

Roll Call

A regular meeting of the Kalamazoo City Commission was held on Monday, March 15, 2021 at 7:00 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, Deputy City Attorney Richard Cherry, and City Clerk Scott Borling.

Invocation

Dr. Addis Moore of Mt. Zion Baptist Church delivered the invocation.

Proclamations
2021-00

Commissioner Hess read a proclamation recognizing the Mt. Zion Baptist Church Centennial. Dr. Moore received the proclamation.

2021-00

Commissioner Praedel proclaimed March 2021 the *19th Annual March for Meals Month*. Abby Finn, Operations Manager for Senior Services, received the proclamation.

Adoption of the Agenda

By unanimous consent the City Commission adopted its meeting agenda as presented.

Public Hearing re: an
Ordinance to Temporarily
Suspend Required
Minimum Off-Street
Parking

At 7:13 p.m. Mayor Anderson opened a public hearing to receive comments on an ordinance to temporarily suspend the required minimum off-street parking requirements of Section 50-7.2, Required Vehicular Off-Street Parking Spaces, through November 1, 2021.

At 7:14 p.m. Mayor Anderson closed the public hearing.

2021-00
Ordinance 2025
Temporarily Suspending
Required Minimum Off-
Street Parking

Commissioner Hess, seconded by Commissioner Knott, moved to adopt an **ORDINANCE** to temporarily suspend the required minimum off-street parking requirements of Section 50-7.2 Required Vehicular Off-Street Parking Spaces through November 1, 2021.

With a roll call vote this motion passed unanimously.

AYES:

Commissioners Cunningham, Hess, Knott, Praedel, Urban, Vice Mayor Griffin Mayor Anderson

NAYS:

None

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

Casey Coker, City resident, asked for a status update on City Commission's efforts to foster transparency, accountability, and trust with City Manager Ritsema.

Matt Smith, City resident, expressed support for the continued funding of hotel rooms for people experiencing homelessness, and he expressed support for the organizations helping the homeless. Mr. Smith urged the City to adopt a "housing first" approach to homelessness.

Ray Sweeney, City resident, thanked the City Commission and City staff for their work. Mr. Sweeney thanked Jeff Messer for directing members of the public to the appropriate government offices and processes to get the help they need. Mr. Sweeney expressed support for funding the hotel initiative for those without housing. Mr. Sweeney read a prayer about sowing and reaping.

A caller spoke about City Manager Ritsema submitting his resignation.

Marie, a City resident, expressed concern about litter in the Northside Neighborhood and asked if a street sweeper could come down her street.

Consent Agenda items were presented as follows with a recommendation to approve the items and authorize the City Manager to sign all documents on behalf of the city:

- approval of a one-year contract extension with PVS Nolwood Chemicals, Inc. for the purchase of fluorosilicic acid in the amount of \$106,500.
- authorization for the City Manager to enter into contracts with ice control salt suppliers as awarded by the State of Michigan for the 2021-2022 winter season requirements in an amount not to exceed \$500,000.
- approval of the purchase of eleven Public Safety fleet vehicles from Gorno Ford through the MiDeal Purchasing Program in the amount of \$417,054.
- adoption of a **RESOLUTION** authorizing the submission of a 2021 Michigan Department of Natural Resources Trust Fund grant application for Kalamazoo River Valley Trail amenities at the Kalamazoo Farmer's Market and committing the City of Kalamazoo to a local match of \$500,000, which will be provided through an Irving S. Gilmore Foundation grant.
- approval of the proposed 40-year Water Services Agreement with local townships and a village which equalizes rates between in-city and out-city water customers and establishes a formal, collaborative platform for issues pertaining to the regional water system.
- approval of an agreement with the Kalamazoo County Consolidated Dispatch Authority to place a public safety communications tower on property located at 2740 North 6th Street in Oshtemo Township.
- approval of an Easement Agreement for Air Rights associated with the Graphic Packaging International project at Harrison Street.

Public Comments

Consent Agenda

2021-00

2021-00

2021-00

2021-00
Resolution 21-16

2021-00

2021-00

2021-00

2021-00

- approval of the nomination of the following Sector Representatives for the Foundation for Excellence Board of Directors:
 - the re-appointment of **Dr. Angela Graham-Williams** as Healthcare Stakeholder Director for a three-year term ending in 2024;
 - the re-appointment of **Barbara Miller** as a Neighborhood Stakeholder Director for a three-year term ending in 2024; and
 - the re-appointment of **Von Washington Jr.** as Education Stakeholder Director for a three-year term ending in 2024.

