

Roll Call

A regular meeting of the Kalamazoo City Commission was held on Monday, December 4, 2023 at 7:00 p.m. in the City Commission Chambers at City Hall.

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT:

Mayor David Anderson
Vice Mayor Jeanne Hess
Don Cooney
Qianna Decker
Stephanie Hoffman
Chris Praedel
Alonzo Wilson

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT:

None

Also present were City Manager Jim Ritsema, City Attorney Aaron Leal, and City Clerk Scott Borling.

Invocation

The invocation, given by Pastor William Boekestein, Immanuel Fellowship Church, was followed by the Pledge of Allegiance.

Adoption of the Agenda

By unanimous consent the City Commission adopted its meeting agenda with the following changes:

2023-46-01

City Manager Ritsema requested that Item G-12, a resolution granting a Payment in Lieu of Taxes (PILOT) to Harrison Circle LDHA LP for Harrison Circle located at 525 E. Ransom Street, be removed from the agenda.

City Manager Ritsema requested that Item G-19, adoption of a resolution vacating Cooley Street between Eleanor Street and West Kalamazoo Avenue and Eleanor Street between North Westnedge Avenue and North Park Street, be moved to the Regular Agenda to allow for a staff presentation.

Commissioner Praedel requested that Item G-18, the approval of minutes, be moved to the Regular Agenda.

Commissioner Decker requested that a discussion of the City Commission Initiatives Fund be added to the agenda under New Business.

A member of the public requested that Item G-11, a resolution setting a public hearing for the proposed Fiscal Year 2024 Budget, be moved to the Regular Agenda.

2023-46-02

Communications:
Presentation on the
Summer Youth
Employment Program

Meg Blinkiewicz, Executive Director of Kalamazoo Youth Development Network (KYDNet), and Jane Asumadu, Out of School Time Program Development Coach, delivered a presentation entitled *ARPA Summer 2023 Program*. A copy of the slides from this presentation was filed with the papers for this meeting.

Commissioner Cooney thanked KYDNet for seeking additional funding sources to keep services at the same level in future years.

In response to a question from Commissioner Decker, Executive Director Blinkiewicz reported that approximately 95% of the organizations that received funding for the summer program would continue their programs through the school year.

Vice Mayor Hess remarked on the tremendous number of organizations that received funding and thanked KYDNet for being proactive with regard to funding opportunities.

Commissioner Praedel discussed the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on young people, and especially in the area social and emotional learning.

In response to a request from Commissioner Praedel, Coach Asumadu described the video production program offered by the Build Up group, and Executive Director Blinkiewicz described a church on the east side that was able to use program funding to hire staff and expand its services.

Mayor Anderson highlighted partnerships as the primary way the City was able to offer a summer youth employment program. Mayor Anderson offered comments on the importance of building non-profit infrastructure, leveraging funding, and program outcomes and effectiveness. Mayor Anderson stated the summer youth employment program was directly connected to the City Commission's goals, and he invited people to attend the City Commission planning retreat in February.

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

In-Person Comments

Dr. Said Abubakr, Professor of Chemical and Paper Engineering at Western Michigan University, asked the City Commission to adopt a resolution calling for a ceasefire in Gaza.

David Elias, City resident, made remarks about Hamas using people as human shields in Gaza. Mr. Elias offered comments about the Kalamazoo Promise and the absence of real learning in the Kalamazoo Public Schools.

Matt Clysdale, non-resident, stated the Public Safety training facility and Schippers Crossing site on Nazareth Road had been a dumping site for years. Mr. Clysdale asked the City to clean up and maintain these properties.

Kevin Trayer, non-resident and Michiana Area Vice President for the National Association of Postal Supervisors, requested that the City Commission send a resolution or letter to the Postmaster General expressing opposition to the proposed consolidation of postal facilities in Kalamazoo County. A packet of information provided by Mr. Trayer was filed with the papers for this meeting.

Call-In Comments

An anonymous caller asked the City Commission to support a ceasefire in Gaza and offered comments on the power dynamics of the situation with Graphic Packaging. The caller stated the City was doing nothing to help the homeless.

Shona Espinoza, City resident, spoke about the housing crisis and homeless children in Kalamazoo.

Tina McClinton, City resident, spoke about flooding in her neighborhood and stated the City Commission did not care about poor residents.

