

Roll Call

The Kalamazoo City Commission met as a Committee of the Whole on Monday, October 17, 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
Chris Praedel

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT:

Esteven Juarez

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

Commissioner Excused

Vice Mayor Cooney, seconded by Commissioner Hess, moved to excuse the absence of Commissioner 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

Mitch Mulholland, City resident, expressed concern about speeding traffic at the Cork Street/Portage Road/Lovers Lane intersection. Mr. Mulholland requested a pedestrian crossing signal and speed limit signs at the intersection.

Call-In Comments

Rachel Frasier expressed concern about speeding traffic at the Lovers Lane/Foley Street intersection, which made it difficult for kids to get to school safely. Ms. Frasier noted the speed limit signs at this intersection were missing.

2022-41-01

Presentation:
Infrastructure and
Neighborhoods

Assistant Public Services Director Anthony Ladd and Senior Civil Engineer George Waring delivered a presentation entitled *FFE Infrastructure*. A copy of the slides from this presentation was filed with the papers for the meeting.

In response to Commissioners' questions and comments, Assistant Director Ladd and Senior Engineer Waring provided the following information:

- a "road diet" is a narrowing of lanes, usually from four lanes to three. A road diet does not hurt traffic flow but reduces the number of head-on crashes and allows for the installation of bike lanes.
- each street project is different when it comes to public outreach, but typically there is a meeting with residents and follow-up to answer their questions. Each project has its own webpage with drawings, detour instructions, and staff contact information. There is also education for the general public through media releases and social media posts.
- \$500,000 will pay for 0.5 – 1.0 miles of new sidewalk; the same amount will pay for 2 – 4 miles of sidewalk repairs.

- the 2023 sidewalk program will focus on Fraternity Village Drive, and the Milwood and Westnedge Hill Neighborhoods.
- for traffic calming, the City gives priority to spaces that are within one-quarter mile of high traffic areas and areas with vulnerable populations, like schools. The City has addressed these spaces, but schools can reach out to the City and report problem areas. Comments submitted through social media and the 311 Customer Service Center are also included in the prioritization process.
- the 311 Customer Service Center is the best way for people to report sidewalks that need to be repaired.
- engineers look at proposed street changes through computer modelling to ensure the changes will work. In addition, staff keep an open mind to the needs of stakeholders.
- the key to educating people about traffic calming is to talk about it constantly. Public Services did a lot of the installation work in 2022; in 2023 there needs to be a focus on communication.
- there has not been a traffic accident at South Street and Westnedge Avenue since the completion of the traffic signal upgrade project.

Commissioner Hess spoke about the need for people to change their driving habits. Commissioner Hess urged neighborhoods to work on their neighborhood plans, as it would take time to implement the projects coming out of these plans.

Commissioner Praedel offered comments on the challenges of prioritizing neighborhood projects, given that the needs are greater than the available resources. Commissioner Praedel thanked staff for clear signage and for adapting to resident feedback.

Commissioner Decker noted the City would maintain the new bike and parking lanes that had been installed.

Mayor Anderson remarked that the City had no budget for sidewalk repairs and replacement prior to the creation of the Foundation for Excellence.

Assistant Director Ladd and City Planner Christina Anderson delivered a presentation entitled *Convert Kalamazoo Avenue: A Streets for All Project Update!* A copy of the slides from this presentation was filed with the papers for the meeting.

Commissioner Hess noted the intersection of West Main Street and Douglas Avenue was important to Kalamazoo College.

Foundation for Excellence (FFE) Manager Steve Brown delivered a presentation on the FY2023 Proposed Budget for the FFE. Mr. Brown used the FFE website to highlight the history, purpose and work of the Foundation. Mr. Brown reviewed the budget transmittal letter and reported \$400 million would be donated to the FFE over a ten-year period to fund the endowment.

2022-41-01

Presentation:
Infrastructure and
Neighborhoods (cont'd)

2022-41-02

Presentation: Two-Way
Street Conversion

2022-41-03

Presentation on the
FY2023 Proposed
FFE Budget

2022-41-03

Presentation on the
FY2023 Proposed
FFE Budget (cont'd)

In response to Commissioner comments and questions, Mr. Brown and City Manager Ritsema provided the following information:

- the total proposed disbursement to the City was \$23.8 million; \$14 million was designated to support the tax reduction to City taxpayers; \$4.5 million was designated for budget stabilization.
- the FFE had given \$2,744,000 from 2017-2022 to the Shared Prosperity Kalamazoo (SPK) High Impact Fund; no SPK funds were requested for 2023, as SPK was in a planning phase.
- the FFE was the only source of funding for the Summer Youth Employment Program (\$825,000). Staff will check on whether young people were turned away this past summer due to lack of funding.
- the proposed 2023 budget included a 40% decrease in funding for aspirational projects, from \$8.6 million to \$5.4 million. Some of the aspirational projects that had been funded historically by the FFE were proposed to be funded with ARPA dollars in 2023 in order to preserve the FFE endowment.

