

Roll Call

The Kalamazoo City Commission met as a Committee of the Whole on Monday, February 1, 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
Eric Cunningham
Jeanne Hess
Erin Knott
Chris Praedel
Jack Urban

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT:

None

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.

Public Comments

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

Dorothy Appleyard, City resident, expressed concern that the Lake Street PILOT was approved on the January 19th Consent Agenda without any discussion.

Jeff Messer, City resident, thanked the City Commission for establishing public Committee of the Whole meetings that included an opportunity for public comments.

Casey Coker, City resident, thanked the City Commission for having a conversation to address transparency and accountability issues with the City Manager.

2021-00

Presentation on Proposed
Water and Wastewater
Rates

Public Services Director James Baker and Bart Foster of The Foster Group delivered a presentation entitled *2021 Proposed Utility Rates: Monday, February 1, 2021*. The presentation provided an overview of the utilities, the 2021 capital improvement projects, the five-year capital improvement plan for the utilities, the proposed 2021 utility rates, and ways the City was expanding help to customers. A copy of the slides from this presentation were filed with the papers for this meeting.

Deputy City Manager Jeff Chamberlain reviewed the next steps for the utility rate increases, which included a first reading of the ordinances during the 7:00 business meeting and adoption of the ordinances on February 15th.

Commissioner Praedel stated customers typically saw the operations side of the water and wastewater utilities, but they did not see the maintenance and capital improvement aspects of the system. Commissioner Praedel asked Director Baker to explain why it was important to invest in capital improvements now. Commissioner Praedel also asked questions about lead service line replacements and the benefits of ductile iron pipe.

In response to questions from Commissioner Praedel, Director Baker explained the water and wastewater systems were complex, and many of the improvements and fixes to these systems were complex and took a long time put in place. Director Baker stated it would be bad to wait until there were failures to fix the system because the downtime would be long and the impacts severe. Regarding lead service line replacements, Director Baker stated in 2017 the Public Services Department identified "500" as the number of lead service lines that would need to be replaced each year to achieve full replacement in 20 years. In addition to the 20-year calculation, Director Baker stated the availability of state funding and the cost efficiencies that came with bidding larger projects impacted the number of service lines that were replaced each year. Director Baker explained the benefits of ductile iron pipe compared to cast iron pipe.

In response to questions from Mayor Anderson, Director Baker explained that utility revenues could only be used for utility expenses and could not be transferred to the General Fund. Director Baker reported approximately 180 staff were focused on providing water and wastewater services, and he noted the utility was essentially staffing a countywide operation. Director Baker estimated the cost for staffing was approximately 20-25% of the expense to run the water and wastewater utilities. Director Baker stated the utilities hired people on a regular basis and described the requirements for getting a job in the Public Services Department.

Mayor Anderson remarked on the importance of water and wastewater services and thanked Director Baker and his staff for their work.

City Manager Ritsema provided an update on the City's efforts to work with Integrated Services of Kalamazoo and the Kalamazoo County Continuum of Care to address the needs of homeless people who were living in encampments.

Vice Mayor Griffin thanked everyone who was working to help people in the encampments and remarked on the need for more permanent solutions.

Commissioner Cunningham thanked City Manager Ritsema for his update and for highlighted the good work the City was doing.

The meeting adjourned at 6:33 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

2021-00

Presentation on Proposed
Water and Wastewater
Rates (cont'd)

Adjournment