



Minutes FFE Board of Directors

Monday, February 23, 2026 at 2:00 PM

251 Mills St., Kalamazoo, MI 49048

A. CALL TO ORDER

1. Roll Call

Present: Bostrom, Hankins, Balkema, Drumm, Parker, Salas, Vazques Alatorre, Anderson, Westbury, Bogan, Hess, Wilson, McKague

Staff Present: Steve Brown - Executive Director; Steve Vicenzi - CFO; Richard Cherry- Board Counsel

Absent: Carrel (excused), Taylor

2. Approve Agenda

Action: Motion to approve Agenda

- **Motion:** Parker
- **Second:** Vazques Alatorre

3. Welcome Guests

- Carrie Ann Williams – City of Kalamazoo Grants Division Manager
- Rebekah Kick - Deputy City Manager
- Christina Anderson – City Planner

B. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

1. Approve Minutes -minor typos will be revised

- **Moton:** Westbury
- **Second:** Bogan

C. REPORTS AND COMMUNICATIONS

1. **(No Action) Imagine Kalamazoo 2035 Update** -City Planner Christina Anderson, Deputy City Manager Rebecca Kick

1. **Background and Purpose**

- update on the Imagine Kalamazoo 2035 community engagement process.
- The Imagine Kalamazoo Strategic Vision is the guiding document for city investment and policy, and determines eligibility for foundation funding.
- New engagement focused on deeper, more representative demographic and geographic participation.

2. Timeline and Engagement Process

- **Start:** September 2024; currently in Phase 3 (Winter 2026).
- Timeline adjusted to maximize inclusivity and respond to community feedback.
- Phases:
 - **Phase 1 (Fall 2024–Winter 2025):** Retrospective on last 10 years, identified main themes; engaged via toolkits, community roadshows, book reads (e.g., “Happy Cities”), self-facilitated sessions, and institutional partnerships (e.g., Bronson, KVCC).
 - **Phase 2 (Spring 2025):** Developed nine strategic themes into potential goal statements through topic-focused, participatory meetings citywide and in focus groups.
 - **Pause:** Six-month hiatus to analyze collected data; internal review and cross-referencing with best practices, market studies, and input from the Western Michigan University evaluation labs.
 - **Phase 3 (Winter–Spring 2026):** “Design It”—focuses on strategy, implementation, and still in the midst of additional community engagement by neighborhood.

3. Engagement Highlights

- Over 4,300 points of contact as of December 2025.
- Efforts made to reach underrepresented groups via roadshows, toolkits, institutional partnerships, and demographic surveys.
- Efforts included focus on measurable outcomes, lessons learned from the last vision/master plan (e.g., need for clearer goals, actionable items, and metrics).
- Noted ongoing challenge in achieving representative demographic participation (survey sample skewed female and white, efforts ongoing to improve outreach to BIPOC communities).

4. Analysis & Results

- **Top Themes Identified:** Housing, DEI (Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, Accessibility), economic mobility, sustainability, operational excellence, continuous engagement, and others.
- Community, staff, and expert focus groups informed refinement of the vision.
- **New Draft Structure:** Nine strategic vision goals, supported by five cross-cutting principles (DEI&A, economic mobility, sustainability, operational excellence, and continuous engagement).
- **Examples of Implementation Challenges:** Staffing to support park expansions, incremental planning, budgeting.

5. Draft Vision and Values

- Vision statement and organizational purpose crafted from engagement exercises.
- Values: Integrity, respect, accountability, teamwork, innovation, inclusion. Behaviors identified to operationalize each value.
- Strategic framework aligns all other city plans (e.g., HUD Consolidated Plan, Parks/Rec Plan) upward toward Imagine Kalamazoo's vision.

6. Commission, Staff, and Process Alignment

- Emphasis on having city staff involved early and deeply in the visioning process to secure buy-in.
- **Government Strategy Document (GSD or “Get Stuff Done”):** Created to align departmental implementation and resourcing with the community vision.
- Recognition that commission alignment is both essential and sometimes a “fail point”; ultimately, elected officials must be stewards of the plan and resist veering toward pet projects not supported by broad engagement or strategic objectives.
- Discussion highlighted the importance of humility—respecting the scope and depth of public engagement as a north star for decision-making.

