

Roll Call

A regular meeting of the Kalamazoo City Commission was held on Monday, March 17, 2025 at 7:02 p.m. in the City Commission Chambers at City Hall.

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT:

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

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT:

Stephanie Hoffman

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

Commissioner Excused

Commissioner Praedel, seconded by Commissioner Cooney, moved to excuse the absence of Commissioner Hoffman. With a voice vote the motion passed.

Invocation

The invocation, given by Sister Patricia Warbritton, Congregation of St. Joseph, was followed by the Pledge of Allegiance.

Proclamations
2025-13-01

Commissioner Wilson proclaimed March 2025 *March is Red Cross Month* in the City of Kalamazoo. Justin Ker, Interim Executive Director of the American Red Cross of Southwest Michigan, received the proclamation.

2025-13-02

Commissioner Decker proclaimed March 21, 2025 *Save Soil Day* in the City of Kalamazoo. Kim Campbell from the Save Soil organization received the proclamation.

Adoption of the Agenda

By unanimous consent the City Commission adopted its meeting agenda as presented.

Public Comments

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

An anonymous speaker expressed opposition to City Commission Rule 10.1 and recent changes that eliminated the ability of the public to move items from the Consent Agenda to the Regular Agenda. The speaker addressed various issues and stated everything was going wrong in the country and in the City of Kalamazoo.

Charles Hannah, City resident, spoke about recent shootings and expressed appreciation for the increased police presence downtown. Mr. Hannah stated mental health issues were driving homelessness and crime.

Maggie Adams, City resident, reported the Civil Rights Board had voted on February 5th to nominate Lewis Smith for appointment, and she questioned why this appointment was not on the City Commission agenda.

Cathy Phason, non-resident and Chair of the Civil Rights Board, questioned why the appointment of Lewis Smith to the Civil Rights Board was not on the City Commission agenda. Ms. Phason encouraged Commissioners to listen to the voice of the community.

Charlae Davis, City resident and Executive Director of ISAAC, questioned why the appointment of Lewis Smith to the Civil Rights Board was not on the City Commission agenda.

Jody Dozeman, City resident, spoke about various topics.

Amanda Charbonneau, City resident, noted the City Attorney had returned the socks she had distributed to Commissioners two meetings ago. Ms. Charboneau provided an update on the unhoused in Kalamazoo and reported Kalamazoo Gospel Ministries would not allow people to have more than two bags.

Tina McClinton, City resident, spoke about flooding and the elimination of greenspace in her neighborhood. Ms. McClinton also spoke about crime, affordable housing, and the closing of the state psychiatric hospital.

Matthew Allen, City resident, stated he would be watching the City Commission leading up to the municipal election in November, and he would work to unseat Commissioners who were not addressing mental illness, flooding, and crime.

Shona Espinoza, City resident, spoke about systemic barriers that kept the unhoused and those experiencing mental health issues from accessing resources.

Tobi Hannah-Davies, City resident, asked the City Commission to approve the appointment of Lewis Smith to the Civil Rights Board. Ms. Hanah-Davies stated the City's Fair Housing Ordinance was not being enforced, and she asked Commissioners to direct the City Attorney to research how the City could legally enforce this ordinance.

Lana Stier, non-resident, described conditions at the Kalamazoo County Jail. Ms. Stier noted the state closed all but one of the mental hospitals between 1970 and 1972, and many of these patients ended up in jail. Ms. Stier stated there were many dirty places in Kalamazoo that were owned by the City.

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:

- approval of a sole source purchase with Consumers Energy for the design and installation of 3-phase power at the Farmers Market Multipurpose Building in the amount of \$103,008.50.
- approval of a professional service agreement with Stantec for water rate and water financial consulting services in the amount of \$109,915.
- approval of a contract extension with Earth Works Lawn and Landscape for 13 and 26 Frequency 2025 Property Mowing in the amount of \$168,760.
- approval of a contract extension with Kendall Electric Inc for inventory and noninventory electrical supplies in the amount of \$250,000.

Public Comments
(cont'd)

