

CITY OF KALAMAZOO
Regular Meeting
SHARED PROSPERITY KALAMAZOO (SPK) ORGANIZING COMMITTEE
12:30 pm
January 8, 2024

Members Present: Brenda Hughes, Carol McGlinn, Don Cooney, Ben Damerow, Bobby Hopewell, *Alyssa Stewart, *Alonzo Wilson

Members Absent: Kym Hollars, Patrese Griffin

City Staff: Kevin Ford, Shared Prosperity Kalamazoo Coordinator, Beth Cheeseman, Executive Administrative Assistant

Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 12:35 p.m.

Roll Call

Kevin Ford conducted a roll call of the organizing committee and determined a quorum existed.

A motion was made by Brenda Hughes, to excuse the absent members, seconded by Don Cooney. A voice vote was taken, and the motion passed.

Approval of (regular/special) minutes of the last meeting

A motion was made by Ben Damerow, to approve the minutes as presented, seconded by Carol McGlinn. A voice vote was taken, and the motion passed.

*Alyssa Stewart arrived at the meeting during the approval of minutes.

Approval of Agenda

Bobby Hopewell asked if there were any changes to the agenda. No changes or concerns were raised. **Agenda was approved.**

Reports of Officers, Boards and Committees

None.

New Business

- a. RX Kids Flint – Alyssa Stewart
 - i. <https://flintrxkids.com/#intro>

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Alyssa Stewart reviewed information about the program Rx Kids in Flint. She said they were able to meet with Dr. Luke Shaefer and Dr. Mona Hanna-Attisha. Dr. Shaefer and Dr. Hanna-Attisha want the program to be replicable. They were able to leverage \$15 million TANF.

*Alonzo Wilson entered the meeting at this time.

Alyssa was able to confirm for Committee members that this program is not income based. In response to Brenda Hughes' questions, she said that they should be able to request more TANF than what was returned. Alyssa thought that a program like this would help address infant mortality issues, and it would align with different initiatives – including SPK.

Alyssa shared that Flint used TANF as the prenatal payment. She said they include \$1 of philanthropic money for every payment for every person. That makes the payment a gift that will not be used against benefits. Alyssa said that Dr. Shaefer and Dr. Hanna-Attisha worked with the City of Flint so the payments wouldn't count against housing allowances. She said that the money would, however, be counted as income for people receiving SSI. Alyssa said she did some rough math for the city and the county. There were an estimated 3,100 births in the county and approximately 1,200 in the city per year. The recipient has to sign up for the program. The program in Flint is working with vendor called Give Directly. Alyssa said Flint budgeted for 1,300 participants.

Alyssa said they are starting now (2024), and they have secured the first three years of funding. It has taken them 1.5-2 years to set up the program. Potentially anyone following behind them could set the program up more quickly. She asked them if they would like a program in Kalamazoo to be called Rx Kids Kalamazoo. Dr. Shaefer and Dr. Hanna-Attisha said they didn't know, but that was a possibility.

There was some discussion of who could be the pediatric champions for Kalamazoo. Alyssa suggested Dr. Lane-Davies. Dr. Cathy Kothari was also mentioned.

Kevin Ford suggested that the biggest issue would be getting money for the program. Alyssa mentioned there would be data collection at every point. She said that Flint has an optional survey which was incentivized with extra money if people participated. Flint is having a big community event on Valentine's Day. Alyssa shared that there were questions to make sure there is no fraud. She said Flint is taking a trust-based approach. They will verify a participants address at the beginning but won't check again. The vendor has fraud protection in place for recipients. The money can be direct deposited or given on debit cards. They will also provide optional extra services.

Bobby Hopewell asked if they can still provide a program if they can only raise \$3 million instead of \$5 million. Alyssa said Flint's research showed that a payment of \$500 per month helps the most. Health outcomes significantly improve, infant mortality decreased, and child nutrition increased.

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Alyssa said that the Flint program is keeping a pot of money for unintended impacts – like someone’s SSI being impacted/eliminated. There was a discussion about removing barriers instead of giving money.

