

CITY OF KALAMAZOO  
Regular Meeting  
SHARED PROSPERITY KALAMAZOO (SPK) ORGANIZING COMMITTEE  
12:30 pm  
May 6, 2024

**Members Present:** Brenda Hughes, Don Cooney, Bobby Hopewell, Kym Hollars, \*Alyssa Stewart, Alonzo Wilson

**Members Absent:** Carol McGlinn; Ben Damerow, Patrice 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 Don Cooney, to excuse the absent members, seconded by Kym Hollars. A voice vote was taken, and the motion passed.**

**ADOPTION OF AGENDA**

**The agenda was approved by consensus as presented.**

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

**A motion was made by Brenda Hughes, to approve the minutes of March 4, 2024 as presented, seconded by Kym Hollars. A voice vote was taken, and the motion passed.**

**NEW BUSINESS**

1. Rx Kids Update (Alyssa Stewart)

\*Alyssa Stewart was present via phone.

Alyssa Stewart shared that this work is progressing. They have heard positive things about the approval of TANF funding as part of the State's budgeting process. She said that a direct budget was passed from the House Representative to the State Senate. It included a \$10 million placeholder for family and infant support programs – which is what Rx Kids is under. Alyssa said they are optimistic that anywhere from \$10-24 million would be approved for this purpose.

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For Kalamazoo it would be \$1.5 million in TANF funds could be leveraged to pilot this program for City of Kalamazoo residents starting as early as January 2025.

Alyssa reported that stakeholders continue to meet and have made progress in identifying local leads. Cradle Kalamazoo will be the local community engagement lead, ensuring a local parent voice and convening an ongoing committee to work with the central point team. Kalamazoo Community Foundation will hold a local Rx Kids fund. She said they have started fundraising and have been asked to focus on gathering money for two years of child allowances (\$10.2 million dollars). Fundraising will continue between now and the end of this calendar year to launch the full program. If they are not successful in obtaining the full amount needed, they will run the peri-natal program which consists of a pre-natal payment of \$1500 and three monthly payments of \$500 each. Alyssa asked for any ideas for local fundraising.

In response to a question from Don Cooney, Alyssa clarified that they are fundraising for two years of cash allowances equaling \$10.2 million. It is about \$4.8 million per year for cash allowances and then they add the \$1.5 million in TANF to that. She said she could share the documents that break down the finances. Alyssa indicated they would like to do a full five year pilot. That would be \$5 million each year for cash allowances.

Bobby Hopewell asked for the TANF definition. Alyssa shared that the initials stood for Temporary Assistance for Needy Families. She indicated there are millions of dollars in unspent TANF funds for the state of Michigan. Their goal is to get those funds back in the community.

Brenda Hughes asked if they could support the effort by contacting any legislators. Alyssa said it is a part of the budgeting process for Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS). She indicated that any advocacy would be welcome. They've worked with Representative Christine Morse, Representative Julie Rogers, and Senator Sean McCann. Alyssa thought they would know if it would pass budget in the next three to four weeks.

Alonzo Wilson asked if they could see any roadblocks to starting a pilot program in January - outside of funding. Alyssa thought that funding was definitely the main roadblock. She did anticipate excitement as well as pushback to the program. They might need support to help people understand the program.

Don Cooney mentioned that some states are trying to pass state laws that prohibit giving money to people without a work requirement. Alyssa said that Rx Kids in Flint is watching that.

Alyssa shared that they were creating a letter of support to have on hand as they fundraise. She requested that if anyone wanted to sign the letter of support, they email her.

## 2. SPK Coordinator Updates (Kevin Ford)

Kevin Ford reported that he submitted three requests for 2025 Foundation for Excellence (FFE) funding: 1) Local Rx Kids for the \$1.5 million for TANF match, 2) Homebased childcare business supports in core neighborhoods, 3) The Financial Opportunity Center at NACD. He is

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just waiting to hear if the requests will be funded. Kevin will keep the Committee members informed.

Kevin Ford reported he is now the staff liaison for the Northside Cultural Business District Authority (NCBDA). They are a corridor improvement authority that has a Tax Increment Financing (TIF) plan. He thought there may be opportunities for Committee Members to support the projects coming from the NCBDA. Kevin briefly explained the boundaries of the TIF district and how TIF worked. He shared that he was still learning about it. Kevin stated that he would keep everyone posted on opportunities for engagement and how they can support the district. He also stated that there is property around NACD that is available for development.