Consent Agenda

2025-13-03

2025-13-04

2025-13-05

2025-13-06

2025-13-07	- approval of a sole source purchase with Collier Geophysics, LLC for Airborne Transient Electromagnetic (ATEM) surveys of five City of Kalamazoo Wellfields properties in the amount of \$277,006.
2025-13-08	- approval of a contract extension with Monoform LLC for Manhole Rehabilitation by Lining in the amount of \$930,870.
2025-13-09 Resolution 25-15	- adoption of a RESOLUTION authorizing the submission of a State of Michigan Department of Natural Resources Land and Water Conservation Fund grant application in the amount of \$500,000; and commit \$500,000 in match funding as well as \$326,400 in additional funding to complete the grant scope for projects at Milham Park.
2025-13-10 Resolution 25-16	- adoption of a RESOLUTION authorizing the submission of a State of Michigan Department of Natural Resources Trust Fund grant application in the amount of \$400,000; and commit \$667,600 in match funding as well as \$182,500 in additional resources to complete the grant scope for projects at Milham Park.
2025-13-11 Resolution 25-17	- adoption of a RESOLUTION authorizing the submission of a State of Michigan Department of Natural Resources Recreation Passport grant application in the amount of \$150,000; and commit \$318,700 in match funding as well as \$92,600 in additional funding to complete the grant scope for projects at Milham Park.
2025-13-12	- approval of an extension with the Road Commission of Kalamazoo County for 2025 township manhole adjustments and casting replacements in accordance with the open-term Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Road Commission of Kalamazoo County in the amount of \$358,900.
2025-13-13	- approval of the fourth amendment to the services agreement between the City of Kalamazoo and United Way of South Central Michigan for the reallocation of existing funding.
2025-13-14	- approval of a Housing Development Fund grant agreement with Community Homeworks for the Code Enforcement Repair Program in the amount of \$138,000.
2025-13-15	- acceptance of a 2024 Justice Assistance Grant (JAG) award in the amount of \$109,768 from the U.S. Department of Justice to purchase mobile video recording equipment for front-line patrol vehicles; and approval of a budget amendment.
2025-13-16	- approval of the following nominations for appointment and reappointment to the Foundation for Excellence Board of Directors: - the re-appointment of Jamauri Bogan as an At-Large Director for a three-year term ending on May 31, 2028. - the re-appointment of Mary Balkema as Housing Stakeholder Director for a three-year term ending on May 31, 2028.

- the appointment of Reverend Christine Westbury as Faith-Based Organization Stakeholder Director for a three-year term ending on May 31, 2028. - the appointment of Sarah Drumm as Neighborhood Stakeholder Director (Vine) for a three-year term ending on May 31, 2028.	2025-13-16 (cont'd)
- approval of the following appointments and reappointments to boards and commissions: - the reappointment of Tiyan Williams to the Community Development Act Advisory Committee as an at-large member for a term expiring March 31, 2028. - the appointment of Jacquelyn Hobson to the Community Development Act Advisory Committee as the Edison Neighborhood Representative for a term expiring March 31, 2028. - the appointment of Vivian Segovia-Perez to the Community Development Act Advisory Committee as an at-large member for a term expiring March 31, 2028. - the reappointment of Don Cooney to the Shared Prosperity Kalamazoo Organizing Committee for a term expiring on March 31, 2028. - the reappointment of Brenda Hughes to the Shared Prosperity Kalamazoo Organizing Committee for a term expiring on March 31, 2028.	2025-13-17
- approval of the Mayor's reappointments and appointments to the following boards: - the reappointment of Kwame Gyimah to the Downtown Development Authority and Downtown Economic Growth Authority Boards of Directors for terms expiring on March 31, 2029. - the appointment of Rick Searing to the Downtown Development Authority and Downtown Economic Growth Authority Boards of Directors for terms expiring on March 31, 2029. - the appointment of Trisha Kidd to the Downtown Development Authority and Downtown Economic Growth Authority Boards of Directors for terms expiring on March 31, 2029. - the appointment of Stanley Steppes to the Downtown Development Authority and Downtown Economic Growth Authority Boards of Directors for terms expiring on March 31, 2028. - the reappointment of Kiar Gamsho to the Northside Cultural Business District Authority Board of Directors for a term expiring on March 31, 2030. - the reappointment of Damian Henderson to the Northside Cultural Business District Authority Board of Directors for a term expiring on March 31, 2030.	2025-13-18

2025-13-18 (cont'd)

- the reappointment of Ricky Thrash to the Northside Cultural Business District Authority Board of Directors for a term expiring on March 31, 2030.
- the reappointment of Mitchell Curtiss to the Planning Commission for a term expiring on March 31, 2028.
- the appointment of Zack Wilson to the Planning Commission for a term expiring on March 31, 2028.
- the appointment of Thomas Kostrzewa to the Planning Commission for a term expiring on March 31, 2028.

2025-13-19

- approval of an easement contract with Consumers Energy for Henderson Park to upgrade the electrical facilities at 1505 Grand Avenue.

2025-13-20

- adoption of the following actuarial assumptions for the City of Kalamazoo Pension and Other Post Employment Benefit Plan (OPEB) plans: 1) Investment Return: 7.25%; 2) Administrative Expenses: 0.75% of payroll; 3) Wage Inflation: 3.50%; 4) Price Inflation: 2.25%; 5) Update proposed demographic assumption changes and 6) Amortization Period: No Change.

Commissioner Cooney, 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, Praedel*, Wilson, Vice Mayor Hess, Mayor Anderson

NAYS: None

*At the time of the vote, Commissioner Praedel abstained from voting on Item G-12, a Housing Development Fund grant agreement with Community Homeworks, because Community Homeworks was his employer.