7. **Metrics, Public Participation, and Feedback**

- Goals > outcomes > strategies > measures—new structure to provide clarity and accountability.
- Ongoing work with Western Michigan University Evaluation Lab on data analysis, visualizations, and demographic representation.
- Commitment to transparency and continuous community feedback (public participation plan, improved communications, targeting more meetings in all neighborhoods by March).

8. **Key Discussions**

- Importance of language/accessibility in communications.
- Alignment of community engagement data, city commission retreats/priorities, and national community surveys (e.g., benchmarking against similar cities).
- Honest assessment and communication of what has/hasn't been achieved from 2025 to 2035 in master plan actions.
- Feedback loops, clear reporting mechanisms, and engagement with youth and “hard to reach” populations (e.g., targeted school/middle school engagements, partnership with literacy council).

2. **(No Action) 2025 FFE Endowment Report - Vicenzi**

- Value as of December 2025: ~\$385 million; as of February 2026, post-donation/sale, ~\$420 million.
- Significant growth in real returns: 2.78% for the quarter; 12.8% real return year-over-year.
- Recent \$55M annual donor contribution received and reinvested; will decrease to \$40M/year going forward through 2030.
- Portfolio rebalancing completed as per October board instruction, all allocations within policy.
- Progress: On track/ahead of schedule toward initial \$500M endowment target
- Inflation/Property Tax Implications: Monitoring real estate market trends; future scenarios include adjusting the aspirational funding portion if/when property tax reimbursement outpaces endowment returns, changes in tax law being closely monitored.
- Emphasized need for continued holistic, strategic reassessment by board as facts and priorities evolve over coming decades.

3. **(No Action) 2025 Program and Operations Data -Brown**

- Operational efficiency: Over 98% of every dollar goes to programming/impact; 1–2% to administration.
- \$220M invested since 2017; \$483M projected investment through 2040.
- Youth Development: 15,800+ youth impacted (registrations, school mobility, family programming); nearly 300,000 free youth bus rides since 2019.
- Economic Development: 325 small business grants, 52 technical assistance grants, numerous infrastructure projects (sidewalks, bike lanes, water lines, trees), leveraging \$11 in external funding for every \$1 invested in affordable housing.
- Housing: 617 affordable units added (including 191 single-family homes); zero tax foreclosures since program initiation in 2019.
- Project Tracking: Data shows most capital investments (81%) made in core neighborhoods; project investments (e.g., programs) at 56% in core neighborhoods; demographic data tracks race, gender, age, with 92% reporting achieved in 2025.
- Demography for impact recipients skews young, female, and Black or African-American (compared to city averages); ongoing need to improve income/disability reporting.

- Evaluation and KPIs: Each aspirational project now requires 1–3 defined outputs and outcomes. Tracking and reporting have improved, demonstrated by steadily increasing percentage of achieved outcomes year-over-year.
- Transparency: Dashboard with project and demographic data available on the website; considering publishing more granular demographic info pending sensitivity concerns.

4. (No Action) Communication Exercise -Brown

- Communications/Newsletter Taskforce: Review and feedback session for the annual and 10th anniversary newsletters—call for improved readability, more visuals, concise storytelling, neighborhood-level data, and a stronger call to action for engagement.
- Volunteers sought for communications planning
 - McKague
 - Bostrom
 - Bogan

D. CONSENT AGENDA

E. REGULAR AGENDA

1. Approve Fiscal Year 2026 Budget Amendment

Budget Amendment - \$24,500 added for communications—approved via roll call.

- **Motion:** Balkema
- **Second:** Hess

2. Executive Director Compensation

Executive Director Compensation found on page 18 and 19 of Board Packet, motion to approve compensation as recommended by executive committee.

Discussion - participation in evaluation process was disappointingly low (~7% response); call for improved engagement and possible process adjustment to coincide with October meetings (vs. December). Approved via voice vote.

- **Motion:** Balkema
- **Second:** Westbury

F. PUBLIC COMMENTS

None

G. BOARD MEMBER COMMENTS

None

H. ADJOURNMENT – 4:32 pm

Richard O. Cherry

Richard O. Cherry
Recording Secretary