2021-00

- approval of the following appointments to boards and commissions:
 - the appointment of **Tiffany Burns** to the Community Development Act Advisory Committee as the Eastside Neighborhood Representative for a term expiring March 31, 2024.
 - the appointment of **Betsy Farner** to the Community Development Act Advisory Committee as an at-large member for a term expiring March 31, 2024.
 - the appointment of **Caitlin Kuhn** to the Community Development Act Advisory Committee as an at-large member for a term expiring on March 31, 2024.
 - the appointment of **Chelsea Viere** to the Community Development Act Advisory Committee as an at-large member for a term expiring on March 31, 2024.
 - the appointment of **Rachel Hughes-Nilsson** to Parks and Recreation Advisory Board for a term expiring on March 31, 2024.
 - the appointment of **Don Cooney** to the Shared Prosperity Kalamazoo Organizing Committee for a term expiring on March 31, 2022.
 - the appointment of **Ben Damerow** to the Shared Prosperity Kalamazoo Organizing Committee for a term expiring on March 31, 2023.
 - the appointment of **Patrese Griffin** to the Shared Prosperity Kalamazoo Organizing Committee for a term expiring on March 31, 2023.
 - the appointment of **Kym Hollars** to the Shared Prosperity Kalamazoo Organizing Committee for a term expiring on March 31, 2024.
 - the appointment of **Bobby Hopewell** to the Shared Prosperity Kalamazoo Organizing Committee for a term expiring on March 31, 2024.
 - the appointment of **Brenda Hughes** to the Shared Prosperity Kalamazoo Organizing Committee for a term expiring on March 31, 2022.
 - the appointment of **Cyekeia Lee** to the Shared Prosperity Kalamazoo Organizing Committee for a term expiring on March 31, 2023.

- the appointment of **Sholanna Lewis** to the Shared Prosperity Kalamazoo Organizing Committee for a term expiring on March 31, 2022.
- the appointment of **Carol McGlinn** to the Shared Prosperity Kalamazoo Organizing Committee for a term expiring on March 31, 2023.
- the appointment of **Jonathan Pulley** to the Shared Prosperity Kalamazoo Organizing Committee for a term expiring on March 31, 2024.
- the appointment of **Alyssa Stewart** to the Shared Prosperity Kalamazoo Organizing Committee for a term expiring on March 31, 2024.
- adoption of a resolution vacating the Garden Street Right of Way adjacent to 924 Russell Street. (*Postpone until April 5, 2021*)

2021-00 (cont'd)**2021-00**

Commissioner Cunningham, seconded by Commissioner Hess, moved to approve the consent agenda requests and authorize the City Manager to sign all documents on behalf of the City.

With a roll call vote this motion passed unanimously.

AYES: Commissioners Cunningham, Hess, Knott, Praedel, Urban, Vice Mayor Griffin, Mayor Anderson

NAYS: None

Deputy City Manager Laura Lam stated it was recommended that the City Commission approve Memorandum of Understanding for a grant of \$250,000 to the Disaster Relief Fund at the United Way of the Battle Creek and Kalamazoo Region (UWBCKR) to fund 90 hotel rooms for 3 months to support individuals who were experiencing homelessness and living in encampments. Deputy City Manager Lam introduced community partners who were working with the Hotel Intervention Project.

2021-00

MOU with the United Way re: \$250,000 for the Disaster Relief Fund to Support the Hotel Intervention Program

Stephanie Hoffman, Tiffany White, and Erika Brown of Open Doors Kalamazoo; Gwendolyn Hooker of Helping Other People Exceed (HOPE) Thru Navigation; and Sara Jacobs of the Kalamazoo County Continuum of Care (CoC) described their roles and the work they were doing with the Hotel Intervention Project and asked the City Commission to approve continued funding for this project.

In response to a question from Commissioner Hess, Ms. Hoffman indicated staff from Open Doors and Urban Alliance were at the hotel 24 hours per day, 7 days per week to maintain order.

