

Roll Call

A regular meeting of the Kalamazoo City Commission was held on Tuesday, September 5, 2023 at 7:01 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 Aaron Leal, and City Clerk Scott Borling.

Commissioner Excused

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

Invocation

The invocation, given by Reverend David Zomer of Bethany Reformed Church, was followed by the Pledge of Allegiance.

Adoption of the Agenda

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

2023-36-01

Communications:
Presentation on the 2023
ALICE Report

Alyssa Stewart, Chief Impact Officer for the United Way of South Central Michigan, delivered a presentation entitled, *ALICE in the Crosscurrents: COVID and Financial Hardship in Kalamazoo County, 2023 Report*. 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, Ms. Stewart provided the following information:

- the financial hardship statistics were for the county; they are probably higher for the City.
- there are many places trying to address the hardships facing ALICE households. Programs for asset building and income building are gaining momentum, and Ann Arbor is piloting a basic income program.
- the “Asset-Limited” aspect of ALICE is a real problem; a “stability budget” for a family of four would be over \$100,000.
- the Continuum of Care is a structure required by the federal government for the administration of funds from the US Department of Housing and Urban Development and the Michigan State Housing Development Authority.
- the application for rental assistance is closed at this time but will reopen in mid-September; the United Way is aggressively seeking funding for this program.

Vice Mayor Cooney noted the ALICE budget was a budget for people to survive, not thrive, and the statistics presented were from a time when the federal government was giving expanded assistance because of COVID. Vice Mayor Cooney spoke about the Up Together movement, which was working to change

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Communications:
Presentation on the 2023
ALICE Report

the approach to addressing poverty through direct financial assistance, storytelling, and lobbying officials at all levels of government.

Commissioner Praedel remarked that large, unexpected expenses, such as medical bills, car repairs, and home repairs created a harmful snowball effect for ALICE households. Commissioner Praedel reported his organization, Community Homeworks, was fielding more and more calls from the Milwood and Burke Acres Neighborhoods. Commissioner Praedel noted student loan debt was also a big problem. Commissioner Praedel spoke about a program in Flint that provided guaranteed income payments for pregnant women.

Commissioner Decker stated there were many organizations in the community trying to assist ALICE households. Commissioner Decker commented on the connection between residents' income and the types of businesses the City was trying to attract. Commissioner Decker noted the City's current economic development strategy focused on site preparation and workforce development.

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

In-Person Comments

John Baker, non-resident, questioned why the City installed bike lanes downtown and asked the City to clean up the trash and junk left by homeless people in Bronson Park.

Jennifer Gougeon-Catarino, City resident, spoke about a recent shooting in the Edison Neighborhood and questioned why the City did not offer a public acknowledgement or denouncement. Ms. Gougeon-Catarino stated the City's silence was sending the wrong message, and she spoke about the need to change community norms.

Tobi Hannah-Davies, City resident, thanked the City for facilitating the creation of senior housing, and she observed the agenda for this meeting included the creation of 56 additional housing units for non-seniors.

Agnus Bohl, City resident, thanked the City for improvements to the pedestrian crosswalks downtown, especially at Academy Street and Michigan Avenue, and she thanked the City for its downtown traffic calming improvements.

Chris Bohl, City resident, thanked the City for improvements to its micro-mobility infrastructure.

Ray, a manager at McDonald's, expressed concern about slow response times from the Kalamazoo Department of Public Safety (KDPS) and asked City to address this situation.

Matt Milcarek, City resident and Director of Construction Services with Kalamazoo Neighborhood Housing Services (KNHS), thanked the City for its support and stated the partnership with the City was vital to KNHS. Mr. Milcarek stated individual projects lifted up the surrounding community and were part of a bigger vision.

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Communications:
Presentation on the 2023
ALICE Report (cont'd)

Public Comments

Public Comments
(cont'd)

Call-In Comments

Stacy Falters-Jackson expressed support for the City's efforts to reduce gun violence, and she asked the City to put more resources towards anti-violence activities than micro transportation infrastructure.

