

# Agenda

## Shared Prosperity Kalamazoo (SPK) Organizing Committee



City of Kalamazoo

Monday, March 10, 2025

12:30 PM

The Community Room at City Hall - 241 W. South Street

**A. CALL TO ORDER/ROLL CALL**

**B. ADOPTION OF AGENDA**

(Action: Motion to approve the agenda)

**C. APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

1. Approval of the minutes from the Shared Prosperity Kalamazoo Organizing Committee meeting on November 4, 2024 & January 13, 2025 (Action: Motion to approve)
  - a. Approve November 2024 minutes
  - b. Approve January 2025 minutes

**D. PUBLIC COMMENTS**

**E. COMMITTEE MEMBER COMMENTS**

**F. NEW BUSINESS**

1. Imagine Kalamazoo 2035: Update & Meeting on the Go

**G. UNFINISHED BUSINESS**

1. 2025 Meeting Time Amendment

**H. COMMUNICATIONS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS**

**I. STAFF REPORTS AND UPDATES**

**J. ADJOURNMENT**

CITY OF KALAMAZOO  
Regular Meeting  
SHARED PROSPERITY KALAMAZOO (SPK) ORGANIZING COMMITTEE  
12:30 pm  
November 4, 2024

**Members Present:** Don Cooney, Bobby Hopewell, Carol McGlinn, Brenda Hughes, Alyssa Stewart, Ben Damerow, Patrese Griffin

**Members Absent:** Alonzo Wilson, Kym Hollars

**City Staff:** Kevin Ford, Shared Prosperity Kalamazoo Coordinator, Beth Cheeseman, Executive Administrative Assistant, Jerrid Burdue, Neighborhood Business and Special Projects Coordinator

**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 Brenda Hughes, to excuse the absent members, seconded by Carol McGlinn. A voice vote was taken, and the motion passed.**

**ADOPTION OF AGENDA**

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

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

It was pointed out that Kym Holland's name was bolded, and Patrese Griffin's name was misspelled.

**A motion was made by Carol McGlinn, to approve the minutes of September 9, 2024 as amended, seconded by Patrese Griffin. A voice vote was taken, and the motion passed.**

**COMMITTEE MEMBER COMMENTS**

Carol McGlinn reminded people to vote in the upcoming election.

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**NEW BUSINESS**

1. Kalamazoo Forward Ventures

Bobby Hopewell shared information about Kalamazoo Forward Ventures, an investment firm that will be doing work in the community. He stated that, traditionally, people of color and other groups don't have as many opportunities to be involved in venture capital or private equity. The firm is seeking to change that. They believe that if they invest in a diverse range of opportunities for people left behind, they can change the nature of the community. He made a point of saying the funds are for the under-resourced, under-represented, and under-invested - also for unique opportunities. Bobby said that applicants don't have to fit in a certain category. It is possible that they will invest in something if it makes sense and drives employment in the community. Bobby shared a slide naming the members of Kalamazoo Forward Ventures.

\*Don Cooney entered the meeting.

Bobby Hopewell said that they want to particularly change the story for the people of Kalamazoo in addition to an even larger area. Kalamazoo Forward Ventures is trying to change a generation and provide a path for those who have great ideas. They raised \$50 million, and the fund is currently closed. Bobby said the firm has General Partners, Managing Partners, and Limited Partners. There are three areas of concentration: the Main Street Fund, Real Estate Fund, and Venture Capital Fund. Bobby emphasized that this money is investment and not grants. They are not funding non-profit organizations.

Main Street Fund

Bobby explained that this fund invests in local projects. The projects could be retail, food, or manufacturing. He said quite a few women have stepped forward for possible funding.

Real Estate Fund – Investment.

They are working with Jamauri Bogan with the goal to impact affordable housing in unique ways. Bobby gave the example of establishing a factory that does prefabrication. That is something that could possibly use local property, the minority contractors program, and lessen transportation costs. He said that the Community Foundation has an amazing Impact Investment fund targeting persons of color. They're hoping to connect with them through Jamauri Bogan.

Carol McGlenn asked if Bobby meant houses when he talked about prefabrication. Bobby responded that it could be walls for apartment buildings, houses, or even mixed-use developments.

Venture Capital fund – investment.

Bobby said this fund was about high growth projects. These would be projects/developments that would bring in a lot of technical people and grow to be massive. He shared that Kalamazoo is under-invested in high growth projects.

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Bobby shared that Kalamazoo Forward Ventures has invested in Glidance which is an AI driven cane. Bobby was able to try the product out and the cane guided him through a crowd of people. They are also talking with the founder of CircNova which is a Biotechnology company that needs lab space.

Alyssa Stewart asked if they would raise additional funds and add more partners in the future. Bobby said they would look at additional limited partners if they raised money for a new fund.