In response to a question from Commissioner Hess, FFE Manager Steve Brown stated the FFE had invested considerable resources to address homelessness, and he remarked on the unique partnerships that were needed to make this work happen.

In response to a question from Commissioner Praedel, Ms. Jacobs stated the hotel intervention was just one of many interventions that were part of the CoC. Ms. Jacobs reported 107 individuals were being housed through the hotel intervention, including 3 families. Ms. Jacobs indicated most of the people staying at the hotel were white men aged 30-55, and she stated the CoC had found permanent housing

2021-00

MOU with the United Way re: \$250,000 for the Disaster Relief Fund to Support the Hotel Intervention Program (cont'd)

for six people outside of the Hotel Intervention Project since the beginning of the encampments. Ms. Jacobs reported the Knights Inn, a separate intervention, had 53 rooms, which housed 50-70 people.

In response to a question from Commissioner Praedel, Jason Knight from Urban Alliance stated the partner organizations were trying to use a "housing first" model as much as possible.

Vice Mayor Griffin thanked all of the organizations that were working together on the Hotel Intervention Project and stated it was important that people in the encampments were being treated with dignity and respect now, when they typically were not treated with dignity and respect. Vice Mayor Griffin stated she was conflicted about the funding request because it was an inequitable, temporary solution to a problem that had existed for a long time. Vice Mayor Griffin explained the data showed a large number of persons experiencing homelessness were women of color and children who were not necessarily visible to the community but who were known to be in toxic situations. Vice Mayor Griffin stated the current system was problematic, as the only people eligible for help were those who were "bottomed out." Vice Mayor Griffin questioned when the City planned to address the needs of all people experiencing homelessness and not a specific demographic. Vice Mayor Griffin also asked if there was a plan to create safe open spaces for people who preferred to live outdoors rather than in a shelter or hotel.

Ms. Hooker stated the partners working on the project knew the people in the encampment were not people of color, but there was an urgent need to get them out of the encampment, which was sitting on land that was contaminated and at risk of flooding. Ms. Hooker indicated the next step was to find places for women of color and families who were experiencing homelessness.

Ms. Jacobs stated the CoC was aware of the equity issue at a systemic level. Ms. Jacobs noted the Hotel Intervention Project was just one intervention, with community partners serving across multiple areas on the continuum. Ms. Jacobs stated the CoC knew equity was an issue, and she expressed a commitment to equity on behalf of the CoC and its partners. Ms. Jacobs confirmed that women of color with children was one of the largest demographic groups among people experiencing homelessness.

Vice Mayor Griffin thanked Ms. Jacobs and Ms. Hooker for their remarks. Vice Mayor Griffin stated equity needed to be at the forefront of conversations about everything and not an afterthought. Vice Mayor Griffin urged City staff to look at every issue with an equity lens. Vice Mayor Griffin noted the City gave \$2 million for small business relief in 2020, but the impact of COVID-19 on minority owned businesses was considered only after the fact. Vice Mayor Griffin stated the practice of considering equity as an afterthought needed to stop.

Deputy City Manager Lam noted the proposed funding was in addition to the \$2+ million allocated for affordable housing in 2021. Deputy City Manager Lam acknowledged the Hotel Intervention Project was not indicative of all the solutions that were needed to address the needs of people in the community who were experiencing homelessness in different ways. Deputy City Manager Lam described the City's portfolio of projects to address homelessness. Deputy City Manager Lam stated a future Committee of the Whole meeting would provide an opportunity for staff dive deep into the work being done and for Commissioners to

provide guidance on where along the affordable housing continuum the City would be most impactful as a direct actor and where it could be most impactful as a convener of partners.

City Manager Ritsema indicated the City was working with partners to identify a safe place for people who were in the encampments but who were not interested in staying at the hotels.

Ms. Hooker reported workers were still performing outreach at the encampment for those who did not want the hotel option. Ms. Hooker stated the people doing the work were being paid, and the project was a heavy lift, involving three organizations.

Ms. Jacobs noted the City's funds would be mingled with funds from other partners.

Ms. Hoffman stated the project was a heavy lift, but they were committed to the work.