An anonymous caller spoke about the potential United Auto Workers (UAW) strike and asked the City Commission to support the UAW workers.

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:

2023-36-02

- approval of a contract supplemental/change with RK Davis Construction, Inc. for various construction modifications to Wastewater Tertiary Disc Filtration Process Facility in the amount of \$176,549.40.

2023-36-03

- approval of a contract with Plante Moran for Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) financial software consulting services in the amount of \$309,875.

2023-36-04

- approval of amendments to the FY2023 budget to incorporate Parking System revenues and expenses into the City budget.

2023-36-05

- approval of a grant in the amount of \$770,000 to Kalamazoo Neighborhood Housing Services from the City's Coronavirus State and Local Fiscal Recovery/ARPA funds to construct eight new single-family homes for low-income households.

2023-36-06

- approval of the allocation of \$450,000 remaining from the \$1,000,000 Community Violence Prevention ARPA State and Local Fiscal Relief funds to the United Way of South Central Michigan for grants to non-profit organizations for eligible activities in direct response to the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic.

2023-36-07

- acceptance of a distribution from the Mayors Riverfront Park Endowment Fund for operational support for 2023 in the amount of \$109,532.20.

2023-36-08

- first consideration of an Off-Premises Sign Agreement with Adams Outdoor Advertising to allow for the removal of a billboard in the Northside Neighborhood and the reconstruction of a billboard along I-94; and set a public hearing for October 2, 2023.

2023-36-09

- approval of the Mayor's appointment of Pamela Burpee to the Civil Rights Board for a term expiring on March 31, 2024.

2023-36-10

- approval and acceptance of an easement agreement with Orley Properties, LLC for the continued installation and operation of Water Pressure Reducing Station 43.

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

With a roll call vote this motion passed.

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

NAYS: None

Regular Agenda items were considered next.

In response to questions and comments from City Commissioner regarding a \$1.5 million grant to the Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC) for the rehabilitation of 48 rental units for low-income households, Housing Development Supervisor Sharilyn Parsons and Zac Bauer, Executive Director of LISC Kalamazoo, provided the following information:

- staff will try to run this program like a US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) program without the HUD overlays. One goal is to work with new landlords who normally do not interact with the City and introduce them to tenants they normally would not serve.
- staff at LISC are able to work with underwriters and lenders. There will be a local program officer at LISC who can help landlords with the process.
- LISC recently awarded a grant to Kalamazoo County for creation of a registry website to track developers who receive benefits from the City and County to create affordable housing units. The developers will need to recertify their units on an annual basis.
- each landlord will be capped at 3-5 properties, to help with their capacity challenges.
- this program will make a difference for ALICE households, and the impact will go beyond housing.

Commissioner Hess requested that staff share data on the results of this project.

Commissioner Decker expressed support for the project.

Commissioner Hoffman stated it was great to see funding go to support quality, permanent, rental housing that would benefit the City's more vulnerable populations. Commissioner Hoffman expressed hope that the City could use this opportunity to work with landlords on fair housing issues and especially the housing equity ordinance's prohibition against source of income discrimination.

When an opportunity was given for public comments on a \$1.5 million grant to the Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC) for the rehabilitation of 48 rental units for low-income households, the following people addressed the City Commission:

Tobi Hannah-Davies, City resident, expressed support for the grant.

Matt Milcarek, City resident, expressed support for the grant.

Commissioner Hess, seconded by Commissioner Hoffman, moved to approve an agreement for a grant in the amount of \$1,500,000 to the Local Initiatives Support Corporation from the City's Coronavirus State and Local Fiscal Recovery/ARPA

Consent Agenda
(cont'd)

Regular Agenda

2023-36-11

Grant Agreement with
LISC Kalamazoo for
Rehabilitation of
Affordable Rental
Housing Units

2023-36-11

Grant Agreement with
LISC Kalamazoo for
Rehabilitation of
Affordable Rental
Housing Units (cont'd)

funds to rehabilitate approximately 48 rental units and increase the number of Housing Choice Voucher ready units for low-income households.