Commissioner Praedel expressed reservations about using ARPA funds to replace FFE funds for existing programs. Commissioner Praedel stated the point of ARPA was action: to inject funds into the community as quickly as possible. Commissioner Praedel stated the City would lose its FFE advantage if it reduced that funding by 40%. Commissioner Praedel stated the City should be doubling down on community investment, not saving for the future. Commissioner Praedel acknowledged the FFE endowment had lost money and that taking the full amount for aspirational projects would potentially mean less available funding in the future. Commissioner Praedel stated there was no more pressing time than the present to address needs in the community.

In response to Commissioner Praedel, Mr. Brown stated part of accepting ARPA funds was an acknowledgement that existential damage had been done to the economy, including damage to investments and investment income. Mr. Brown explained that maintaining the current level of FFE funding for aspirational projects would pose a threat to the endowment, as it would reduce the endowment's capacity to generate interest income. Mr. Brown noted the FFE Board was responsible for choosing the amount of the disbursement for aspirational projects, and they did that based on the sustainable level of the endowment. Mr. Brown indicated the endowment was in a building phase where it would receive major, structured gifts through 2030; this was an additional challenge to thinking about the appropriate funding levels. Mr. Brown pointed out the City was doing much more for the community than it could have done without the FFE, and he stated the question at hand was about scaling the level of community investment today so that the City could do more for the community permanently. Mr. Brown expressed confidence that the 2023 funding proposal struck that balance, and he clarified that this balance was something that would need to be considered during the remaining years of ARPA funding. Mr. Brown cautioned that digging into the FFE endowment when it was losing money was gambling on an uncertain market upturn; the City could lose the FFE.

Commissioner Praedel stated investing in the community now could create a snowball-type impact for the future. Commissioner Praedel urged the City to stop sitting on its ARPA funding and to get those dollars into the community.

Vice Mayor Cooney expressed agreement with Commissioner Praedel and stated he was disappointed there were no FFE funds for SPK. Vice Mayor Cooney stated investments in people today would give returns in the long term.

Commissioner Decker expressed agreement with Commissioner Praedel and Vice Mayor Cooney. Commissioner Decker stated ARPA was a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity, and these funds needed to get into the community to help people who were struggling. Commissioner Decker stated there were areas, like housing, that should be getting more funding from the FFE.

Commissioner Hoffman spoke about the role of non-profit organizations in doing the work of community investment. Commissioner Hoffman observed these organizations had limited capacity, and she suggested the City find out what the community wanted and whether the non-profit organizations had the capacity.

Mayor Anderson reminded Commissioners that this was a presentation on the FFE budget, not the ARPA allocations. Mayor Anderson stated the City Manager and his staff were present for this conversation and would be able to consider Commissioners' remarks when developing ARPA funding recommendations.

In response to a question from Mayor Anderson, City Attorney Robinson stated the FFE was a separate entity from the City, and the FFE Board was the fiduciary for the endowment. City Attorney Robinson noted funding for the aspirational projects was discretionary, and the goal of the FFE was to preserve funds for the long-term. City Attorney Robinson referenced a presentation by Mr. Brown in July and stated the decision was made to reduce aspirational project funding for 2023 and use ARPA funds for some projects, in order to protect the endowment. City Attorney Robinson cautioned Commissioners that once the FFE funds were given to the City, they became public monies and needed to be used for public purposes (i.e., a public benefit).

City Manager Ritsema stated there would be more discussions on the budget in the coming months. City Manager Ritsema observed that this discussion captured the crux of the decisions that would need to be made during the budget process. City Manager Ritsema reported staff were using a scoring rubric based on the City Commission priorities and Imagine Kalamazoo to determine the activities that could, or could not, be funded. City Manager Ritsema indicated staff and the Commission would need to work together closely on this process.

Commissioner Praedel stated Commissioners had been sharing their priorities and thoughts on the budget, and he encouraged the Commission and staff to have discussions about the budget early, while changes could be made.

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

The meeting adjourned at 6:48 p.m.

Scott A. Borling
City Clerk

Approved by the City Commission on: _____

2022-41-03

Presentation on the
FY2023 Proposed
FFE Budget (cont'd)

Commissioner
Comments

Adjournment