Commissioner Cunningham, seconded by Commissioner Urban, moved to approve a Memorandum of Understanding with the United Way of the Battle Creek and Kalamazoo Region for a grant in the amount of \$250,000 from the Foundation for Excellence 2020 Fiscal Year fund balance to support the Disaster Relief Fund; amend the FY2021 budget accordingly; and authorize the City Manager to sign all related documents on behalf of the City.

Prior to a vote on the motion, Vice Mayor Griffin asked if there was a commitment from City staff to a definitive timeframe when they would bring to the City Commission an actionable, concrete intervention that would be available for the greater portions of the community who were in need. Vice Mayor Griffin asked staff to imagine that every person experiencing homelessness was in a toxic place and needed immediate intervention.

In response to Vice Mayor Griffin, Deputy City Manager Lam offered that staff could report on the plans that were presented leading up to the 2021 budget, where funds were allocated in the 2021 budget, and the current pathway and vision for those funds. Deputy City Manager Lam indicated Commissioners could discuss changes to the current budget allocations, and they could have conversations about the opportunities that were discussed at the retreat on Saturday. Deputy City Manager Lam recommended current budget allocations as the place to start when considering specific interventions.

Vice Mayor Griffin remarked that the City could not pick and choose when to be equitable. Vice Mayor Griffin expressed support for the motion and stated the hotel intervention project was necessary, but she noted this intervention was inequitable. Vice Mayor Griffin indicated she would feel more comfortable if there were a definitive timeframe for interventions that were accessible to people in need who the City already knew were in need.

Deputy City Manager Lam indicated staff would report on current and planned projects and their timelines, as well as short- medium- and long-term interventions. Deputy City Manager Lam stated she wanted to get the full vision of the City Commission for using resources in the most impactful way. Deputy City Manager

2021-00

MOU with the United Way re: \$250,000 for the Disaster Relief Fund to Support the Hotel Intervention Program (cont'd)

2021-00

MOU with the United Way re: \$250,000 for the Disaster Relief Fund to Support the Hotel Intervention Program (cont'd)

Lam expressed a commitment to keeping equity at the forefront of these discussions.

Commissioner Cunningham thanked the community organizations involved and especially Ms. Hoffman. Commissioner Cunningham stated the problem of homelessness was larger than the City's ability to address. Commissioner Cunningham expressed frustration that state and federal regulations prevented the City from explicitly focusing on the demographic populations with known needs.

With a roll call vote this motion passed unanimously.

AYES: Commissioners Cunningham, Hess, Knott, Praedel, Urban, Vice Mayor Griffin, Mayor Anderson

NAYS: None

Ordinance 2026 re: Chapter 12, Emergency Management

In response to questions from Commissioner Praedel, Deputy City Attorney Richard Cherry stated the City Commission would need to meet in person on April 5th if this ordinance was not adopted. Deputy City Attorney Cherry noted the current gathering restrictions would be in place until April 19th, and those restrictions limited the total capacity of the City Commission Chambers to 25 people, which would include City Commissioners, staff, and the public.

Commissioner Urban, seconded by Commissioner Knott, moved to adopt an **ORDINANCE** as an emergency measure to amend Chapter 12 of the Kalamazoo City Code to set forth Emergency Management protocols and permit the City Commission and other public bodies of the City, which are subject to the Open Meetings Act, to continue to meet by electronic means.

Prior to a vote on the motion, Commissioner Praedel stated some people felt excluded or disenfranchised because the City Commission was not meeting in person, but he noted in-person meetings, whether indoor or outdoor, also would exclude people for various reasons. Commissioner Praedel observed that public participation had been at record levels during the COVID-19 pandemic. Commissioner Praedel stated the City Commission did not know the personal circumstances and health conditions of City staff and members of the public who might want to participate in meetings, and a return to in-person meetings at this point would require those people to take risks they might not want to take.

With a roll call vote this motion passed unanimously.

AYES: Commissioners Cunningham, Hess, Knott, Praedel, Urban, Vice Mayor Griffin, Mayor Anderson

NAYS: None

Resolution 21-17
Declaring a Local State of Emergency to Allow Electronic Public Meetings

Commissioner Knott, seconded by Commissioner Cunningham, moved to adopt a **RESOLUTION** declaring a local emergency due to the COVID-19 epidemic and permit the City Commission and all other City of Kalamazoo public bodies to continue to meet by electronic means after March 30, 2021 through August 31, 2021.

