VanlerBerghe from Milestone Senior Services delivered a presentation entitled *Housing Development Partners*. 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, the KNHS presenters provided the following information:

- the presenters distributed a document entitled *Who Were KNHS Home Ownership's Clients in 2022?*
- homeownership coaching was offered to the public through out the year; construction and rehabilitation services were offered based on available funding.
- KNHS clients were life-long clients; their homeownership success rate was higher than the open market. Some clients were 2nd or 3rd generation clients.
- KNHS has seven financial literacy coaches; this service is publicized through community partnerships, neighborhood associations, and direct marketing, but the most effective outreach is word-of-mouth. There were approximately 400 clients serviced by the financial literacy coaches.
- around 25 new people per month were taking the new homeowner's class. There was no waiting list.
- the cost to remediate lead in a home ranged from \$10,000 - \$100,000, with the average cost being \$34,000 - \$38,000.
- the Down Payment Assistance Program closed the financing gap. The need for this program was increasing.

- areas where there were resource gaps included: home rehabilitation, classes and educational opportunities, and down payment assistance.
- several KNHS programs targeted the poorest parts of the community: the Pathways Home program, the savings matching program, and lease/purchase program.
- KNHS partners with several banks to provide classes and coaching. These partners educate and do not market their products in class.
- the number of home buyers in 2023 will stay level or possibly increase; the unknown factors would be supply costs and labor availability.

Commissioner Juarez noted there was a gap between homelessness and being ready for the programs at KNHS.

In response to questions and comments from City Commissioners, Mr. Beach from HRI provided the following information:

- HRI did not have the resources it needed. There was a housing crisis in Kalamazoo, resulting in high rents. If rents are higher than the amounts allowed by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), HRI cannot assist.
- the Walk to End Homelessness would take place on March 18th.
- the extra funds HRI received because of the COVID-19 pandemic were running out, but people still had needs.
- HRI has a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the City for a housing pods project. HRI had to obtain a property and develop a site plan. At this time the intent was to have one site for the pods. HRI will be in conversation with the neighborhood associations to hear their concerns. The MOU gave HRI six months to find a property.

Commissioner Juarez spoke about the lack of cohesiveness between housing service providers: they are siloed. Commissioner Juarez questioned what could be done to connect the different organizations doing the work so they could truly help people. Commissioner Juarez remarked on the need for a new approach that would move people from dependence to independence.

Vice Mayor Cooney commented on the need for a collective response when funding became available. Vice Mayor Cooney stated the community needed to do more to advocate for funding at the federal level.

Housing Development Supervisor Sharilyn Parsons stated the various housing service providers worked closely together.

Commissioner Juarez stated there were partners should be at the table but were not: the education sector, healthcare sector, churches, and employers.

Ms. Humes from Community Homeworks distributed a document entitled *2022 Organization Highlights*. In response to questions and comments from City

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Commissioners, Ms. Humes stated the availability of funds was improving as Community Homeworks diversified its funding sources.

Commissioner Juarez spoke about landlords who knew how to “play the game” to avoid code compliance. Commissioner Juarez stated this issue was unacceptable, and the City Attorney needed to get involved.

Community Planning and Economic Development Director Antonio Mitchell acknowledged there were code enforcement issues and loopholes in the code that could be exploited. Director Mitchell indicated his staff worked with the City Attorney’s Office to close the loopholes, but the City needed to give property owners due process and an opportunity to correct their violations.

Commissioner Decker expressed support for Community Homework’s efforts to preserve housing stock, and she noted these preservation efforts would work well with a home share program.

In response to questions and comments from City Commissioners, Ms. Vanlerberghe from Milestone Senior Services provided the following information:

- Senior Services staff had observed the issue of landlords avoiding code compliance.
- it was difficult for seniors to navigate the network of service providers because of health issues.
- Senior Services had just received funding to provide services to veterans; the organization could potentially serve as a point of entry for a home share program, as long as the service pertained to senior citizens.
- Senior Services performed safety assessments and repairs that enabled seniors to stay in their homes; they installed a lot of ramps.
- people could be stubborn and not want help. Sometimes the repair crews had to make suggestions in a way that made the resident think it was their idea.
- Senior Services had a new grant writer who was very good.

Vice Mayor Cooney stated there needed to be a better navigation system for social services.

Director Mitchell stated 211/Gryphon Place was supposed to be the single point of entry for services in the Kalamazoo area. Director Mitchell stated there were more housing partners in the community than the ones who presented, and the City was working on housing initiatives. Director Mitchell thanked the presenters.

Commissioner
Comments

Finally, an opportunity was given for general comments from City Commissioners.

Vice Mayor Cooney thanked the presenters and noted Mayor Anderson had a lifetime of experience with affordable housing and had made many contributions.

Commissioner Juarez shared John 15:11, “These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full.” Commissioner Juarez thanked the housing partners for their work.

The meeting adjourned at 6:41 p.m.

Adjournment

Scott A. Borling
City Clerk

Approved by the City Commission on: _____

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