

Roll Call

A regular meeting of the Kalamazoo City Commission was held on Monday, November 7, 2022 at 7:00 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, City Attorney Clyde Robinson, and City Clerk Scott Borling.

Vote to Excuse
Commissioner

Vice Mayor Cooney moved to excuse the absence of Commissioner Juarez. The motion failed for the lack of a second.

Invocation

The invocation, given by Michelle Scheidt of The Fetzer Institute, was followed by the Pledge of Allegiance.

Proclamation
2022-00

Mayor Anderson proclaimed November 20, 2022 *Transgender Day of Remembrance* in the City of Kalamazoo. Michael Cleggs, Director of Programs, and Regan Hanley, Board Member, for OutFront Kalamazoo, received the proclamation.

Adoption of the Agenda

By unanimous consent the City Commission adopted its meeting agenda as presented.

2022-00
Presentation re: A Gun
Violence Prevention
Plan

Jennifer Heymoss, Vice President of Initiatives and Public Policy for the Kalamazoo Community Foundation, delivered a presentation entitled, *Update: Kalamazoo County Collective Input for a Gun Violence Prevention Plan*. A copy of the slides from this presentation was filed with the papers for this meeting.

Public Comments

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

In-Person Comments

Ray Sweaney, City resident, expressed support for a Payment in Lieu of Taxes (PILOT) for The Lodge House project and the Urban Bird Treaty resolution. Mr. Sweaney thanked Commissioners for attending the ISAAC Public Meeting. Mr. Sweaney asked the City Commission to hold the City Manager accountable for enforcing the Housing Equity Ordinance, and he requested that the Commission hire a City Attorney who would support this ordinance.

Olivia Scheinker, non-resident, expressed support for the Urban Bird Treaty resolution.

Nehemiah Scudder, City resident, expressed concern about the City's focus on gun violence rather than violence in general.

Reniya Fance, representing Our Day, a youth climate coalition, expressed support for the Urban Bird Treaty resolution. Ms. Fance spoke about the lack of open green space in the Edison Neighborhood.

Mia Breznau, a youth climate activist, expressed support for the Urban Bird Treaty resolution.

Elliot Spoelstra, member of the Youth Climate Coalition, expressed support for the Urban Bird Treaty resolution.

Pam Jackson, representing the Kalamazoo Audubon Society Board of Trustees, expressed support for the Urban Bird Treaty resolution.

Toni Kennedy, a non-resident, distributed information regarding the 2022 Kalamazoo County Veterans Day Ceremony and invited Commissioners to attend the event. A copy of the informational flyer provided by Ms. Kennedy was filed with the papers for the meeting.

Bill Reeves, City resident, spoke about the lack of hearing assistance for people attending meetings in the City Commission Chambers.

Ashante Collins, City resident, urged people to vote for candidates who supported the community vision regarding transparency, equity, and accountability. Ms. Collins thanked City Commissioners for attending the ISAAC public meeting. Ms. Collins asked Commissioners to attend upcoming ISAAC trainings and to commit to hiring a public health officer who would investigate environmental injustice in the Northside and Eastside Neighborhoods.

Cathy Phason, non-resident, thanked Commissioners for attending the ISAAC public meeting and made the following requests on behalf of ISAAC: that the City Commission would hold the City Manager accountable for enforcing the Housing Equity Ordinance; that the Commission would hire a City Attorney who would support the Housing Equity Ordinance; and that the Commission would support temporary housing that gives people dignity and equity. Ms. Phason asked that City Commissioners answer these questions during their comment time. Ms. Phason inquired about changing the meeting procedures so that Commissioners could respond to people during public comments, like the Portage City Council.

Charlae Davis, City resident and Executive Director of ISAAC, urged Commissioners to make public commitments to ISAAC's requests. Ms. Davis read comments from Commissioner Hoffman and Vice Mayor Cooney regarding environmental justice. Ms. Davis asked for confirmation that the investigation of Public Safety Chief Vernon Coakley was being handled in a manner consistent with similar situations in the past and in a manner centered on anti-racism and equity. Ms. Davis asked whether the City Manager could report on the timeframe for concluding the investigation.

Becket Jones, a candidate for 8th District Court judge, thanked City Commissioners for their work and urged people to vote.

Wendy Fields, President of the Kalamazoo Metropolitan Branch of the NAACP, expressed support for the comments made by Charlae Davis and

Public Comments
(cont'd)

2022-00

Public Comments
(cont'd)

asked for an update on the investigation of Public Safety Chief Vernon Coakley. Ms. Fields noted she had requested records about the investigation but not received them, and she stated the City Manager needed to be held accountable.

