

Roll Call

A neighborhood meeting of the Kalamazoo City Commission was held on Monday, February 17, 2020 at 6:00 p.m. in the Community Room at City Hall, 241 W. South Street.

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT:

Mayor David Anderson
Vice Mayor Patrese Griffin
Jeanne Hess
Chris Praedel
Jack Urban

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT:

Eric Cunningham
Erin Knott

Also present were Deputy City Manager Patsy Moore, City Attorney Clyde Robinson, and City Clerk Scott Borling.

Commissioner
Excused

Commissioner Hess, seconded by Commissioner Urban, moved to excuse the absences of Commissioners Cunningham and Knott. With a voice vote the motion passed.

Communications

An opportunity was given for miscellaneous communications, but no communications were offered.

Neighborhood
Communications

Neighborhood communications were received next.

Representatives from the following neighborhood associations were present and addressed the City Commission:

Western Student Association

Lauren Smith (President)
Taylor West (Vice President)
Jacobi Wright (Chief of Finance and Operations)
Erin Westrick (speaker Pro Tempore)
Ben Johnson (Rules, Bylaws, and Administration Chair)
Tyler Signorella (Sustainability Chair)
BJ Nidizeye (Diversity & Inclusion Chair)

Neighborhood Association of Parkview Hills

Bonnie Alkema, Vice President
Karen Braemer, Parkview Hills Community Association

Western Student
Association

The Western Student Association (WSA) representatives:

- introduced themselves and described the role of WSA.
- stated the Invisible Need program was going well.
- reported on various projects and events, including the sustainability initiative, Dinner with the Candidates, providing therapy dogs during midterms, revisions to the WSA handbook, a complete re-write of the WSA Constitution, the Homecoming Parade, and bringing Cory Rise of The Exonerated 5 to campus.
- stated WSA elections were coming up.

- read the new WSA vision and mission statement.

In response to a question from Commissioner Hess, the WSA representatives stated the following made Kalamazoo attractive to them:

- food truck rally's
- arts and culture
- good restaurants
- local politics are open

In response to questions from Mayor Anderson, Ms. Smith stated the office of President was the only office on the WSA ballot, and she explained the President selected the Cabinet. Ms. Smith stated around 1,000 students voted in the 2019 WSA election.

Mr. Johnson noted the WeVote group was raising awareness of the election, and students would be sent a link to vote online, both of which should help turnout.

In response to a question from Commissioner Praedel, the representatives said the best way the City could serve students was to help them be visible in the community and to keep them informed about events and opportunities in the community.

In response to a question from Commissioner Urban, the representatives stated putting information online, posting information on campus pillars and bulletin boards, and having information tables at the Bernhard Center were the good ways to communicate with students. Representatives also suggested targeting first-year students through events like Bronco Bash, interfacing with student ambassadors who gave campus tours to prospective students, and developing a good relationship with the WSA Community Involvement Chair.

Commissioner Urban stated the Stadium Drive/Lovell Street/South Street was a barrier for student access to the downtown area, and he urged the students to be involved in the City's work to redesign this intersection.

In response to a question from Mayor Anderson, the representatives offered the following lessons they had learned about leadership:

- relax, and give leadership tools to others; empower them.
- the importance of mentoring successors and the transition of leadership
- be at peace with not seeing the conclusion of your work.
- communicate early and communicate with purpose.

The Neighborhood Association at Parkview Hills representatives:

- described the Parkview Hills development, its history, layout, and amenities.
- stated the Association was reformed in 2019, largely as a result of the IK2025 Master Plan.
- reported the Association was in the process of presenting the draft neighborhood plan to residents again with the hope that it would be considered by the Planning Commission in the spring.

Western Student
Association (cont'd)

Parkview Hills
Association

Parkview Hills
Association (cont'd)

- indicated the neighborhood plan would address the lack of sidewalks, which was an issue for walkers.
- stated the neighborhood would be getting speed indicator signs in the spring to help address the problem of speeding traffic on Greenleaf Boulevard.
- expressed hope that the Association would be included in the planning for repaving Parkview Avenue in 2021 and stated a review of the Parkview Hills entrance would be part of this project, as many people entering the neighborhood turned into the wrong side of the boulevard.
- reported the Association held a forum for City Commission candidates and hosted a Unity Dinner for representatives of all the condominium associations in the City.
- noted Parkview Hills was a neighbor to Asylum Lake and expressed opposition to the proposed development at the corner of Drake Road and Stadium Drive.
- reported the smaller streets and crossovers were not always plowed in the winter.

In response to a question from Commissioner Urban, Ms. Alkema stated the neighborhood plan might include the possibility of converting Greenleaf Boulevard to a one-way street.

Public Comments

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

Nehemiah Scudder, City resident, stated the WSA was a “rubber stamp” for the decisions and actions of the WMU administration, and he suggested it would be better to invite WMU President Edward Montgomery to a meeting.

Margaret Wilson, City resident, asked if property owners would face enforcement action if they spoke at the 7:00 business meeting and indicated their properties were not in compliance with the City’s anti-blight ordinance.

Commissioner
Comments

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

Commissioner Urban stated he was impressed with the energy of the WSA representatives. Commissioner Urban noted there was evidence of fruit from the IK2025 process in the Parkview Hills report.

Commissioner Praedel stated he was proud of the WSA representatives and he encouraged them to continue building on the good work they were doing so that their time at WMU would not be the highlight of their lives.

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 6:52 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Scott A. Borling
City Clerk

For City Commission approval on July 6, 2020

Approved by: _____
David F. Anderson, Mayor
Dated: August 3, 2020