

Roll Call

The Kalamazoo City Commission met as a Committee of the Whole on Monday, June 20, 2023 at 4:01 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

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

Public Comments

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

*Commissioner Juarez arrived at 5:02 p.m.

2023-25-01

Presentation re: the FY 2024 Budget

Management Services Director and Chief Financial Officer Steve Vicenzi delivered a presentation entitled *FY2024 Budget Process Update*. A copy of the slides from this presentation was filed with the papers for this meeting.

In response to questions and comments from City Commissioners. CFO Vicenzi provided the following information:

- there are \$17.2 million of unallocated ARPA funds. The goal is to allocate all remaining ARPA funds in the FY 2024 budget.
- there are no planned mid-year budget amendments.
- there is \$130,000 in the City Commission Initiatives line item for 2023. It would not be an issue if Commissioners wanted to use some of these funds to help with transportation for the City's youth programs.
- all of the City Commission's priorities are well-represented in the special requests submitted by staff.
- when considering how to use ARPA funding, simply dividing the dollars evenly across the City's priorities was not the best approach; the appropriate funding source needs to be considered for each activity. Every housing priority fit the ARPA criteria.
- some of the future economic uncertainties included interest rates and the property values/tax revenue.

Vice Mayor Cooney remarked on the need for a plan to address poverty, and he stated the City did not have a plan.

Commissioner Hoffman noted some communities were offering reparations, and she asked if the City could do that.

Commission Juarez questioned what the City could do right now, before approval of the 2024 budget, to impact the community and reduce poverty. Commissioner Juarez stated resources were helpful in the short term, but poverty was a mindset that needed to be changed.

In response to Commissioner Juarez, Commissioner Hoffman stated poverty was systemic and a state of being, not just a mindset. Commissioner Hoffman stated relationships were needed, in addition to programming.

Commissioner Juarez agreed that there were systemic barriers that fostered poverty, but he noted a person's mindset drove their behavior, which drove results.

Commissioner Hoffman stated those in power needed to be more generous, and she stated community leaders needed to get people to "another level"; the question was how to get people to that level. Commissioner Hoffman remarked that there would always be people in the community who needed more than others.

Commissioner Decker remarked that conversations like this were the types of conversations the community wanted to hear, and they should be happening at Committee of the Whole (CoW) meetings. Commissioner Decker observed there were interconnections between the City Commission's priorities. Commissioner Decker announced she would be making a motion at the business meeting regarding CoW meetings.

Vice Mayor Cooney stated people were poor and hurting because of historical dynamics. Vice Mayor Cooney stated hope changed peoples' mindsets, but it was resources that addressed poverty, as demonstrated by the Great Society initiatives.

Commissioner Juarez stated there were three types of poverty – physical, spiritual, and emotional – and he stated the City needed to address all three.

Commissioner Hess remarked on educational opportunities in Kalamazoo and stated education gave hope.

Commissioner Decker expressed agreement with Commissioner Juarez about needing to do the work now, and she questioned what the City Commission could do right now to address poverty.

Communications Manager Michael Smith delivered a presentation entitled *2023-2025 Communications Plan*. A copy of the slides from this presentation was filed with the papers for this meeting.

In response to questions and comments from City Commissioners, Communications Manager Smith provided the following information:

- specific goals for 2023 included: working on the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) initiative; putting out a workplace survey; creating a community calendar; and writing columns and speeches.
- when there is a gap between what the community wants and what the City is doing, the communications team can consult with Commissioners to

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Presentation re: the FY
2024 Budget (cont'd)

2023-25-02

Presentation re:
the 2023-2025
Communications Plan

2023-25-02

Presentation re:
the 2023-2025
Communications Plan
(cont'd)

help them understand and communicate the City's role and efforts on a particular situation or topic.

Commissioner Decker expressed support for consistency in the City's communications and having someone coordinate meetings with neighborhood associations. Commissioner Decker requested that staff keep Commissioners informed of meetings taking place in the community and asked whether Commissioners could get notes from these meetings. Commissioner Decker requested that staff work with the media to make sure they were invited to City meetings.

Commissioner Praedel offered the following suggestions: the City should tailor its communication strategy to specific neighborhoods; the City should be consistent in its meetings with neighborhood associations and should commit to a schedule; the City Commission should talk about one of its priorities at each Committee of the Whole meeting and cycle through them; the City Commission should invite staff to its meetings to recognize them; the Freedom of Information process should be included in the Communications Plan.

Commissioner Hess noted that City Commissioners and staff talked frequently about the need for good communication. Commissioner Hess expressed support for the 311 Customer Service Center and for the idea of recognizing employees at City Commission meetings.

Mayor Anderson expressed appreciation for Communications Manager Smith and thanked him for including internal communications in the plan.

Commissioner Decker encouraged managers and supervisors to allow their employees to attend the City's employee recognition event.

Commissioner
Comments

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

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 6:13 p.m.

Scott A. Borling
City Clerk

Approved by the City Commission on: _____

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