A special work session of the Kalamazoo City Commission was held on Wednesday, May 4, 2016 at 6:00 p.m. in the Community Room at City Hall. The purpose of the meeting was for the Commission to receive an update on the Imagine Kalamazoo 2025 process and engage in the visioning process.

Roll Call

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT:	Mayor Bobby Hopewell Vice Mayor Don Cooney David Anderson Erin Knott Matt Milcarek Shannon Sykes Jack Urban
COMMISSIONERS ABSENT:	None

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

Communications

An opportunity was given for general communications, but none were offered.

Update on Imagine Kalamazoo 2025

Community Planning and Development Director Laura Lam reviewed the agenda and highlighted the following meeting outputs:

- Ensure understanding of Imagine Kalamazoo (IK) 2025 strategic vision process to date and emerging community themes;
- Engage creativity around the Commission's vision for the future of Kalamazoo;
- Engage creativity around the next phases of IK2025 to maximize participation and effectiveness; and
- Brainstorm and prioritize future work session topics and outputs.

Director Lam and City Planner Rebekah Kik delivered a PowerPoint presentation entitled *City Commission Work Session: Imagining a Stronger Kalamazoo*. (Copies of the slides from this presentation were filed with the papers for this meeting.) The presentation covered the following topics:

An Overview of the Strategic Visioning Process

- Current Trajectory of Plans
- Vision Alignment

Imagine Kalamazoo 2025: Where have we been?

- *Imagine It* process overview and results
- Community themes

City Commissioners made the following observations and suggestions regarding the IK process:

- the Commission needed to be careful that its conversation about community vision not skew the IK process and conversation; the Commission needed to honor, value, and support this process.

Update on Imagine Kalamazoo 2025 (cont'd)

- in the community there was a lack of trust that the plan resulting from the IK process would be implemented; it was important for the City Commission to talk about how the IK process would turn into action.

- the Master Plan and community vision would need to be reduced and distilled to an "elevator speech" if the vision going to be meaningful and have an impact.

- the City Commission would welcome an effort by staff to make explicit connections between Commission actions, the annual budget, and City's strategic goals.

- the Commission needed to make sure the Master Plan was understood by the public at a conceptual level and that it was apparent where major actions were connected to the Plan.

- the Plan needed to be a living document.

- the City needed to move forward with Priority #5 regarding poverty reduction and not wait until the IK process was finished.

- the City was affording itself the luxury of planning while still accomplishing its day-to-day work.

- the City Commission needed to have discussions that lined up with the Design It! and Discuss It! phases of the IK process.

Director Lam remarked that Sydney, Australia used the tag line "We're connected; we're green; we're global," and she highlighted the need for a connection between top level terms and how those terms translated into action.

In response to a question from Vice Mayor Cooney, Director Lam stated the City would be applying the factors of local data, best practices, and community experience to the IK responses as they were funneled down through the brainstorming, planning, and implementation stages.

In response to a question from Commissioner Sykes, Ms. Kik stated there would be community engagement and staff/workgroup engagement opportunities at each step in the IK process. Ms. Kik also noted there would be a place to collect ideas that fell outside the sphere of the City's control.

In response to a question from Commissioner Knott, Director Lam stated cost estimates would be attached to the Master Plan during the feasibility analysis.

In response to a question from Commissioner Anderson, Ms. Kik reported the IK and Priority Based Budgeting processes had created efficiencies as departments had started working together and pooling resources to make a bigger impact on the community's priorities.

Discussion of a Future Vision for Kalamazoo

Kalamazoo's Future

Next, Commissioners provided the following answers to questions about Kalamazoo's future:

Why is it important to have a strong Kalamazoo?
People need value to live here.
We want a strong home, a strong family.
The core needs to be strong; it supported everything else. Nothing outside the core would flourish if the core isn't strong.
The City was the core of the county economically, legally, and with regard to diversity, but the boundaries of "Kalamazoo" stretched to the edges of the county.
There is diversity of opportunity here.
The broader community has placed a lot of faith in the core.
There are unique opportunities here (arts, retail, heathcare).
Kalamazoo is the place where people come together.
What if we were not here? What would this community be like? What would be the core?
The City is physically designed to have more economic intensity and connectedness.
Kalamazoo is expected to lead. We want to be the leaders to drive the metro area. We can't lead effectively if we're not strong.
Kalamazoo needs to be strong for the people who live here. If Kalamazoo was not the core, what would happen to our people?
People in southwest Michigan need a dynamic place.