2023-46-02

Communications:
Presentation on the
Summer Youth
Employment Program
(cont'd)

Public Comments

2023-46-03

Public Comments (cont'd)	Joe Byars, City resident, expressed support for a City Commission resolution calling for a ceasefire in Gaza. Mr. Byars expressed opposition to the proposed utility rate increases.
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:
2023-46-04	- approval of a change order to the contract with Clean Earth Environmental for disposal of vector spoils through December 31, 2023 in the amount of \$43,500.
2023-46-05	- approval of a one-year contract with Alexander Chemical Corporation for the purchase of Fluorosilicic Acid for Water Treatment in the amount of \$133,500.
2023-46-06	- approval of a one-year contract renewal with AT&T for the purchase of Centrex phone services in the amount of \$135,000.
2023-46-07	- approval of a contract supplemental/change order with SNR Technologies for Powdered Activated Carbon in the amount of \$149,000, bringing the total amount of the contract to \$1,057,000.
2023-46-08	- approval of a contract supplemental/change order with Solenis LLC for Biosolids Dewatering Polymer in the amount of \$230,000, bringing the total amount of the contract to \$2,185,355.28.
2023-46-09	- approval of a one-year contract with Alexander Chemical Corporation for the purchase of Liquid Chlorine Cylinders in the amount of \$235,365.
2023-46-10	- approval of a contract with A1 Asphalt, Inc. for the Water Main Break Patch Repair Project, in the amount of \$274,912.
2023-46-11	- approval of a contract extension with Olameter Corporation for meter reading in the amount of \$294,365.13.
2023-46-12	- approval of a contract with Balkema Construction for the Water Station No.4 Roof Replacement in the amount of \$307,000.
2023-46-13	- approval of a sole source agreement with Brentwood Industries for the purchase of direct replacement equipment for Wastewater primary clarifiers for the clarifier drive machinery system in the amount of \$380,200.
2023-46-14	- approval of an amendment to the agreement between the City of Kalamazoo and Can-Do Kalamazoo for a mixed-use business incubator, with the City providing Can-Do Kalamazoo \$100,000 annually over a three-year period for a total investment of \$300,000.
2023-46-15	- approval of an exchange agreement for innerduct utilities between the City and 123.Net, Inc.
2023-46-16	- approval of an agreement with the US Department of the Interior US Geological Survey (USGS) for \$85,332 for groundwater and surface water monitoring sites and gage stations throughout the Kalamazoo Regional Water Supply WSSN 03520.

- approval and acceptance of an easement from the Kalamazoo County Land Bank Authority for sidewalk purposes along Southworth Terrace where the previous and newly constructed sidewalk encroaches along the western edge of the property line of 1601 E Main Street.
- approval of the following appointments to boards, commissions, and committees:
 - the appointment of Tressa Greschak to the Environmental Concerns Committee for a term expiring on January 1, 2027.
 - the appointment of Tony McReynolds to the Zoning Board of Appeals for a term expiring on March 31, 2027.

2023-46-17**2023-46-18**

Commissioner Praedel, seconded by Vice Mayor Hess, 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 unanimously.

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

NAYS: None

*At the time of the vote, Commissioner Decker abstained from voting on Item G-16, the acceptance of an easement from the Kalamazoo County Land Bank Authority for sidewalk purposes.

Regular Agenda items were considered next.

Public Services Director James Baker delivered a presentation entitled *2024 Proposed Utility Rates: City Commission, Monday, December 4, 2023*. A copy of the slides from this presentation was filed with the papers for this meeting.

Libby Heiny-Cogswell, Chair of the Utility Policy Committee (UPC), reported the UPC unanimously supported the proposed utility rate increases and rate recommendations for the water system.

In response to questions and comments from City Commissioners, Director Baker provided the following information:

- the intersection of the climate crisis and utility operations was an issue of system resiliency. Some actions were being taken to improve resiliency, such as installing generators at facilities, but there were additional opportunities for positive investment through implementation of the City's Sustainability Plan.
- compared to Battle Creek, Grand Rapids, and Ann Arbor, the Kalamazoo water and wastewater systems had the lowest rates.
- moving from quarterly billing to monthly billing was a goal for the utility. For that to happen, there would need to be more investment in smart meters so the City could get usage data on a monthly basis.

Regular Agenda

2023-46-19

First Reading of an Ordinance to Set Rates for Water Service

2023-46-19

First Reading of an
Ordinance to Set Rates for
Water Service (cont'd)

- if utility rates were not increased now, there would be staff layoffs and compliance violations; the necessary increase in 2025 would likely be 15-17%.
- the City had been aggressive and successful at seeking federal and state grant funding for lead service line replacements, and those efforts would continue.
- there were new, evolving technologies for removing PFAS from the water supply. Staff was engaged with the research, but those technologies had not been developed to operate at scale.
- because the utility produced goods and services, they used the Producers Price Index rather than the Consumers Price Index. But their costs also included some of the same costs as households, like gas and electricity. The utilities provided critical services, so there were costs and inflationary pressures that could not be avoided. The utilities funded themselves and did not receive tax dollars.
- creative efforts to reduce costs included dewatering sludge before disposal, pre-buying ductile iron pipe to keep projects on schedule and on budget, and using cast-in-place pipe lining to rehabilitate, rather than replace, water main.