Alyssa said they are talking to Cradle Kalamazoo. She thought that funders will ask how the local community informed this program. Alyssa shared some of the organizations and people that are currently at the table to talk about this program. She said the next step is to start making some asks. They need core funding secured to get TANF money. Alyssa said they also need to think about who would head this program for Kalamazoo.

Kevin Ford brought up the point that they need to look at what happens to the program participants after the year of support. If they are out of the workforce, can they go back where they were? Will they get a living wage? Alyssa said that from day one, the participants know the support is only for a year. She made the point that the money follows the baby – whether the baby stays with a parent, is adopted, or put in foster care. If the child is lost, they would get an abbreviated term of payments.

Brenda Hughes said her lobbying offer still stands if needed.

b. SPK Coordinator Updates – Kevin Ford

i. Past projects (Hire Reach, VITA)

Hire Reach and Vita programs ended.

Kevin Ford reported some ending numbers for the Vita and Hire Reach programs.

Alyssa commented that it has been difficult, post-Covid, to bring volunteers back to Vita. They are trying to rebuild their base and find sites.

Ben Damerow shared that the City dropped out of the Hire Reach program due to turnover in Human Resources. He shared that there are no plans to do an additional cohort at this time. They don’t have the momentum for that right now.

ii. Future directions (CPED, City Commission)

Kevin Ford shared that they have had the internal kick-off for the Economic Development Plan. He said he would be reaching out to some of the Committee members. Kevin shared part of an email from Antonio Mitchell. He said there is a meeting set up this month to discuss ALICE in SPK neighborhoods. Kevin shared that special requests are due by May of this year. He asked the Committee members to start thinking about how they wanted to shape that.

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Kevin noted that they had a discussion at the last meeting about the future of this Committee. He said they want to set up meetings with the City Commission to clarify the work they want SPK to carry out. SPK was set up by City Commission. Bobby Hopewell mentioned that part of SPK's duty was to advise the City Commission. He said that hasn't happened. Bobby said he doesn't want to kill the committee, but he wants to maximize what they are bringing. He said they may need to have a conversation about if the SPK Committee needs to continue.

Don Cooney indicated that meeting with City Commissioners was a good idea, and he wants SPK to be on a lot of other agendas.

Kevin Ford agreed with Brenda Hughes that the money was out. He said even if they had money, he would argue that wouldn't take monthly or bimonthly meetings.

Carol McGlinn said that they were trying to be innovative and different than just being a body granting money. She thought they should be working on other solutions.

Don Cooney thought the question was what role city government can play in the reduction of poverty.

Bobby Hopewell suggested they go back to their core values and policies. If that work is still of value, then they decide how to move it forward.

There was discussion about what the group should be doing. Carol McGlinn didn't think it was right that Kevin wasn't informed that the City's Human Resources dropped out of the Hire Reach program. Alyssa Stewart thought this was a huge opportunity to clarify their role within the City.

Bobby Hopewell mentioned connecting with the community around the discussion of poverty. Kevin Ford said that if they wanted to plan and execute it, the City Planner is working on setting up community engagement for Imagine Kalamazoo. There was a suggestion to invite Christina Anderson to a meeting to talk about that.

Don Cooney mentioned there was a City Commission retreat coming up.

Kevin Ford said he could connect Bobby Hopewell to Camion, Economic Development Strategy consultants. He mentioned that they need to discover how SPK, and the BRA/EDC Boards connect.

Old Business (unfinished or pending matters)

None.

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Miscellaneous

Don Cooney shared that the City Commission has a budget item to buy medical debt. They are joining with the county to purchase \$30 million in medical debt.

It was again brought up that this initiative is something of which Kevin wasn't informed. One Committee member thought it showed a disconnect/disrespect of prosperity work in the city.

Ben Damerow shared that there was to be a round table at Bells.

Kevin Ford mentioned some ARPA money used for home childcare. It is scheduled for a February City Commission meeting. He is working through the details of what that means.

Martin Luther King Birthday events were noted.

Public Comments—General

None.

Adjournment

Bobby Hopewell adjourned the meeting at 2:06 p.m.