Prior to a vote on the motion, Mayor Anderson reminded people that Committee of the Whole Meetings took place at 5:00 p.m. before City Commission Business

Meetings, and he stated Commissioners had discussed this issue at length during the Committee of the Whole meeting earlier that evening.

With a roll call vote this motion passed unanimously.

AYES: Commissioners Cunningham, Hess, Knott, Praedel, Urban, Vice Mayor Griffin, Mayor Anderson

NAYS: None

City Manager Ritsema stated many staff members had been working from home during the COVID-19 pandemic due to rules put in place by the Michigan Occupational Safety and Health Administration (MIOSHA). City Manager Ritsema stated the rules would expire on April 15th, but there were indications MIOSHA would extend those rules for another six months. City Manager Ritsema reported Governor Gretchen Whitmer had established a work group around transitioning employees back to the workplace. City Manager Ritsema stated he wanted people to know City staff were working from home to keep all City employees and the public safe.

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

Commissioner Urban expressed appreciation to Vice Mayor Griffin for her candor and emphasis on equity. Commissioner Urban thanked Deputy City Manager Lam for her measured response. Commissioner Urban stated everyone working to address homelessness needed to get good data to measure the work and the results moving forward.

Commissioner Cunningham remarked on the 100th anniversary of Mt. Zion Baptist Church and its work in the community. Commissioner Cunningham urged people to be safe on St. Patrick's Day.

Commissioner Knott commented that windy weather was blowing litter around, and she asked about the enforcement process for vacant lots that were littered. Commissioner Knott also asked about assistance for neighbors who wanted to clean up those lots. Commissioner Knott stated she was going to have her lead water service lines replaced and remarked on the professionalism of City staff.

Commissioner Praedel thanked Vice Mayor Griffin for lifting up the work of equity and expressed hope that his kids would grow up to be more aware of equity issues than him. Commissioner Praedel offered comments on the water services agreement that was approved on the Consent Agenda. Commissioner Praedel encouraged people to contact their elected officials at the state level and encourage them to take the lead and act on the issue of electronic meetings. Commissioner Praedel referenced a report that indicated 369,000 yds³ of sediment had been displaced and moved downstream in the Kalamazoo River when the Morrow Dam failed. Commissioner Praedel explained the added sediment would displace the river water and result in extensive flooding if water levels were not below average, as was the case. Commissioner Praedel urged people to push for remediation of the sediment.

Commissioner Hess stated the meetings that evening had been rich, and the big idea of both the Committee of the Whole Meeting and Business Meeting had been

Resolution 21-17
Declaring a Local State
of Emergency to Allow
Electronic Public
Meetings (cont'd)

City Manager's Report

Commissioner
Comments

Commissioner
Comments (cont'd)

collaboration and partnership. Commissioner Hess noted KYDNet and other community organizations were preparing for their summer programs. Commissioner Hess announced the City would start recycling #6 Styrofoam, and the first collection would take place on April 24th. Commissioner Hess thanked Vice Mayor Griffin for her voice and for speaking up for women and women of color.

Vice Mayor Griffin said "hi" to Seamus, a young person who was watching the meeting. Vice Mayor Griffin thanked Commissioners Urban and Praedel for their remarks and stated she wanted to see solutions to homelessness for the greater Kalamazoo community and not just the City of Kalamazoo. Vice Mayor Griffin urged elected officials in Kalamazoo County to work together to address homelessness and specifically the need for outdoor living space. Vice Mayor Griffin thanked City staff and Commissioners for a great retreat on Saturday.

Mayor Anderson thanked Vice Mayor Griffin for her comments about equity. Mayor Anderson encourage any type of community response to cleaning up litter. Mayor Anderson remarked on the groundbreaking nature of the water service agreement approved on the Consent Agenda. Mayor Anderson stated his department at Integrated Services of Kalamazoo had \$17 million of COVID Emergency Relief Aid (CERA) that was available to help people with back rent, back utility bills, future rent, and future utility bills, including internet service. Mayor Anderson stated Housing Resources Inc. (HRI) was the doorway for accessing this assistance, and he encouraged people who needed it to contact HRI.

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 9:00 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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