Vice Mayor Hess noted this was a tremendous opportunity to educate residents.

Commissioner Praedel cited inflation statistics from a Bloomberg article entitled “Just How Bad is the US Cost of Living Squeeze?”, and he compared the considerable inflation of household expenses since 2020 to the much higher inflation experienced by the water and wastewater utilities. Commissioner Praedel described how cast-in-place pipe lining worked in his neighborhood.

An opportunity was given for public comments on an ordinance to amend certain sections of Chapter 38 of the Kalamazoo City Code to change the rates charged for drinking water to increase water system revenues, but no comments were offered.

Commissioner Hoffman, seconded by Commissioner Decker, moved to offer for first reading an ordinance to amend certain sections of Chapter 38 of the Kalamazoo City Code to change the rates charged for drinking water to increase water system revenues, effective January 1, 2024.

Prior to a vote on the motion, Commissioner Decker remarked on the changing regulatory environment and stated the proposed utility system improvements would serve the City well in the future. Commissioner Decker expressed support for the water affordability program through the Community Action Agency and encouraged people to seek assistance through this program.

Commissioner Praedel stated it was difficult to raise rates, but inaction would lead to future pain that would be much worse than the pain of raising rates now. Commissioner Praedel stated the assistance programs would help offset the rate increases.

Vice Mayor Hess noted the City’s housing issues were due to a lack of investment in prior decades, and she stated the City could not let that happen with the utilities.

Mayor Anderson pointed out the water and wastewater systems were owned by the rate payers; the City did not make a profit from them. Mayor Anderson remarked on the significant cost increases for goods and services and how that impacted the utilities. Mayor Anderson stated the provision of clean water and the treatment of wastewater were two of the most important services the City provided.

With a roll call vote the motion passed unanimously.

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

NAYS: None

Mayor Anderson introduced Item G-11, a resolution setting a public hearing for the FY 2024 Budget.

Commissioner Praedel noted the proposed budget was available on the City's website, www.kalamazoocity.org.

When an opportunity was given for public comments on this item, the following people addressed the City Commission:

Jeff Messer, City resident, highlighted upcoming City Commission actions related to the budget. Mr. Messer described opportunities for public participation and provided information on the availability of budget documents. Mr. Messer encouraged people to be engaged with the budget process, and he asked whether there would be any other budget discussions.

City Manager Ritsema stated the Committee of the Whole meeting scheduled for December 11th was the only meeting dedicated to the budget. City Manager Ritsema clarified the adoption of the budget was scheduled for the business meeting on January 22nd. City Manager Ritsema explained the City Commission's proposed meeting schedule for 2024 would place the second business meeting in January on January 22nd rather than January 16th so that Commissioners could attend community events for both Martin Luther King Jr. Day and the National Day of Racial Healing. City Manager Ritsema stated the proposed 2024 meeting schedule would be presented to the Commission for approval at the next business meeting.

Vice Mayor Hess, seconded by Commissioner Cooney, moved to adopt a **RESOLUTION** setting a public hearing on January 2, 2024 to consider the proposed Fiscal Year 2024 Budget for the City of Kalamazoo.

With a roll call vote the motion passed unanimously.

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

NAYS: None

2023-46-19

First Reading of an Ordinance to Set Rates for Water Service (cont'd)

2023-46-20

Resolution 23-65 Setting a Public Hearing for the FY2024 Budget

2023-46-21

Approval of Minutes

Commissioner Praedel requested the following amendments to the minutes from the City Commission Business Meeting on November 20, 2023:

- on page 263 of the minutes, paragraphs three and four, correct "Vice Mayor Cooney" to read "Commissioner Cooney".
- on page 264 of the minutes, paragraph two, strike the second sentence and replace with, "Commissioner Praedel stated it was shocking to think the City Commission was facing issues like antisemitism in 2023, and he stated the Commission could be an example of how people with different ideas could work together in a time of polarization."

There were no objections to Commissioner Praedel's requested amendments.

Commissioner Praedel encouraged Commissioners to read the meeting minutes prior to approval to make sure the permanent record of the meeting was accurate.

An opportunity was given for public comments on this item, but no comments were offered.