Call-In Comments

Tina, a City resident, asked when the City would recognize the Southtown Neighborhood and fix the storm drains and sewers in Southtown.

An anonymous called spoke about her hearing before the Citizen Public Safety Review and Appeals Board on November 1st and stated racism was rampant at the Kalamazoo Department of Public Safety (KDPS). The speaker stated the community was not safe and questioned when the City's issues were going to be solved at a fundamental level.

Joe Bowers, City resident, expressed support for the Urban Bird Treaty and remarked that the City had destroyed a bird garden planted by Tom and Nancy Small. Mr. Bowers commented on the situation with Graphic Packaging.

Consent Agenda

Consent Agenda items were presented as follows with a recommendation to approve the items and authorize the City Manager to sign all related documents on behalf of the city:

2022-00

- approval of a supplemental change order to the contract with SWT Excavating, Inc. for the Hotop water main replacement project in the amount of \$131,199.22.

2022-00

- approval of a 3-year contract with Mission North for downtown parking and mobility services in the amount of \$184,434.

2022-00

- approval of a contract supplemental with Kalamazoo Oil, Inc. for gasoline and diesel fuel in the amount of \$150,563.02.

2022-00

Resolution 22-58

- adoption of a **RESOLUTION** approving a Payment in Lieu of Taxes for 1211 S. Westnedge Avenue, LodgeHouse LLC, a Michigan limited liability company that was formed with the sole purpose of owning the property at 1211 S. Westnedge Avenue, Kalamazoo, MI 49008 and whose sole member is the LIFT Foundation. For 1211 S. Westnedge Avenue (Parcel No. 06-22-310-007), pursuant to Section 35-4 of the Kalamazoo City Code.

2022-00

- approval of a request from the Downtown Development Authority to approve a Parking Agreement with MA KZOO THEATER LLC for discounted parking rates at the Kalamazoo Mall Ramp and the Epic Center Ramp.

2022-00

- approval of an agreement with The National Fish and Wildlife Foundation for a grant in the amount of \$34,700 for the Reed Court floodplain and stormwater improvement planning project.

2022-00

- approval of amendments to the Foundation for Excellence Bylaws and Articles of Incorporation.

Commissioner Hess, seconded by Commissioner Decker, moved to approve the consent agenda requests and authorize the City Manager to sign all related documents on behalf of the City.

Consent Agenda
(cont'd)

With a roll call vote this motion passed unanimously.

AYES: Commissioners Decker, Hess, Hoffman, Praedel, Vice Mayor Cooney, Mayor Anderson*

NAYS: None

*At the time of the vote, Mayor Anderson abstained from voting on Item G-4, a resolution approving a Payment in Lieu of Taxes for 1211 S. Westnedge Avenue, due to a conflict of interest as he was a volunteer member of the LIFT Foundation Board.

Regular Agenda items were considered next.

Regular Agenda

An opportunity was given for public comments on the appointment of Steve Brown to the position of Executive Director of the Foundation for Excellence (FFE), but no comments were offered.

2022-00

Appointment of Steve Brown as the FFE Executive Director

Commissioner Hoffman, seconded by Commissioner Praedel, moved to approve the creation of an allocation and the Foundation for Excellence Board of Directors' appointment of Steve Brown to the position of Executive Director of the Foundation for Excellence.

Prior to a vote on the motion, Commissioner Praedel remarked that Mr. Brown had been with the FFE from its inception.

With a roll call vote the motion passed.

AYES: Commissioners Decker, Hess, Hoffman, Praedel, Vice Mayor Cooney, Mayor Anderson

NAYS: None

City Manager Ritsema reported he was not able to discuss in detail the investigation of Chief Coakley, as it was a personnel matter. City Manager Ritsema noted this was a complex investigation and he expressed frustration with the amount of time that had elapsed. City Manager Ritsema acknowledged that time was of the essence, and he committed to having a report to the City Commission in the near future.

City Manager's Report

Items of new business were considered next.

New Business

Sustainable Development Coordinator Jamie McCarthy presented a staff recommendation regarding a countywide initiative to get the Federal Fish and Wildlife Service to designate Kalamazoo County as an Urban Bird Treaty Area. Working with multiple partners to protect bird habitats. Ms. McCarthy stated this designation had points of intersection with the Natural Features Protection Ordinance, the Tree Ordinance, and the Sustainability Plan. Ms. McCarthy indicated the Urban Bird Treaty Area designation would involve City resources in the following ways: staff would track bird-positive outcomes, staff would offer

2022-00

Resolution 22-59
Supporting the
Designation of Kalamazoo
County as an Urban Bird
Treaty Area

2022-00

Resolution 22-59
Supporting the
Designation of Kalamazoo
County as an Urban Bird
Treaty Area (cont'd)

educational resources on how people could be bird-positive; and the City would celebrate bird holidays. Ms. McCarthy indicated the designation would benefit the Kalamazoo by allowing the City to get preferential consideration for some federal grants.

