

Roll Call

The Kalamazoo City Commission met as a Committee of the Whole on Tuesday, September 5, 2023 at 5:01 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 Ritsema, City Attorney Aaron Leal, and City Clerk Scott Borling.

Commissioner Excused

Commissioner Praedel, seconded by Commissioner Hoffman, 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**2023-35-01**

Dana Wagner from Discover! Kalamazoo invited people to attend the Street Rod Nationals event over the coming weekend and specifically the Street Rod Car Parade on September 8th. A flyer provided by Ms. Wagner was filed with the papers for this meeting.

Tom expressed concerns about Graphic Packaging and asked the City Commission to talk about Graphic Packaging at every meeting.

Call In

None

2023-35-02

Update re: the Social
Equity Cannabis
Chamber

Community Planning and Economic Development Director Antonio Mitchell provided an update on the proposed Social Equity Cannabis Chamber and reviewed a draft Request for Proposal (RFP). A copy of the draft RFP was filed with the papers for this meeting.

In response to questions and comments from City Commissioners, Director Mitchell provided the following information:

- regarding section 3.4 of the RFP, Youth Workforce Development Training in the SPK Neighborhoods, young people would need to be over 18 years of age in order to be hired by marijuana businesses; for youth ages 14-18, the plan is to offer internships and apprenticeships to show them the opportunities available.
- the primary funding source for the Cannabis Chamber would be the City's cannabis excise tax revenue, but the City wants the Chamber to match this funding and eventually become self-sustaining. It is estimated the City's funding contribution would be \$200,000 per year for the first three years.

- staff had suggested a membership fee for businesses to join the Cannabis Chamber, but there would need to be a conversation with the chosen applicant regarding the membership fee; a fee amount had not been established. Memberships and fees were a way for the marihuana businesses in the City to support the City's goals.
- the Cannabis Chamber should set expectations and standardize the way marihuana businesses engage the community so that the engagement is more intentional. The City needs to work with non-profit organizations in the community to increase their willingness to accept grant funds from marihuana businesses.
- marihuana businesses are interested in an organization that would help them relate to the community, especially in the areas of job opportunities and workforce recruitment.
- City staff will be working with the Cannabis Chamber on a monthly basis; staff want to be able to report data on social equity and local hiring.
- "cannabis-related businesses" in section 3.5 of the RFP referred to ancillary services and contracted services that any business might need, like printing, web design, custodial services, etc. There are opportunities for business development beyond the actual selling of cannabis product.
- the Cannabis Chamber will not have an influence on the permitting process; the City will define what constitutes a conflict of interest and will seek counsel from the City Attorney if there are any questions.
- no other jurisdictions in Michigan are attempting to create a Cannabis Chamber – the City is leading the way. The Chamber is being proposed because City staff do not have the capacity to focus on social equity on a daily basis; the Chamber will have that focus.
- staff is hoping that the Cannabis Chamber will be able to offer the scholarships and training incentives described in section 3.9.
- the Cannabis Chamber will not have a role in the licensing/permitting process but will educate businesses about the process. Right now, there is no vehicle to help businesses navigate the application process.
- the RFP would be released by the end of the month. Applications would be due in early 2024.
- to qualify for on-the-job training incentives, employees need to be actual hires and need to be City residents/residents of an SPK neighborhood. Management level employees could be qualifying employees for their employer to receive the training incentives.
- City staff have heard there are likely applicants for the RFP, but this was not a certainty. If the right applicants do not apply, staff will consider other options.
- the ability or commitment of an applicant to offer matching funds would not be part of the scoring criteria for the RFP, but if the Chamber did nothing to contribute additional resources during the three-year contract, the City could

2023-35-02Update re: the Social
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choose not to renew with that managing organization. Staff want to give applicants flexibility regarding matching funds.

Commissioner Praedel suggested changing “Youth” in section 3.4 of the RFP to “Young Adult” and having the program for 14-year-olds focus on entrepreneurship in general. Commissioner Praedel suggested that Director Mitchell connect with Commissioner Juarez regarding business development opportunities for the Shared Prosperity Kalamazoo (SPK) neighborhoods.

Commissioner Decker noted there was interest in creating a committee to consider increasing the percentage of cannabis revenue dedicated to social equity. Commissioner Decker requested that this topic be discussed at a future City Commission meeting.

City Manager Ritsema recommended that a conversation about the use of cannabis tax revenue happen in the context of the 2024 budget discussion.

Future Committee of
the Whole Topics

In response to a question from City Manager Ritsema, Commissioners Praedel and Hess requested that parking and the management of the downtown area, including roles and responsibilities during the two-way street conversion project, be discussed at future Committee of the Whole Meetings.

Commissioner
Comments

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

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 6:00 p.m.

Scott A. Borling
City Clerk

Approved by the City Commission on: _____

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