

Roll Call

A neighborhood meeting of the Kalamazoo City Commission was held on Monday, February 18, 2019 at 6:00 p.m. in the Community Room at City Hall, 241 W. South Street.

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT:

Mayor Bobby J. Hopewell
Vice Mayor Erin Knott
David Anderson
Don Cooney
Jack Urban

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT:

Eric Cunningham*
Shannon Sykes

Also present were City Manager Jim Ritsema, City Attorney Clyde Robinson, and City Clerk Scott Borling.

Commissioners
Excused

Commissioner Anderson, seconded by Vice Mayor Knott, moved to excuse the absences of Commissioners Cunningham and Sykes. With a voice vote the motion passed.

Communications

An opportunity was given for miscellaneous communications, but no communications were offered.

Neighborhood
Communications

Neighborhood communications were received next.

Representatives from the following neighborhood associations were present and addressed the City Commission:

Parkview Hills Neighborhood Association

Bonnie Alkema, Representative
Karen Braemer, Board Member

Kalamazoo College Council of Student Representatives

Emma Eisenbeis, President
Sage Ringsmuth, Secretary

Western Michigan University Student Association

Joseph Sanchez, President
Henry Thiry, Community Involvement Chair
Jenna Otten, Sustainability Chair

Parkview Hills
Neighborhood

The Parkview Hills Neighborhood representatives:

- described the organization of the Parkview Hills Neighborhood and stated the Neighborhood Association had been inactive and was in the process of reorganizing.
- reported the Association was working with the City on a neighborhood plan.
- indicated the association was looking to become more involved with adjacent neighborhood associations, especially regarding the development of properties at the corner of Drake Road and Stadium Drive and the creation of Natural Features Protection rules.

Commissioner Urban noted many people walked on the streets in Parkview Hills because there were no sidewalks.

Parkview Hills
Neighborhood
(cont'd)

Ms. Alkema noted some City departments did not realize the streets in Parkview Hills were public streets.

The Kalamazoo College representatives:

Kalamazoo College
Representatives

- reported the Council of Student Representatives had been reorganizing itself over the past few years and had ratified a new Constitution on Friday, February 15th.
- stated Kalamazoo College was hosting the Great Lakes Colleges Student Government Conference over the coming weekend.

Commissioner Anderson requested a copy of the new Constitution.

In response to a question from Commissioner Cooney, the representatives indicated they were not involved personally with tutoring at Woodward School.

Commissioner Anderson noted Kalamazoo College students staffed the CAPS tutoring program.

In response to a question from Mayor Hopewell, Ms. Eisenbeis stated they were on the open curriculum plan and reported there was a move recently to have students take a more broad, interdisciplinary approach to their capstone projects.

Commissioner Cooney commented on the good work of Arcus Center and requested more timely information about events.

Ms. Eisenbeis stated the Arcus Center had lost Mia Henry as its Executive Director, which caused some communication issues.

The Western Student Association (WSA) representatives:

Western Student
Association

- described the organization of the WSA.
- stated the two foci for the WSA this school year were communicating students' voices upwards to the University administration, and improving the visibility of the Association through branding, and mission/vision clarification.
- indicated the Association was asking what it could do to improve student retention rates, as issues like food access and healthcare, in addition to personal finances, impacted students' ability to continue at the University.
- reported the Association was working with the Invisible Needs program to provide food to students in need.
- stated they were working on upcoming events like Earth Day Kalamazoo and Great Lakes Peace Jam.
- described ideas for students to volunteer when there was limited transportation to sites in the community.

Western Student
Association (cont'd)

- stated \$125,000 was available each year for student sustainability grants to fund student-initiated projects that impacted sustainability on campus.
- represents students on sustainability issues like tree removal.
- reported the Association was trying to make campus more bike-friendly, including a bike rental program and an initiative to make biking on campus legal.

Commissioner Cooney suggested WMU adopt a specific organization or a specific school in the community for volunteering.

Mr. Thiry expressed support for the idea of adopting an organization in the community but highlighted transportation as a barrier for many students.

In response to a question from Commissioner Cooney, Mr. Thiry stated the Invisible Needs program had enough food, but it lacked official standing as a University department/office. The program needed more visibility and promotion.

Commissioner Urban expressed interest in the idea of improving connectivity between WMU and downtown and increasing biking and walkability. Commissioner Urban noted the Stadium/Michigan/Michikal area needed to be redesigned, and he expressed hope that WSA would get involved with this work, even if the changes would not happen while the current leaders were at WMU.

In response to a question from Mayor Hopewell, Ms. Otten described projects that had received Sustainability Grants, including the creation of a community garden by the Honors College; funding for the Solar Car projects; and the purchase of solar powered phone/device charging stations built into park benches.

In response to a question from Mayor Hopewell, Mr. Sanchez stated there was no collaboration between WSA and the Kalamazoo College Council of Student Representatives, but such collaboration would be beneficial.

Mayor Hopewell asked both the WSA representatives and the Kalamazoo College representatives what they wanted from the City.

Ms. Otten stated it would be beneficial to change the bus system from the current hub/spoke system to a point-to-point system, as it was not convenient for a person to have to take a bus downtown to catch another bus that was going to their destination.

*Commissioner Cunningham arrived at 6:37 p.m.

Commissioner Urban advised the student representatives that changing bus routes took a long time, from a procedural standpoint.

Mr. Sanchez expressed concern about the condition of local roads, and he asked if the City had a plan to address the trunklines that had just been transferred from state to City ownership.

City Manager Ritsema stated the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT) had conducted a Planning and Environmental Linkage (PEL) Study within the past

couple of years, and the City would be doing a lot of public engagement on the use and design of these roads.

Mr. Thiry commented that getting student input was important, but it was difficult to get students to engage when they did not feel the change was going to happen in the near future.

Mayor Hopewell asked both the WSA and Kalamazoo College representatives what they wanted to see in the downtown.

Mr. Thiry stated the food was great downtown, but the prices did not fit a student's budget. Mr. Thiry also noted students were not into retail shopping or sit-down dining.

Ms. Eisenbeis stated she could envision working with City to increase student engagement, to get them out of the "K-Bubble." Ms. Eisenbeis indicated Kalamazoo College students were very involved, but there was not space for them to come together for engagement purposes. Ms. Eisenbeis also noted Kalamazoo was a great beer City, but most students, who were between 18 and 20 years of age, were not able to participate in that aspect of the downtown. Ms. Eisenbeis highlighted the need to develop new ways to get students involved in the life of the downtown area.

Mayor Hopewell asked other students who were present to share their ideas and comments.

Daniel indicated he was from Detroit and stated he would like to see a "Coney Island place" and a "fried chicken place."

Mayor Hopewell referred students who wanted to be more engaged to Rebekah Kik, the Director of Community Planning and Economic Development.

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

An opportunity was given for miscellaneous comments by City Commissioners, but no comments were offered.

The meeting adjourned at 6:49 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Scott A. Borling
City Clerk

For City Commission approval on March 4, 2019

Approved by: _____
Bobby J. Hopewell, Mayor
Dated: March 4, 2019

Western Student
Association (cont'd)

Citizen Comments

Commissioner
Comments

Adjournment