Kevin Ford asked if the funds were private or public funds. He also wondered, if they were private funds, why they worried about the terminology they used and specifically used words like under-resourced, under-represented, under-invested. Bobby said they are private funds, and he referred to the Fearless Fund for which a lawsuit was filed stating that it was discriminatory. They are cognizant of that suit.

Kevin Ford asked about the amount in each fund. Bobby indicated that it could be fluid, agreeing with Carol McGlenn that the amount in each fund might be shifted by project.

Alyssa Stewart wondered if the results of these investments would be shared publicly. Bobby hoped that the entrepreneurs would share their success stories. He also indicated that it is usually 10 years before you see a return on investments. They want to see people succeed.

Jerrid Burdue asked if they were open to referrals. Bobby shared their contact information. He said that there is an intake process, and everyone gets a response – even if they do not get an investment. Bobby and Patrese both added that investment does not have to be monetary, it could be connecting two parties, a line of credit, a loan, or equity in the person’s company.

Jerrid Burdue asked how the City could be a support to them. Bobby said that removing barriers would help. They should be innovative and creative in moving the City in a different way than they have. Bobby thought they needed to be strategic, have expectations, provide access to resources, and encourage people to invest in their own success. Brenda Hughes thought they needed to think about zoning and prioritize start up situations. Bobby agreed but clarified that he is not against regulation.

## **UNFINISHED BUSINESS**

### 1. Economic Development Strategy

Kevin Ford reported that the City Commission approved the Economic Development Strategy at their first meeting in October. He said there is one paragraph on page four of the strategy that has a strong focus on equitable economic development, community wealth building, and having a real opportunity for residents to allow them to share the prosperity of development. It is about living in the values of an inclusive and thriving community. That could look like a lot of different things. Kevin said he is doing some research and talking to folks. The community wealth building piece is jumping out to him in terms of reframing the work of SPK. The original

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intent of their work was to address generational poverty. That is highly relevant, but not a real differentiator in terms of what the non-profits are trying to do with their work. Kevin said they are reframing it as community wealth building. When they looked at just addressing generational poverty, the inertia of that work limits possibilities. There is no limit on ways to generate wealth for a community. Kevin thought it opened a different realm of possibilities in terms of how to utilize resources for the City and what resources they can pursue (not just FFE). He stated that Management was going to want them to do things out of the strategy. Kevin thought that 2025 would be interesting as they move forward. He wants the Economic Development Strategy on their radar as they explore different things around community wealth building and getting families on a permanent path of economic security.

Don Cooney asked if he was talking about the difference between survival and flourishing. Kevin Ford indicated he was talking about getting beyond sustaining folks in impoverishment. Once they get beyond that, options open - including civic participation to serve.

Don Cooney said he liked how they were measuring success in the Economic Development Strategy. They measure per capita income and how many people get above A.L.I.C.E.

Jerrid Burdue added that the steering committee for the Economic Development Strategy was the Economic Development Corporation (EDC). He said they are hoping to activate the board and have them hold staff accountable to move towards those measurements. They are looking at above living wage job creation. Jerrid said they hope to get people moving upward in terms of economic mobility.

Brenda Hughes questioned a number used for households in the City and if that included those who don't have a house. Kevin Ford said that the data was from the most recent United Way A.L.I.C.E. data and did not include unhoused people.

Kevin Ford asked them to take a look at the strategy and let him know if they have questions.

## **COMMUNICATIONS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS**

None.

## **STAFF REPORTS AND UPDATES**

### 1. Aspen Think Xchange 2024

Kevin Ford reported on his trip to Aspen Think Xchange 2024. There were 15 organizations in the 2Gen accelerator. There are over 250 people across the country involved in this type of work. He made a lot of connections and ran into interesting and unique 2Gen programming. He gave an example of a children's hospital in Ohio which had tax preparation on site, a match savings program, workforce development, and a lot of family services at the hospital.

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Carol McGlinn asked if the services were for anyone or for families of children with long-term hospital stays. Kevin thought the services were for anyone, but he didn't know if that included hospital staff. He met the folks from Jackson, Mississippi who work with the Springboard to Opportunities program. He said it is a cash transfer program which gives \$1,000 a month for families. The last cohort was 150 families, and this is the fourth or fifth cohort. Kevin stated interest in learning more about that program and what happens during the year to help people save. He said he was looking forward to figuring out how to innovate within that 2Gen space. Kevin thought there were interesting potential opportunities working with entrepreneurial parents as they moved forward with the work.

Bobby Hopewell said he thought it would be interesting if someone studied the level of poverty within Kalamazoo hospital staff. Patrese Griffin shared that the Rentable Program at United Way has been open for a year. It is a program to help the A.L.I.C.E. households. She said there are many applications from people employed by the hospitals, non-profits, and factories.