In response to questions from City Commissioners, Sustainable Development Coordinator McCarthy and Gail Walters provided the following information:

- a lot of the activities that protect bird habitats also protect people (reductions in pesticides, for example).
- the City did not have the capacity to commit to being core participants. Although the Urban Bird Treaty Area designation aligns with Sustainability Plan, the City's would play a collaborative, supporting role for many of the bird-related activities specified under the treaty.
- intergovernmental collaboration was one of the goals of the Urban Bird Treaty program. There were several partners already collaborating on bird issues in the Kalamazoo area.
- there were 30-35 other Urban Bird Treaty Areas in the United States.
- birds were an environmental justice multiplier; birds and people both needed clean air, clean water, and a healthy environment.

Commissioner Hess thanked Gail Walter for writing the Urban Bird Treaty application.

An opportunity was given for public comments on a resolution supporting the designation of the greater Kalamazoo County area as an "Urban Bird Treaty Area," but no comments were offered.

Commissioner Hess, seconded by Commissioner Hoffman, moved to adopt a **RESOLUTION** supporting the designation of the greater Kalamazoo County area as an "Urban Bird Treaty Area."

With a roll call vote the motion passed.

AYES: Commissioners Decker, Hess, Hoffman, Praedel, Vice Mayor Cooney, Mayor Anderson

NAYS: None

Commissioner
Comments

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

Commissioner Hoffman stated she had met with group of residents who expressed concern about the number of liquor licenses in the Northside Neighborhood. Commissioner Hoffman stated the City needed to do something and suggested that revoking licenses could be linked to addressing gun violence.

Commissioner Praedel thanked City Clerk Borling and his staff for their work on the election. Commissioner Praedel recognized Assistant Public Services Director Anthony Ladd for being selected as one of 50 delegates attending the Local

Government 2030 convening in Omaha, Nebraska to think about how to address challenges in public administration. Commissioner Praedel explained he did not respond to the questions posed to public officials at the ISAAC Public Meeting because a quorum of City Commissioners was present, and for them to have publicly taken positions on policy items in that setting would have violated the Open Meetings Act. Commissioner Praedel offered the following answers to the questions posed by ISAAC: Will you hold the City Manager accountable for enforcing the Fair Housing Ordinance? Yes; Will you hire a City Attorney who supports the Fair Housing Ordinance? Yes; Will you strengthen the Fair Housing Ordinance? That's a matter of opinion – I will work to strengthen housing; Will you hire a health inspector who can investigate and solve environmental justice issues? Multiple specialists are needed to address environmental health issues; Will you commit to participating in upcoming trainings? Yes.

Commissioner Decker thanked Ms. Heymoss for her presentation and the ISAAC representatives for their comments. Commissioner Decker state she had signed up for the EERACE training, she was committed to reducing racial disparities, and she supported changes to the Civil Rights Board ordinance. Commissioner Decker reported a representative from the Michigan Municipal League had commended Kalamazoo at a recent conference for the City's work on affordable housing. Commissioner Decker urged people to vote and asked the City Manager to keep the Commission informed about the Chief Coakley investigation.

Commissioner Hess expressed gratitude for City workers doing leaf pick-up, the City Clerk's Office, and Wendy Fields. Commissioner Hess explained that Southtown was a district, not a neighborhood, and staff had given Ms. McClinton and others information on how to get City recognition for a neighborhood. Commissioner Hess stated a solution to flooding in this area would be involved and expensive. Commissioner Hess thanked ISAAC and noted the City Attorney had investigated or sent to the state 44 cases of housing discrimination. Commissioner Hess indicated she would ask City Attorney candidates about the housing ordinance and agreed with Commissioner Praedel about a health officer.

Vice Mayor Cooney remarked on the integrity and competence of the City Clerk. Vice Mayor Cooney highlighted recent events sponsored by ISAAC, the Northside Ministerial Alliance, and the NAACP. Vice Mayor Cooney stated there was no greater work than the work of justice, and City Commissioners were willing partners in this work.

Mayor Anderson commended City Clerk Borling for his work on the election. Mayor Anderson offered remarks about a trunk-or-treat event on Krom Avenue organized by Charles Parker and the oath of office ceremony for Judge Parker-LaGrone. Mayor Anderson observed that most people agreed the community would not be successful if people did not work together to solve its problems.

The meeting adjourned at 9:04 p.m.

Scott A. Borling
City Clerk

Approved by the City Commission on: _____

Commissioner
Comments (cont'd)