

Roll Call

The Kalamazoo City Commission met as a Committee of the Whole on Monday, August 7, 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 Aaron Leal, 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

Glen Hawkins, City resident, expressed concern about the negative impacts of truck traffic on Reed Avenue. Mr. Hawkins requested that Reed Avenue be repaved prior to the scheduled repaving in 2029.

Linda Cross, City resident, expressed concern about speeding traffic on Reed Avenue and requested speed bumps.

Call-In Comments

None

2023-31-01
Blueprint for Peace
Update

Chief Operating Officer Laura Lam introduced Jennifer Heymoss, Vice President of Initiatives and Public Policy at the Kalamazoo Community Foundation, and Andrea Meinema-Macklin, Associate Director of Community Impact at United Way of South Central Michigan, who delivered a presentation entitled, *August 2023 Kalamazoo Blueprint for Peace Update: City of Kalamazoo Committee of the Whole*. 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 presenters provided the following information:

- the Community Violence Intervention (CVI) grant awards to individual organizations were not released publicly, but the figures could be provided to Commissioners.
- there will be an online scoresheet showing CVI activities and results.
- there was a gap between the CVI work being done by passionate people who were focused on doing their part, and the need for a bird's eye view and coordination of effort. Achieving coordination would take the work from being competitive and transactional to collaborative and transformational. Everyone is responsible for the work, but no one person or group can do it all.

- building relationships was important; working with people and building trust was necessary to get them to share their data. Systemic change centered on racial healing and relationship building. The people doing this work would not have been able to talk with people in Lansing two years ago about what was needed to address gun violence.
- coordination/capacity building work was being done right now; meetings were being scheduled for October to bring people and groups together.
- the CVI Coordinating Committee needs youth representatives, and their input is needed on the CVI Strategy. This representation needs to include youth who were impacted by gun violence and expulsions, not just the motivated young people who typically volunteered to serve on committees.
- if the City and Kalamazoo County continued their partnership, there would be \$1,128,950 available for the CVI Phase 2 grant process. If the funding was coming from the City alone, the available amount would be \$557,000.
- regarding sustainability, the ARPA funds were a one-time gift. The CVI Coordinating Council would need to think about other funding streams that were already in place. There was a need for clear communication among funders and coordinators; coordination was more important than funding.
- Kalamazoo is looking into using Medicaid for CVI, and those same conversations are happening across the country. Kalamazoo is the first community in Michigan to have a community strategy; Milwaukee is a model for us.
- the Phase 2 CVI grant is being proposed as an upfront grant rather than a reimbursement program. The Phase 1 grants were two-year grants; there would be overlap between the Phase 1 and Phase 2 grants. It has not been decided whether Phase 1 grant recipients will be eligible for Phase 2 grants, but they should apply.
- nobody has a clear grasp of the big picture; this has been a puzzle that's being put together, matching needs with funding streams. Kalamazoo is a well-resourced community; the challenge is to be transparent regarding funding sources.

Commissioner Juarez remarked on the multiple layers and facets of CVI work and noted the process to effect lasting change was a slow process. Commissioner Juarez reported that some groups doing work on-the-ground were also doing their own convening. Commissioner Juarez remarked on the need to structure funding to address urgent needs and also sustain the CVI effort over the long term. Commissioner Juarez asked if the CVI grant recipients could speak to their work.

Commissioner Praedel commented on the need to reduce barriers in the grant application process.

Mayor Anderson invited the recipients of CVI grant funds to address the City Commission and talk about the work they were doing.

Gwendolyn Hooker thanked the City for working with Kalamazoo County to address gun violence and for providing funding to Hope Through Navigation –

2023-31-01

Blueprint for Peace
Update (cont'd)

2023-31-01

Blueprint for Peace
Update (cont'd)

\$250,000 over two years. Ms. Hooker stated details of how the grant funds were being spent were in their monthly reports. Ms. Hooker reported Hope Through Navigation had helped 17 people with burial costs since last fall. Ms. Hooker expressed uncertainty about the lack of interest in the fully paid life insurance that was offered, especially because the risk of experiencing gun violence was greater for families that had already experienced gun violence. Ms. Hooker stated the youth were the most important CVI component that was not really in place, and she noted youth work Hope Through Navigation was doing was being done by youth. Ms. Hooker thanked the United Way for helping with the federal grant requirements.

In response to questions from Commissioner Hoffman, Ms. Hooker spoke about the high cost of funeral and burial services. Ms. Hooker stated Hope Through Navigation's budget was \$2,000 per household, and Griffin Place also had funds available for funeral services. Ms. Hooker indicated most people wanted a full funeral service with burial, and she stated it was a hard conversation to talk about reducing funeral costs. Ms. Hooker stated the real conversations needed to be about life insurance, and she highlighted an 8-week span that saw the murder of three men, who had 19 children between them. Ms. Hooker spoke about the need for intentional work to give resiliency and trauma care.

James Harris, Outreach Manager at Urban Alliance, stated there was a lot of work being done in the community, and Urban Alliance was a small piece. Mr. Harris reported 58 men had gone through the Change of Status (CoS) program. Mr. Harris stated the curriculum and supports at Urban Alliance were effective, but the program needed to go beyond 12 weeks. Mr. Harris stated there was a need for Tier 2 and Tier 3 programs, which would make the entire program 36 weeks long. Mr. Harris noted he was able to hire former program participants to be peer support. Mr. Harris stated the next CoS graduation would take place on Thursday at 6:00 p.m. at The Experience. Mr. Harris invited City Commissioners to visit CoS sessions, which were held at various locations based on the topic.

Sharlae Davis, Executive Director of the Interfaith Strategy for Action and Advocacy in the Community (ISAAC), reported ISAAC was receiving \$193,000 over two years, which was being used to fund trauma support for those doing CVI work on the ground. Ms. Davis indicated the funds were also used to support violence interrupters, Group Violence Intervention workers, and safe lodging for those who had experienced gun violence. Ms. Davis spoke about the challenges of finding housing, as the same disparities in Kalamazoo made it difficult for ISAAC to find housing for people in other cities. Ms. Davis reported ISAAC had been approved to help the families of victims with funeral and burial costs. Ms. Davis stated Kalamazoo Empowerment, The Synergy Health Center, and The Black and Brown Therapy Collective had been good at providing trauma support, which was vital, as those working to address gun violence were impacted by the work.

Mayor Anderson thanked presenters and stated the City Commission had identified gun violence as a priority. Mayor Anderson commended City staff and expressed appreciation for the City's efforts to do this work the right way.

2023-31-02

Discussion of Retirement
Investment Committee
Reappointments

Mayor Anderson suggested the City Commission not begin a discussion of the Retirement Investment Committee reappointments due to the time and the need for a break before the 7:00 Business Meeting. There were no objections.

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

Commissioner
Comments

Vice Mayor Cooney asked the City Manager's Office to follow up with the speakers who voiced concerns about traffic on Reed Street.

The meeting adjourned at 6:41 p.m.

Adjournment

Scott A. Borling
City Clerk

Approved by the City Commission on: _____