Bobby Hopewell asked if the Rx Kids type program has seen an increase in more babies being born. Kevin Ford said he didn't ask, but he can ask. He will send the SPK Committee members the concept posters from the conference. He asked them to let him know if they have questions. The people doing this work are happy to share what they are doing.

Carol McGlinn asked if they are doing any additional programming with Rx Kids – like parenting classes, or savings programs. Don Cooney shared that they are partnering with all the organizations working with kids. Kevin Ford said that additional resources were offered in Flint, but they were optional. He remembered Dr. Luke saying he was interested in studying the economic portion. Kevin proposed a community where they have Rx Kids for one year; years 1-4 they would have a family development account, then when the child enters kindergarten, a children's account kicks in. Don Cooney shared that Up Together is monitoring and seeing what is happening with them. The latest analysis shows very positive things.

\*Don Cooney left the meeting.

Brenda Hughes asked if the hospital in Ohio was funding their different programs through grants. Kevin Ford said he didn't get all the funding information but thinks some of it was grant funded.

\*Patrese Griffin left the meeting.

Bobby Hopewell said he heard statistics recently that 40% of people in the mission are not from Kalamazoo. Brenda Hughes said that was the correct statistic.

Bobby Hopewell gave a book recommendation, *Of Boys & Men*, by Richard Reeves.

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**PUBLIC COMMENTS**

None.

**ADJOURNMENT**

Bobby Hopewell adjourned the meeting at approximately 1:39 p.m.

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**Members Present:** Don Cooney, Carol McGlinn, Alyssa Stewart, Alonzo Wilson

**Members Absent:** Bobby Hopewell, Patrese Griffin, Brenda Hughes, Ben Damerow, Kym Hollars

**City Staff:** Kevin Ford, Shared Prosperity Kalamazoo Coordinator, Beth Cheeseman, Executive Administrative Assistant

**CALL TO ORDER**

The meeting was called to order at 12:38 p.m. by Vice Chair Carol McGlinn.

**ROLL CALL**

Kevin Ford conducted a roll call of the organizing committee and determined a quorum was not present.

**ADOPTION OF AGENDA**

A quorum was not present, and no vote could be taken.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

A quorum was not present, and no vote could be taken.

**COMMITTEE MEMBER COMMENTS**

Rx Kids

Alyssa Stewart gave an Rx Kids update. She explained they were waiting for information from Give Directly, the administrator for the Rx Kids program. Give Directly will receive the applications, review them for eligibility, approve and make payments. Alyssa said they are currently working with Cradle parents and community members to test the applications to make sure they are accessible and working well. She said the launch date (when applications are available) would either be February 12 or February 18. Any baby born on February 1 or after will be eligible and will get payments from whenever they enter the program forward. Alyssa said the launch celebration is planned for Sunday, February 23, 2025 from 12:30-4:00pm at the Kalamazoo Valley Museum. The event will be tailored for those pregnant and people with young children. She said they are getting a mailing list and invitation ready.

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Alyssa Stewart also shared that there was an Rx Kids stakeholder meeting scheduled for January 23, 2025. They are hoping to have the launch date locked in by then. She said that a news source indicated that the program was limited to the first 200 eligible people. Alyssa clarified that there is no limit of participants. There are funds for all the pregnant people in the City of Kalamazoo. Ideally, women would apply at 12-16 weeks pregnant, and payment would start at about 20 weeks of pregnancy. It is for City residents only. Alyssa said they are really close to being fully funded for two years – \$9.2 million. In about six months, they will raise funds for years three through five.

Alyssa Stewart said there will be a dashboard at RxKids.org that will show how many families are being served and how much money is going out. They are putting together an Rx Kids social media toolkit that they will share with their partners. Alyssa is coordinating with Patrice Griffin to talk with all the homeless service providers. There is a process by which people can use shelters as their address and housing providers can attest that the person is engaged with their service. At this time, they only verify addresses at the time of enrollment. Alyssa shared that the program is for ages 16 and up. A guardian would need to sign off on a minor's application. She said they are updating the Rx Kids fact sheet and will share it with Committee members. More marketing materials will be coming in the next couple weeks.

Alyssa Stewart shared that the University of Michigan Poverty Solutions center is the central evaluator of the program. They are in conversation with the Upjohn Institute, which may help with the workforce development and economic development part of the program. She said they would be able to look at the data holistically but will also have Kalamazoo specific data.

Through conversation, it was clarified that to be eligible for the program, you have to have proof of residency for the City of Kalamazoo; regardless of how late you enter the program, you would get remaining payments forward – there are no retroactive payments. Steps are being taken to start programs in Saginaw and the Eastern Upper Peninsula. Alyssa said they are talking to people in other states as well. She said they will have physical posters and rack cards. They are going to try to include information about Rx Kids in the late February early March City mailing.