Commissioner Wilson, seconded by Commissioner Decker, moved to approve the minutes from the City Commission meetings on November 20, 2023, as amended.

With a roll call vote the motion passed unanimously.

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

NAYS: None

2023-46-22

Postponement of a Resolution Vacating Portions of Cooley and Eleanor Streets

Assistant City Planner Bobby Durkee introduced Item G-19, a resolution vacating portions of Cooley and Eleanor Streets, and stated the resolution in the original meeting packet contained incorrect prices for the two properties. Assistant City Planner Durkee explained the higher prices in the resolution were the appraisals if no utility easements were needed, but the two rights-of-way contained underground utilities, which lowered the values of the properties. Assistant City Planner Durkee noted the resolution had been updated with the correct prices.

In response to a question from Commissioner Decker, Assistant City Planner Durkee confirmed the correct sale prices for the two street vacations were \$86,000 and \$201,000.

An opportunity was given for public comments on this item, but no comments were offered.

Commissioner Hoffman, seconded by Commissioner Praedel, moved to postpone until December 18, 2023 consideration of a resolution vacating Cooley Street between Eleanor Street and West Kalamazoo Avenue, and vacating Eleanor Street between North Westnedge Avenue and North Park Street.

With a roll call vote this motion passed 6-0 with one abstention.

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

NAYS: None

ABSTAIN: Commissioner Wilson*

*At the time of the vote, Commissioner Wilson indicated he was abstaining due to a conflict of interest.

City Manager Ritsema highlighted the work and accomplishments of staff in the 311 Customer Service Center.

Next, an item of New Business was considered.

Commissioner Decker noted there was a balance of \$91,000 in the City Commission Initiative Fund, and she suggested that some of these funds be used to install water fountains in City parks. Commissioner Decker stated the estimated cost for the equipment, installation, and plumbing was \$32,000 per fountain.

City Manager Ritsema reported the \$91,000 balance was net of a \$33,000 carry-forward from 2022 and the recent allocation of \$30,000 for a van for the Police Athletic League. City Manager Ritsema recommended the Commission expend its initiative funds in the year budgeted, rather than carrying forward dollars from year to year.

Commissioner Praedel thanked Commissioner Decker for thinking of ways to use these dollars. Commissioner Praedel suggested using a Committee of the Whole meeting at the beginning of 2024 or the City Commission planning retreat in February to discuss possible uses for the City Commission Initiatives Fund.

Commissioner Decker expressed support for Commissioner Praedel's suggestion.

City Manager Ritsema offered the Committee of the Whole meeting on January 22nd as an opportunity for Commissioners to discuss the Initiatives Fund.

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

Commissioner Cooney thanked Dr. Abubakr for his comments. Commissioner Cooney expressed sympathy for the Israelis but stated indiscriminate bombing in Gaza was wrong. Commissioner Cooney it would be a betrayal to not speak out against these actions.

Commissioner Praedel challenged people to shop locally during the holidays. Commissioner Praedel recognized CFO Steve Vicenzi and his team for their work to prepare the FY 2024 Budget. Commissioner Praedel remarked on comments regarding non-motorized transportation.

Commissioner Decker thanked CFO Vicenzi for the FY 2024 Budget. Commissioner Decker remarked on Mr. Elias's comments about Kalamazoo Public Schools. Commissioner Decker noted Governor Gretchen Whitmer had recently created the Michigan Department of Lifelong Education, Advancement

2023-46-22

Postponement of a Resolution Vacating Portions of Cooley and Eleanor Streets (cont'd)

City Manager's Report

New Business

Discussion of City Commission Initiative Fund

City Commissioner Comments

City Commissioner
Comments

and Potential (MiLEAP), and she expressed hope that this work would help get students back to pre-COVID performance levels.

Vice Mayor Hess thanked Information Technology staff for their recent assistance. Vice Mayor Hess invited people to shop downtown and visit venues like the Civic Theatre, Farmers Alley Theater, and the newly opened movie theater. Vice Mayor Hess thanked Western Michigan University for hosting an event to celebrate George White, the first African-American contractor in the City. Vice Mayor Hess reported she had attended a meeting that morning to discuss downtown construction with stakeholders, and she thanked participants for their kindness and respect. Vice Mayor Hess thanked staff in the Parks and Recreation Department for the lights in Bronson Park.

Mayor Anderson remarked on recent events in the community, including the Change of Status graduation at Urban Alliance, the regional gathering of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, and the gingerbread house competition sponsored by Community Homeworks.

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 10:15 p.m.

Scott A. Borling
City Clerk

Approved by the City Commission on: _____

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