

	A regular work session of the Kalamazoo City Commission was held on Monday, May 22, 2017 at 6:00 p.m. in the Community Room at City Hall. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss code administration.
Roll Call	COMMISSIONERS PRESENT: Vice Mayor Don Cooney David Anderson Erin Knott Matt Milcarek Shannon Sykes Jack Urban COMMISSIONERS ABSENT: Mayor Bobby Hopewell Also present were City Manager Jim Ritsema, City Attorney Clyde Robinson, and City Clerk Scott Borling.
Commissioner Excused	Commissioner Sykes, seconded by Commissioner Milcarek, moved to excuse the absence of Mayor Hopewell. With a voice vote the motion passed.
Communications	An opportunity was offered for general communications, but none were offered.
Discussion Items	Discussion items were considered next.
Discussion of Code Administration	City Manager Ritsema reviewed the agenda and provided introductory remarks for a PowerPoint presentation entitled <i>City of Kalamazoo Code Administration, May 22, 2017</i>. A copy of this presentation was filed with the papers for this meeting. Community Planning and Development Director Rebekah Kik reviewed the desired meeting outputs; provided an overview of the City's code administration programs; and reviewed 2016 statistics for inspections, rental certifications, site plans processed, and construction permit valuation. Building Official Bob McNutt reviewed the City's code enforcement activities. Director Kik explained the City's data-mining efforts and provided detailed comparative information on condemned buildings and property-related complaints. In response to a question from Commissioner Anderson, Mr. McNutt indicated 80% of code enforcement activities for weeds and curb lawn trash violations were staff-driven rather than complaint driven. Mr. McNutt noted the City was just starting to mine the available data, so these efforts were a work in progress. In response to a question from Vice Mayor Cooney, Mr. McNutt stated the City's cost for boarding a house that was open to casual entry was passed on to the property owner.

Discussion of Code
Administration (cont'd)

In response to a question from Commissioner Anderson, Mr. McNutt stated there could be some open condemnation cases dating from 10 years ago.

In response to a question from Vice Mayor Cooney, Mr. McNutt stated any structure could be rehabbed if a person was willing to invest the time and money. Mr. McNutt explained he maintained a fluid list of properties that were candidates for demolition, which he updated on a monthly basis.

In response to a question from Commissioner Milcarek, Mr. McNutt explained there were many properties on the Abandoned Residential Structures (ARS) list that were condemned, but there were many properties on ARS that were bank-owned and not condemned. Mr. McNutt indicated the City would take dangerous properties to the Building Board of Appeals for a determination that the structure was a "Dangerous Building." Mr. McNutt clarified that code enforcement officials did not monitor water and wastewater accounts or track shut-off notices to uncover properties with disconnected utilities, and he explained his staff usually discovered the lack of active utilities through inspections that were prompted by other problems.

In response to a question from Commissioner Knott, Director Kik and Mr. McNutt stated the City received complaints via email, via phone, and in person, but there was no online tracking/response system. Mr. McNutt acknowledged the City's web interface needed work.

Director Kik discussed the City's current and future blight elimination strategies and the work of the Hoarding Task Force.

In response to a question from Commissioner Knott, Mr. McNutt stated hoarding was a mental illness, and typical enforcement options did not work. Mr. McNutt noted the City did not want to incarcerate people for hoarding.

In response to a question from Commissioner Urban, Mr. McNutt stated in many cases hoarders did not have property insurance.

Commissioner Milcarek noted many people did have property insurance due to a variety of factors.

Director Kik provided an update on Redevelopment Ready Community Certification and described planned improvements to the development review processes.

Mr. McNutt explained the concept of a Neighborhood Clean-Up and stated it was designed to be education-based rather than enforcement-based. Mr. McNutt also reviewed proposed changes to the graffiti and ARS ordinances.

In response to a question from Commissioner Urban, Director Kik stated there was a point person working on the Redevelopment Ready Community Certification.