El Sol Update

Carol McGlenn said they are deciding about moving El Sol at the next school board meeting. She thinks they are leaning towards moving it to the Eastside of Kalamazoo because they want to expand the program and make the building much more kid focused. She said they know it would be a huge hit to the Vine neighborhood. They haven't made any decisions about what would happen to the current El Sol building. They want to have a community team look at the feasibility of the building and its potential use. Carol said it is not really a neighborhood school. You have to be committed to the bilingual program and start in first or second grade if you are an English speaker. She said they think they will get more Spanish speaking kids if they move because the highest populations are in Edison and the Eastside.

Carol McGlenn did say there was some miscommunication. She said the idea of moving El Sol's location was moving quickly, but everyone did their due diligence. They have tried to have a lot

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of conversations up until the community event happened. Carol said they had very little input from parents against the move. She spoke about the programs currently housed at education center (Chenery): Kalamazoo Area Math and Science Center (KAMSC), Kalamazoo Innovative Learning Program (KILP), and the Virtual program. Carol said she has been there when the kids are dismissed and it's crazy. She indicated that the current El Sol building is not in great shape. However, it will be three years before the new school will be built, so they have time to decide what is best for that location. One idea is a STEM program or a small pre-school program. Carol emphasized that they want to make sure Vine residents sit on the committee.

Don Cooney asked about the potential new location, saying there was a lack of places for youth on the Eastside. Carol stated that it was Baker Street between East Main and Nazareth – just blocks away from Northeastern. She clarified that the property is in Kalamazoo Township. Right now, El Sol is on a 6 acre property which includes Chenery. If the school stayed at its current location, there would only be 2.6 acres available. The lot on the Eastside is 12 acres. Carol spoke about the difficulties of rebuilding on the current location and that they would not be able to expand the program up to 8<sup>th</sup> grade. She mentioned their partnership with WMU on a bilingual program. Carol stated that 27/400 kids are from Vine neighborhood. El Sol has to have a 50/50 population of English/Spanish speaking kids. There was some conversation centered around school of choice.

Kevin Ford mentioned that the SPK Committee may be able to help with the conversation of what would benefit the community at the current El Sol location. Carol said she would prefer not to tear the building down. She said it is not a standalone building – water and electricity comes from Chenery. Carol emphasized again that she wants Vine representation and input in these decisions.

## **NEW BUSINESS**

### **1. 2025 Meetings Times and Location**

Kevin Ford stated that the next SPK meeting would probably be at the CPED office. He reported that the current meeting time and location didn't work for 2025. They either need to change the time or location of the meeting. Carol McGlinn suggested moving the meeting to the second Monday of the month. Kevin said he would look at the Community Room calendar and put the meeting time and location on the next meeting agenda.

### **2. 2025 Updates**

Kevin Ford highlighted that he will be working on a project with the Center for Community Based Enterprise on cooperative business developments. The Center will give general information on cooperative business developments and specific information about childcare cooperatives. Carol McGlinn asked if a childcare co-op would be childcare groups coming

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together to share costs. Kevin said there would be many different ways to form the co-op. The Center will give further information and if there is interest, they will proceed from there.

Kevin Ford announced the Happy City author event. He encouraged people to attend. There is a Ted Talk available too.

Kevin Ford said that Bobby Durkee, Assistant City Planner, suggested having staff come to their next meeting to talk with them about IK 2035 or conducting a Meeting On The Go.

Kevin Ford announced that he applied for a City Start grant through Bloomberg for \$75,000. He said the grant looks to identify the drivers and wealth accumulation/extraction for black residents. This wouldn't be taxpayer money, so they can be explicit that it is for black residents. Kevin said he should hear back this month. The kick-off for those accepted is in February in New York.

Alyssa Stewart shared that the Kalamazoo Community Foundation was accepted into a Community Foundation Leads cohort (economic mobility cohort). It is funded by the Gates Foundation. She said Kalamazoo is one of 10 communities who will send representatives to sessions for a year. Alyssa said she will bring back what they learn. At the end of the year, they will receive a \$50,000 grant that could support the planning or implementation of an idea.

Kevin Ford said he was tasked with coming up with a Business Retention and Expansion plan. He will be connecting with people in the SPK Committee to assist him with that. He also shared that the opportunity to submit 2026 special requests was coming up in a couple of months.

**UNFINISHED BUSINESS**

None.

**COMMUNICATIONS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS**

None.

**STAFF REPORTS AND UPDATES**

Staff reports and updates were given under Committee Member Comments.

**PUBLIC COMMENTS**

None.

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**ADJOURNMENT**

Carol McGlinn adjourned the meeting at approximately 1:27 p.m.