Prior to a vote on the motion, Commissioner Praedel thanked City staff and the project partners. Commissioner Praedel observed that the City Commission had approved funding for almost 200 housing units over the past two meetings. Commissioner Praedel noted the City had only 28 months to spend its remaining ARPA funds.

With a roll call vote the motion passed.

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

NAYS: None

City Manager's Report

City Manager Ritsema reported he experienced a ride-along with Public Safety Officers (PSO's) last Friday, and he highlighted the good work of KDPS:

- KDPS officers responded to 400 calls for service that day.
- the following officers took on extra shifts to cover staffing shortages over the summer: PSO's John Maney, Gabriela Avila, Kipp Crigger, Quinn DeBolt, Travis Cutler, Michael Arnett, and Peter Arnett; and Sergeants Nate Belen, Jeff Townsend, Jerry LoBretto, and Brett Bylsma.
- officers seized 15 guns over the weekend, including 3 automatic weapons; KDPS had seized 312 firearms year-to-date.

City Manager Ritsema announced KDPS was in the process of recruiting and hiring additional PSO's.

City Manager Ritsema thanked Public Services Director James Baker and the City's tree crews for assisting the City of Grand Rapids with cleaning up after major storms two weeks ago.

Commissioner
Comments

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

Commissioner Decker highlighted the City funding allocated to address gun violence, and she expressed a commitment to be more vocal and supportive of those who were hurting.

Commissioner Praedel highlighted the 33% reduction in traffic accidents downtown and the City's leadership to create a Cannabis Chamber. Commissioner Praedel spoke about the heavy burden of gun violence and stated the City had been allocating additional funds to address this problem. Commissioner Praedel stated he had been in conversation with Kalamazoo County Commissioner Jen Strebs about a resolution of support for state legislation that would allow immigrants to get driver's licenses.

Commissioner Hess commended the Downtown Ambassadors and thanked those involved with the I Have a Dream Speech event. Commissioner Hess offered remarks on the life and death of Jimmy Buffet.

Vice Mayor Cooney spoke about the Matthew Desmond's book *Poverty in America* and stated America made choices to not use its resources to address poverty. Vice Mayor Cooney spoke about the need to continually listen to people in poverty, look for best practices, and do more to address this problem. Vice Mayor Cooney expressed solidarity with the UAW workers.

Commissioner Hoffman noted the disparities highlighted in the ALICE report existed due to systemic racism. Commissioner Hoffman questioned how the City would be able to address social mobility when the ARPA funds were gone. Commissioner Hoffman reported the City of Detroit had adopted a resolution supporting state legislation to ban source of income discrimination by landlords. Commissioner Hoffman requested the City Commission adopt a similar resolution.

Mayor Anderson remarked that City Commissioners responded to gun violence in different ways, and he noted it could be difficult to determine the best way to respond. Mayor Anderson stated the City was investing resources to address gun violence, and Commissioners felt deep grief for the community.

Commissioner Hoffman, seconded by Commissioner Hess, moved that the City Commission go into closed session to discuss labor negotiations.

With a roll call vote the motion passed.

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

NAYS: None

The City Commission went into closed session at 8:46 p.m.

The City Commission returned to open session at 9:01 p.m.

Commissioner Decker, seconded by Commissioner Hess, moved to approve a five-year collective bargaining agreement with the American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees (AFSCME), as discussed in closed session.

Prior to a vote on the motion, Commissioners Decker and Praedel thanked staff who negotiated the contract and AFSCME employees for their service to the City.

With a roll call vote the motion passed.

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

NAYS: None

The meeting adjourned at 9:03 p.m.

Scott A. Borling
City Clerk

Approved by the City Commission on: _____

Commissioner
Comments (cont'd)

Closed Session

2023-36-12
AFSCME Collective
Bargaining Agreement

Adjournment