Discussion of Code
Administration (cont'd)

In response to questions from Commissioner Urban, Mr. McNutt stated he had not thought about keeping the ARS fees in escrow, but he expressed concern about turning the City into a bank. Mr. McNutt stated the City did have authority to address dangerous buildings, but the issue was a lack of funding and a lack of engagement on the part of property owners.

Commissioner Anderson requested information on the number of housing units in the City and a breakdown of that number between owner-occupied vs. non-owner occupied. Commissioner Anderson also asked for the number of un-registered rental properties.

City Manager Ritsema reported there were 32,433 housing units in the City, with 47% being owner occupied and 53% being rental properties.

Commissioner Anderson reported on notes he had taken during conversations about code administration with Commissioners Knott and Milcarek. Commissioner Anderson stated the main theme of those conversations was "rebuilding and revitalizing neighborhoods," with sub-themes of reducing blight, code compliance, and increasing investment. Commissioner Anderson indicated the following questions flowed out of these discussions: what is our vision for the built environment; what tools do we have to accomplish the vision, and are they effective; can we tell if the tools are making a difference; what are we measuring; do we have a strategy for focusing resources on the greatest needs; and what are our biggest challenges? Commissioner Anderson stated City staff was doing good work, and he expressed hope that the Commission could bring some energy to the table to sharpen those efforts.

Commissioner Milcarek expressed support for changes to the ARS program. Commissioner Milcarek questioned whether staff needed to look at other programs in the Community Planning and Development Department (CP&D) and shift resources from ineffective or low-priority activities to high priority programs. Commissioner Milcarek also questioned whether CP&D should rethink its fees and noted Kalamazoo had bad reputation with property owners in some ways.

In response to a question from Vice Mayor Cooney, Director Kik confirmed there was a housing shortage in Kalamazoo.

Commissioner Sykes observed there were housing challenges in Kalamazoo and a shortage of resources to meet those challenges. Commissioner Sykes questioned how the City was prioritizing the challenges and if the current prioritization needed an overhaul.

In response to Commissioner Sykes, Director Kik noted the City did not rehabilitated homes with Community Development Block Grant Funds; those funds were given to non-profit organizations that did the rehabbing. Director Kik stated the City would need to try influencing the priorities of the non-profits or find new revenue streams if it wanted to change how housing resources were allocated in the community.

Mr. McNutt stated code enforcement was a challenge because situations were not always black and white due to the human element. Mr. McNutt explained that prioritization for code enforcement meant dealing with "hot

spots” and the worst cases. Mr. McNutt expressed a desire to have more incentives to use rather than punishments.

Commissioner Milcarek expressed support for making the built environment friendlier to private investment so that the City could be more competitive with neighboring jurisdictions in attracting investment in housing. Commissioner Milcarek suggested the City consider using the Universal Property Code System (UPCS) for rental regulations and revising the current fee structure.

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

Zach Lassiter, City resident, spoke about his neighbor's house and a water leak, expressed agreement with Commissioners about the use of rental inspectors' time and the lack of quality, affordable housing in the City, and suggested that tax breaks include a community benefit requirement.

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

Commissioner Milcarek thanked staff for their work and for the deep dive into the data. Commissioner Milcarek suggested the City consider accepting third-party certifications if the UPSC were implemented.

Commissioner Urban encouraged staff to continue mining the data and using it to move the City towards the Imagine Kalamazoo 2025 vision. Commissioner Urban note streets, lighting, and noise were also factors in making Kalamazoo a welcoming place. Commissioner Urban expressed concern about inconsistent approaches among the City's inspectors.

Commissioner Knott stated the code was black and white, but the City was “cherry picking” how it enforced the code. Commissioner Knott stated the meeting should have focused more on rental housing.

City Manager Ritsema reported the City was working on the issue of affordable housing.

The meeting adjourned at 8:01 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Scott A. Borling
City Clerk

For City Commission approval on June 19, 2017

Approved by: _____

Bobby J. Hopewell, Mayor
Dated: June 19, 2017

Discussion of Code
Administration (cont'd)

Citizen Comments

Commissioner
Comments

Adjournment