

Roll Call

The Kalamazoo City Commission met as a Committee of the Whole on Monday, February 15, 2021 at 5:00 p.m. This meeting was held as an electronic meeting under the authority of the Michigan Open Meetings Act (PA 267 of 1976) as amended by PA 254 of 2020.

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT:

Mayor David Anderson
Vice Mayor Patrese Griffin
Jeanne Hess
Erin Knott
Chris Praedel

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT:

Eric Cunningham**
Jack Urban*

All members present indicated they were physically located in the City of Kalamazoo.

Also present were City Manager Jim Ritsema, Deputy City Manager Jeff Chamberlain, City Attorney Clyde Robinson, and City Clerk Scott Borling.

Commissioners Excused

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

Public Comments

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

Jeff Messer, City resident, noted the Parks and Recreation Advisory Board held its summer meetings in various City parks, and he requested that the City Commission hold its meetings in City parks if it had not moved to hybrid or in-person meetings by May. Mr. Messer stated he had left this comment during the February 1st meeting, but it was not played because he also recorded a comment regarding an agenda item. Mr. Messer noted he would have been allowed to make both comments at an in-person meeting.

*Commissioner Urban arrived at 5:03 p.m.

**Commission Cunningham arrived at 5:04 p.m.

Mayor Anderson asked that the order of the two agenda items be reversed so the guest speaker did not need to wait through the City Commission's discussion of upcoming agenda items. There were no objections.

2021-00

Presentation and
Discussion of Public
Meeting Accessibility

Leatrice Fullerton, Program Manager for Advocacy & Community Education with the Disability Network Southwest Michigan, discussed public meeting accessibility and made the following recommendations:

- in the published meeting notices, encourage people to ask for accommodations prior to meetings and make sure the information and instructions on requesting accommodations is accessible.
- share all written materials that will be used in meetings in advance, including agendas and PowerPoint presentations.
- provide keyboard shortcuts for communications tools (like Zoom).
- build in breaks for longer meetings (anything longer than an hour).
- identify yourself before you speak.

- let people participate via chat and designate someone to read comments and questions in the chat.
- describe what is on the screen; screen readers cannot read content being displayed in a screen-share.
- control the sound: one person speaks at a time; non-speakers should be muted to cut down on background noise.
- speakers should have their video on and sit close to the camera, for those who need to read lips.
- participants should share their contact information so people can follow-up; be reachable and approachable.
- ask people what they need in the way of accommodations; solutions are not cookie cutter; they are often based on individual needs.

Ms. Fullerton described the different trainings the Disability Network offered and highlighted the event calendar on the Disability Network website.

In response to a question from Commissioner Hess Ms. Fullerton stated the City could make in-person meetings more accessible by sending out the agenda packet and other meeting materials in advance in electronic format and by making the accommodation request process accessible.

Vice Mayor Griffin thanked Ms. Fullerton and stated she had taken the Ableism 101 training offered by the Disability Network. Vice Mayor Griffin expressed hope that all City Commissioners would take the ableism training.

Commissioner Praedel remarked his whole team had attended a Disability Network training, which led to an audit of their facility.

Commissioner Urban asked for clarity regarding roles and responsibilities for monitoring the chat box, and he asked that Commissioners give each other permission to correct and remind themselves about the accessibility recommendations.

City Attorney Robinson noted there were specific times during meetings for public comments, and it was questionable whether a chat box met the requirement of two-way communication for the public as required by the Open Meetings Act. City Attorney Robinson also observed it would be difficult to enforce the rule that members of the public were allowed to address the Commission once during public comments if comments were read from a chat box.

Deputy City Manager Chamberlain clarified there were two different chat boxes: the one on Facebook and the one in Zoom. Deputy City Manager Chamberlain explained the chat box in Zoom had been disabled on purpose to make sure there were no private conversations taking place among Commissioners during meetings.

Ms. Fullerton asked whether there was a way for the public to communicate with Commissioners and City officials.

In response to a request from Commissioner Urban, Deputy City Manager Chamberlain stated he would work with City Clerk Borling, Director of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Dorla Bonner, and Vice Mayor Griffin to review the City's meeting practices.

2021-00

Presentation and
Discussion of Public
Meeting Accessibility
(cont'd)

Review of Upcoming
City Commission
Agenda Items

Deputy City Manager Chamberlain reviewed the agenda for the business meeting at 7:00 p.m.

In response to questions from Commissioner Hess, Deputy City Manager Chamberlain provided the following information:

- the City Assessor's Office would be the office to help people fill out the poverty exemption application form.
- Mountain Home and Riverview were the cemeteries owned by the City.
- both Mountain Home and Riverview cemeteries had Capital Improvement Plans.

Commissioner Praedel asked about the *Analysis to Impediments* and the nature of the feedback the City was seeking.

In response to Commissioner Praedel, Deputy City Manager Chamberlain stated Director Bonner would answer that question during her presentation at the 7:00 meeting.

Deputy City Manager Chamberlain highlighted items for other upcoming City Commission meetings.

City Manager Ritsema stated a Committee of the Whole calendar would be developed, and the City Administration would solicit work session topics from Commissioners.

Commissioner
Comments

Next an opportunity was given for comments from City Commissioners, but no comments were offered.

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 5:51 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Scott A. Borling
City Clerk

For City Commission approval on April 5, 2021

Approved by:

David F. Anderson, Mayor

Dated: April 5, 2021

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