What does a strong Kalamazoo look and feel like?
A modern, urban design.
Quality housing stock (design standards, code enforcement, asbestos abatement, lead abatement)
Strong people who have what they need to lead a fully human life.
Employment opportunities/workforce development
Affordable housing
Density is how cities survive.
Complete Streets
We don't compete with the suburbs; we compete with cities our size; we will fail if we try to be a suburb.
A strong, enhanced transportation system
Focus on target population; people who want to live in cities

Future Work Sessions

Future Work Sessions

When Commissioners were asked to brainstorm topics for future work sessions the following topics were offered:

A continuation of this meeting's topics
Code review/code enforcement/housing
Community Policing/Group Violence Intervention/Traffic Enforcement
Shared Prosperity
Complete streets
Systemic Issues – Poverty, Racism, Homelessness
How do we become a larger community (regionalization)?

City Manager Ritsema suggested Commissioners help staff prioritize topics by putting their initials next to their top three preferred topics on the flip chart after the meeting.

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

Citizen Comments

Mark Fricke, City resident, cautioned against the City Commission getting too involved in the IK process, because IK was opportunity for citizens to create the "playbook" for the Commission.

Dana Underwood, City resident, expressed disappointment with the number of people who had participated in the IK community engagement process and reported people did not want to fill out the IK surveys because the City did not have the money to accomplish its current priorities, let alone do anything new.

Jeff Spoelstra, Sustainability Coordinator for Western Michigan University, expressed a desire to work with the City on sustainability issues.

Max Tibbetts, City resident, stated increasing population density in 2016 (more young professionals moving into the neighborhood) was different than increasing population density 20 years ago (more college kids and fraternity houses moving into the neighborhood).

Paul Ecklund, Disability Rights Advocate at the Disability Network of Southwest Michigan, encouraged the City to get its rights-of-way up-to-date with ADA standards. Mr. Ecklund encouraged the City Commission to not concentrate affordable housing in one part of the City but to spread it around.

Doug Kirk, City resident, reported some of his friends had moved out of the City because it was difficult to ride bikes there. Mr. Kirk stated there needed to be more centralization of government in Kalamazoo County.

Zach Lassiter, City resident, suggested the City do more to encourage home ownership.

Annie Sprague, City resident, stated the Commission's references to "shared prosperity" did not resonate with her because there had been no action. Ms. Sprague stated there would be strength where people were equals and felt safe. Ms. Sprague expressed disappointment at the lack of diversity in the audience.

Tim Graham, City resident, stated the City's top priority should be creating a sustainable 21st century economy and addressing the issue of robots taking over peoples' jobs.

Commissioner Comments

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

Commissioner Milcarek agreed with Ms. Sprague about the need for more inclusion in the IK process.

Commissioner Sykes noted that people were not able to attend meetings if they were in survival mode, which was why the Commission needed to discuss systemic issues. Commissioner Sykes questioned how much of the IK input had been from County residents versus City residents.

Commissioner Knott agreed that the IK process was the peoples' process. Commissioner Knott reported she had gone door-to-door with the IK survey, but people did not trust that she wanted to hear about their ideas for the future. Rather, they wanted to talk with her about issues that were happening at that moment. Commissioner Knott stated the work group needed to be talking about the issues facing people here and now, in order to build trust.

Commissioner Urban stated he saw this meeting as a trust building exercise among Commissioners and between Commission and Planning staff. Commissioner Urban stated the Commission had not built trust with stressed groups in the City.

Vice Mayor Cooney stated the job of the City Commission was to be the catalyst for change to enable people to live at the highest level possible.

Mayor Hopewell stated in 1996 all neighborhoods wanted to move away from high density, not just those neighborhoods with a high student population. Mayor Hopewell encouraged staff to analyze the demographics of the IK responses. Mayor Hopewell noted that Commissioners had not relinquished their ability to have input into the IK process as City residents. Mayor Hopewell also noted much of the input from City Commissioners was driven by what they were hearing from people, and the primary work of the Commission was to help staff move the work forward.

Meeting adjourned at 8:09 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Scott A. Borling
City Clerk

For City Commission approval on June 20, 2016

Approved by: _____
Bobby J. Hopewell, Mayor
Dated: June 20, 2016

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