

Roll Call

The Kalamazoo City Commission met as a Committee of the Whole on Saturday, March 8, 2025 at 8:36 a.m. at The Foundry, located at 600 East Michigan Avenue. The purpose of the meeting was a retreat to discuss the City Commission's priorities for Fiscal Year 2026.

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT:

Mayor David Anderson
Vice Mayor Hess
Quiana Decker
Stephanie Hoffman
Chris Praedel
Alonso Wilson

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT:

Don Cooney*

Also present were City Manager Jim Ritsema and City Clerk Scott Borling.

Commissioner
Excused

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

Public Comments

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

2025-11-01
Introductory Remarks
and Warmup Exercises

City Manager Ritsema provided introductory remarks and reviewed the agenda for the day. City Manager Ritsema introduced Ashley Kletke of YOU UNLIMITED, who facilitated the work session portion of the agenda. A copy of the PowerPoint presentation *Planning Retreat – 2026 Budget, 3.8.2025*, was filed with the papers for this meeting.

*Commissioner Cooney arrived at 8:40 a.m.

At 8:41 a.m. Ms. Kletke asked City Commissioners and staff to divide into small groups for a warmup exercise. Participants were given two minutes each to share the following within their groups:

- Name
- What is something you have with you today that helps us understand more deeply about you?

Ms. Kletke reviewed the mindset-thoughts-behaviors-results paradigm and discussed the importance of creating a positive mindset and perspective through gratitude and curiosity.

With Commissioners and staff still divided into groups, Ms. Kletke reviewed the Formal/Informal and Dominant/Easygoing matrix for evaluating behavior styles. Participants were given three minutes each to answer the following questions:

- How has your style positively impacted your work?
- What do you wish others understood about your style?
- How will you use the strengths of your style in your work for Kalamazoo?

At 9:22 a.m. Commissioners and staff returned to their seats.

Commissioners discussed the value of the behavior styles exercise. Ms. Kletke asked Commissioners to consider the benefits of getting to know people at a personal level.

Ms. Kletke summarized the concepts emphasized during the warmup exercises:

- Mindset – positive mindset for brain
- Curiosity – and gratitude for immediate mindset shift
- Styles – all behavior styles have value
- Beware of filters
- Building rapport leads to better work

The meeting recessed at 9:29 a.m.

The meeting resumed at 9:45 a.m.

Chief Operating Officer (COO) Laura Lam and Deputy City Manager Rebekah Kik delivered a presentation entitled *Kalamazoo Imagines, Kalamazoo Acts: 2025 Projects and Programs Review*. The presentation highlighted 2025 programs and projects grouped around the following focus areas:

Investments that Support Kalamazoo's Families
Investments that Improve Kalamazoo's Neighborhoods
Investments that Help our Young People Thrive
Investments that Ensure Safety and Well-Being
Investments that Create a Stronger City Organization

COO Lam reviewed the work and projects funded by The America Rescue Plan Act (ARPA). A copy of the slides from the presentation was filed with the papers for this meeting.

An opportunity was given for Commissioner questions and comments on FY2025 programs and projects, but none were offered.

Community Planning and Economic Development Deputy Director Christina Anderson delivered a presentation entitled *Wrapping Up: Imagine It! Imagine Kalamazoo 2035*. The presentation included a review of the Imagine Kalamazoo 2035 (IK2035) timeline and preliminary results from community engagement efforts. A copy of the slides from the presentation was filed with the papers for this meeting.

Following the presentation, Deputy Director Anderson responded to Commissioners' questions regarding the relationship between the Strategic Plan and Master Plan; youth responses to surveys and community events; and the IK 2035 timeline relative to the timeline for hiring a new City Manager.

COO Lam delivered a presentation entitled *City of Kalamazoo: the National Community Survey 2025 Results*. COO Lam noted the City had received the survey results within the past few days, so the presentation would only feature high-level results. A copy of the slides from this presentation was filed with the papers for this meeting.

Following the presentation, COO Lam responded to Commissioners' questions regarding the survey method and sample size; benchmarking; the definition of survey terms and categories; and discrepancies between the survey data and what Commissioners were hearing from the community.

2025-11-01

Introductory Remarks
and Warmup Exercises
(cont'd)

Recess

2025-11-01

Review of FY2025
Programs and Projects

2025-11-01

Presentation re: Imagine
Kalamazoo 2035

2025-11-01

Presentation re: the
National Community
Survey

2025-11-01

Presentation of Proposed
Strategies for FY 2026

Ms. Kletke reviewed the Goal-Outcome-Strategies-Measures framework and the results of the pre-retreat Commissioner survey. City staff presented the following strategies to address the priority outcomes identified by Commissioners:

Housing – Community Development Manager Sharilyn Parsons

- Foreclosure Prevention (homeownership preservation) – \$60,000/year to help 30 homeowners
- Critical Code Repair Program (homeownership preservation) - \$135,000/year to help 20 households
- Underwriting of Housing Development Fund – \$100,000 (+ some HOME \$) to assist with 5 in-concept housing projects
- Housing Development Fund Predevelopment Funding (partnership with LISC) - \$250,000 for 5 projects (cap of \$50,000/per)
- Housing Development Fund Pre-Approved Plans (partnership with Land Bank to build models of pre-approved plans to cover appraisal gap)
- Housing Development Fund Gap Financing Revolving Loans (870 units created over past 4 years, 80% affordable) – 70 units for \$1.5 million - \$1.8 million
- Homeshare Launch (same model) – no numbers available; partnership with Milestone Senior Services

Recess

The meeting recessed at 11:57 a.m.
The meeting resumed at 12:35 p.m.