2025-13-21
City Manager's
Report

City Manager Ritsema provided the following reports and updates:

- the *City of Kalamazoo Planning Commission Annual Report - 2024* was included in the agenda packet.
- the Community Policing Unit was actively training local businesses, non-profit organizations, and service providers on how to effectively respond to incidents of active violence. Since January 1st the unit had conducted 12, 2-hour training sessions, reaching 182 people.

City Manager Ritsema expressed appreciation to officers in the Community Policing Unit for their work to keep the community safe. City Manager Ritsema also commended officers in the Operations Division as they responded to 1,200 calls for service over the past weekend.

New Business

Items of New Business were considered next.

Mayor Anderson opened a discussion on the search process for a new City Manager. Mayor Anderson noted a City Commission subcommittee worked with the Human Resources Director in the past to manage search processes.

Commissioner Praedel expressed support for a national search for candidates carried out by a national search firm. Commissioner Praedel stated the process needed to include opportunities for community input.

Commissioner Decker expressed support for a national search for candidates but stated the Human Resources Department was capable of carrying out the search process. Commissioner Decker stated there needed to be an opportunity for the community to meet the candidates.

Vice Mayor Hess offered remarks on the importance of the City Manager position and stated this moment was an inflection point for the City. Vice Mayor Hess stated Director Henderson was capable of running an efficient national search process, and she suggested the City Commission appoint a subcommittee at this meeting. Vice Mayor Hess agreed that the Commission needed to get community input.

Commissioner Wilson expressed support for a national search led by an external search firm. Commissioner Wilson agreed the City was at an inflection point, and a robust search was needed.

Commissioner Cooney remarked on the challenges facing the community and expressed support for a national search for candidates. Commissioner Cooney also expressed strong support for gathering community input on this decision. Commissioner Cooney stated he was not sure about an in-house search process versus a search firm.

By consensus the City Commission established a subcommittee comprised of Vice Mayor Hess, Commissioner Wilson, and Commissioner Praedel to work with Director Henderson on costs, timelines, and other considerations for two City Manager search processes: one carried out by the Human Resources Department, and one carried out by an external search firm. The subcommittee should be prepared to provide information and a recommendation at the next City Commission meeting.

Mayor Anderson noted this subcommittee would focus on options for the scope and execution of a search process; a different subcommittee could be formed to assist with the search itself.

Mayor Anderson opened a discussion about using the City Commission travel budget to support Commissioners who wanted to join a local delegation to Numazu, Japan, Kalamazoo's sister city. Mayor Anderson stated the primary expense for the City would be airfare, as most other arrangements (food, accommodations, etc.) were typically provided by the hosts. Mayor Anderson noted City funds would only pay for Commissioners, not family or friends who wanted to make the trip.

Commissioner Praedel expressed support for the City covering the cost for Commissioners to take this trip, and he stated this decision should be precedent-setting.

2025-13-22

City Manager Search –
Process Subcommittee
Formed

Use of City Funds for
Commissioner Travel to
Numazu, Japan

Use of City Funds for
Commissioner Travel to
Numazu, Japan (cont'd)

Commissioner Decker spoke about disparities in Commissioners' ability to pay for travel, and she suggested the City Commission's travel policy be reviewed.

By consensus the City Commission authorized the use of funds from the City Commission travel budget to pay for airfare for Commissioners going to Numazu, Japan.

Commissioner
Comments

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

Commissioner Cooney honored Robert Dunigan, a former student who became a brilliant scholar and who recently passed away.

Vice Mayor Hess invited people to attend the Imagine Kalamazoo 2035 (IK 2035) Plan It! meeting at Kalamazoo College Field House on Tuesday, March 18th. Vice Mayor Hess informed residents the state would be testing emergency sirens on Wednesday at 1:00 p.m. Vice Mayor Hess reported on events and meetings she had attended the prior week: a meeting with Public Safety staff and providers who collaborated to serve the unhoused; and a tour of the Kalamazoo Water Reclamation Plant. Vice Mayor Hess expressed gratitude for those serving the City, and she noted Public Services Director James Baker was on a recent episode of *Kalamazoo and You*, on Public Media Network.

Commissioner Praedel stated the appointment of a new City Manager was one of the most significant decisions the City Commission would make, and he spoke about the importance of picking the right person. Commissioner Praedel commended City Manager Ritsema for his service, and he commended Greg Milliken and Shardae Chambers for their service on the Planning Commission. Commissioner Praedel stated he attended the recent IK 2035 event at the Northside Association for Community Development, and he thanked staff for creating ways for kids to participate in the process. Commissioner Praedel expressed support for the Milham Park improvement project.

Mayor Anderson offered remarks on the St. Patrick's Day Parade and the Youth Voices on Gun Violence presentation, both of which took place on Saturday. Mayor Anderson stated City Commissioners cared a lot, but their energies were split, as they had many areas to manage.

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 8:43 p.m.

Scott A. Borling
City Clerk

Approved by the City Commission on: _____

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