Kevin said he is working with the Eastside Neighborhood Association regarding a property they've had challenges getting developed. He is also working with the Edison Neighborhood Association to implement an economic development tool in Edison. Kevin said they don't know what that looks like at this time. They are seeking to clarify how the Neighborhood desires to help businesses and what the best and most effective way is to do that.

Kevin gave an update on the Fellow from Chile who visited. They were able to engage some Latino entrepreneurs to partner with El Concilio. There is a database of about 60 Latin businesses. He reported success with an event held at El Concilio. Kevin said they are looking to partner with El Concilio again and get entrepreneurs connected with local and State resources.

Kevin referenced The Kalamazoo Investment group that gave a presentation to the SPK Committee. He was able to connect them with a local funders group and the rotary club.

Bobby Hopewell asked for an update on Experiential Learning with Kalamazoo Public Schools. Kevin said they are spending money slowly. He offered to sit with the principals to help them brainstorm. Kevin reported that Parent Teacher Organizations (PTOs) have been established in Lincoln and Northeastern. That's a success. Bobby Hopewell explained to newer Committee Members that they had given funding to five schools: Woodward, Washington, Edison, Northeastern, and Lincoln. Those schools didn't have PTOs and had very little opportunity to offer students experiential learning.

### **UNFINISHED BUSINESS**

None.

### **COMMUNICATIONS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS**

1. Economic Development Open House (Kevin Ford)

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Kevin announced an Open House on Wednesday, May 8 from 4-7pm at the Kalamazoo Public Library VanDeusen room. He encouraged everyone to come out and give input on the Economic Development Strategy. Kevin said he would send them a flier.

**PUBLIC COMMENTS**

Mia Sanchez, Community Outreach Coordinator for the Institute of Public Scholarship, spoke about their initiatives in Kalamazoo. She said they are working with the City on housing development. They plan to purchase property on Gull Road and Ampersee, remediate the soil, and create 10 homes as a transition hub for those who are displaced. The people in these homes would go through their programs which consist of health care, mental health care, addiction treatment, and financial classes. The hope is the residents would eventually be able to go through KNHS to purchase homes. Another initiative on that same property is called the Ampersee Garden. This is a community garden where they will have garden parties and cooking classes. Mia mentioned their youth programs, ancestry program, wellness program, and wholistic learning. Their programs are geared towards black, brown, and indigenous people.

Mattie Jordan-Woods talked about the boundaries of NCBDA. She shared that the main priority for the NCBDA was to provide financial incentives for resident-owned businesses. Mattie stated that it was difficult for residents to get involved when most of their property was purchased by outside developers. She said that she owns a piece of property across from Metro. Mattie plans to build a Northside entrepreneur's market. The goal is to do popups for people to see things they would like to do that can make money. She offered to show them the design after the meeting. The design allows up to 15 entrepreneurs, where 50% would be Northside residents and others could be from anywhere.

**COMMITTEE MEMBER COMMENTS**

Don Cooney said they hear a lot about rents going up really high. There is a State law that prohibits cities from doing rent control. He shared that House Bill #4947 would restore that power to the city. Don reported that a number of cities have already passed resolutions supporting that bill, and the City of Kalamazoo plans to do that too. If the bill passes, then they would look to see what they could do to help.

Bobby Hopewell stated that they had meetings with City Commissioners. They talked about trying to reconvene the business community around shared prosperity. He thought it was time to have conversations with the business community again. Bobby asked for volunteers to serve on a subcommittee to move this forward. Don Cooney, Brenda Hughes, and Kym Hollars volunteered.

Bobby Hopewell asked if they needed to do anything with regards to the 2025 budget. Kevin stated that right now internal staff were doing their review. Later there may be some support elements with which the group could help. Bobby also asked about ARPA dollars. Don Cooney

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stated they are all planned, but there could be flexibility. The dollars need to be allocated by the end of the year.

**ADJOURNMENT**

Bobby Hopewell adjourned the meeting at 1:24 p.m.