Economic Development – Community Investment Manager Chelsie Downs-Hubbarth

- KMEG Fund Grants (\$5,000 each) - \$500,000 to support 100 businesses (document filed)
- Building Development Fund – façade and white box development grants coordination/collaboration with United Way - \$500,000 for 20 businesses (\$25,000 each)
- Commercial Corridor Analysis - \$50,000 for corridors that emerge from Imagine Kalamazoo 2035
- Kalamazoo Entrepreneur Network Capital Consortium – \$32,000 to support 20 entrepreneurs
- Business Capacity Building Grants - \$25,000 to support two businesses: Core 360, Black Wall Street Beta Program (documents filed)

Shared Prosperity Kalamazoo (SPK) – SPK Coordinator Kevin Ford (document filed)

- Capacity Building for Bridges to Career Opportunities at the Northside Association for Community Development (NACD) through the Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC) – \$273,000 to serve 100 people
- Match Savings Program – \$250,000 to fund development of this program

Increase Coordination/Support for Unhoused Community – COO Lam

- Transportation Costs to Reunite Unhoused with Family Support - \$10,000 to help 50 people
- Kalamazoo County Continuum of Care 3-Year Plan – no cost estimate at this time
- Emergency Shelter for Extreme Weather - \$500,000
- Increase Safe Storage Capacity for the Unhoused – double the current capacity, no dollar amount
- Support County Family Shelter Operations – some contribution towards annual operating costs (\$500,000 to start)

Commissioners discussed potential funding sources and strategies for addressing housing needs that come up in the middle of a budget year.

Assistant Public Safety Chief David Juday reviewed annual and multi-year crime statistics and statistics regarding firearms and youth contacts. A copy of the slides from Assistant Chief Juday's presentation was filed with the papers for this meeting.

Decrease Violent Crimes, Especially Among Youth – Assistant Public Safety Chief David Juday and Parks and Recreation Director Patrick McVerry

- Install 10 overt cameras downtown and in the Northside Cultural Business District to increase Fusus camera coverage by 15% – \$150,000 to install 10 overt cameras
- Conduct weekly crime reduction meetings (with countywide law enforcement officers) and support for victim advocates – no real cost; a matter of staff allocation
- Contact 50 At-Risk Youth and Families (repeat contacts); continue funding for PAL and Summer Youth Programming

Ms. Kletke led City Commissioners in a prioritization exercise where Commissioners were each given five votes to place on the various strategies within a prioritization matrix.

During the exercise, City Commissioners chose the following strategies to be prioritized in the 2026 budget:

2025-11-01

Presentation of Proposed Strategies for FY 2026 (cont'd)

Review of Crime Statistics

2025-11-01

Prioritization of Strategies for FY 2026

2025-11-01
 Prioritization of
 Strategies for FY 2026
 (cont'd)

5 Votes

- Contact 50 At-Risk Youth and Families (repeat contacts); continue funding for PAL and Summer Youth Programming
- Critical Code Repair Program (homeownership preservation) - \$135,000/year to help 20 households
- Emergency Shelter for Extreme Weather - \$500,000

4 Votes

- Homeshare Launch (same model) – no numbers available; partnership with Milestone Senior Services

3 Votes

- Capacity Building for Bridges to Career Opportunities at the Northside Association for Community Development (NACD) through the Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC) – \$273,000 to serve 100 people
- Install 10 overt cameras downtown and in the Northside Cultural Business District to increase Fusus camera coverage by 15% – \$150,000 to install 10 overt cameras

2 Votes

- Kalamazoo Entrepreneur Network Capital Consortium – \$32,000 to support 20 entrepreneurs
- Housing Development Fund Gap Financing Revolving Loans (870 units created over past 4 years, 80% affordable) – 70 units for \$1.5 million - \$1.8 million
- Support County Family Shelter Operations – some contribution towards annual operating costs (\$500,000 to start)

1 Vote

- Foreclosure Prevention (homeownership preservation) – \$60,000/year to help 30 homeowners
- Conduct weekly crime reduction meetings (with countywide law enforcement officers) and support for victim advocates – no real cost; a matter of staff allocation
- Increase Safe Storage Capacity for the Unhoused – double the current capacity, no dollar amount
- Match Savings Program – \$250,000 to fund development of this program

At Ms. Kletke's invitation, City Commissioners shared their biggest personal "take-aways" from the day.

Closing Remarks and
Next Steps

Ms. Kletke stated she would send Commissioners a form for them to provide feedback on the retreat.

COO Lam reviewed the next steps in the process.

City Manager Ritsema thanked Commissioners for their work and passion.

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

City Commissioner
Comments

Commissioner Decker thanked staff for their preparations for the retreat.

Vice Mayor Hess wished everyone "Happy International Womens' Day".

The meeting adjourned at 2:54 p.m.

Adjournment

Respectfully submitted,

Scott A. Borling
City Clerk

Approved by the City Commission on: _____