

Roll Call

The Kalamazoo City Commission met as a Committee of the Whole on Tuesday, January 2, 2024 at 5:03 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.

Public Comments

An opportunity was given for general public comments, but no comments were offered. (Note: there were technical difficulties that precluded call-in public comments.)

2024-01-01

Presentation on the Draft
5-Year Parks and
Recreation Master Plan

Parks and Recreation Director Patrick McVerry and Eric Dryer and Rachel Bush from OHM Advisors delivered a presentation entitled *Kalamazoo Parks and Recreation Master Plan: Master Plan Summary, January 2, 2024*. A copy of the slides from this presentation was filed with the papers for this meeting.

In response to questions and comments from City Commissioners, the presenters offered the following information:

- the presentation featured parks that were high-priority due to their equity scoring. The full plan included recommendations for Milham Park and other parks that were not in the presentation.
- the cost estimates in the plan were for capital projects, not operational needs. Staffing shortages were due to budget constraints, not the lack of applicants.
- the plan included statistics on the City's park amenities compared to national averages. This information might show where park sponsorships and naming opportunities could be effective. If the City pursues sponsorships and naming opportunities, the cost of on-going maintenance should be included for larger amenities.
- the extension of the Kalamazoo River Valley Trail through Blanch Hull Park was one of the recommended improvements.
- the City should be able to maintain a pace of 2-3 park improvements per year, although that number will vary depending on the size of the parks.
- the City has finished all the improvements specified in the current 5-year plan except for improvements to Verberg and Milham Parks. The Verberg and Milham projects are scheduled to be completed in 2024.
- Frays Park was not on the project list in the current 5-year plan. Residents identified the park during the Imagine Kalamazoo 2025 process, and the City was able to do the project using dollars from the Foundation for Excellence.

- major sources for potential grant funding included the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (MDNR), Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP) grants from the Federal Highway Administration (FHA), PetSafe for dog parks, the Tony Hawk Foundation for skate parks, the Kalamazoo Community Foundation (KCF), and the Foundation for Excellence (FFE). Projects that are shovel ready are the most likely to be funded. The FHA never spends all of its TAP grant funds.
- there was no statutory requirement for a Parks and Recreation Master Plan, but the state requires a master plan to be eligible for MDNR funding.
- the Parks and Recreation Master Plan will incorporate input from Imagine Kalamazoo 2035 process when that process is complete.
- OHM Advisors works primarily in Michigan.
- staffing and funding for parks and recreation in Kalamazoo is compared to national averages, not specific jurisdictions; Kalamazoo is on a similar path compared to other cities in Michigan.
- some park systems fund their operations with rental revenues and their park improvements with dedicated millages. Dedicated millages are common both nationally and across Michigan. The recommendations for Versluis-Dickinson Park are aimed at supporting sports tourism and enhancing rental income. Detroit uses Community Benefit Agreement to fund park improvements.
- Kalamazoo has an excellent park system for its size; its sports and athletic facilities meet the needs of the community. Areas of opportunity include improving the perception of safety in parks and using parks as connectors to other places in the City.

Commissioner Decker remarked that it was good to see recommendations from young people in the final plan.

City Manager Ritsema noted parks could be a topic of conversation at the City Commission planning retreat in February.

An opportunity was given for general comments from City Commissioners, but no comments were offered.

The meeting adjourned at 5:59 p.m.

Scott A. Borling
City Clerk

Approved by the City Commission on: _____

2024-01-01

Presentation on the Draft
5-Year Parks and
Recreation Master Plan
(cont'd)

Adjournment