

Roll Call

A special work session of the Kalamazoo City Commission was held on Monday, December 14, 2020 at 6:01 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 228 of 2020. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss the Fiscal Year 2021 (FY2021) Proposed Budget.

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, City Attorney Clyde Robinson, and City Clerk Scott Borling.

2020-0
Presentation and
Discussion re: the
FY2021 Proposed
Budget

City Manager Ritsema provided introductory remarks for a presentation entitled *City of Kalamazoo 2021 Proposed Budget, December 14, 2020*. City Manager Ritsema reviewed highlights of the proposed budget and announced there would be a work session in January to discuss in detail the water and wastewater funds. A copy of the slides from the presentation was filed with the papers for this meeting.

Financial Overview

Management Services Director Steve Vicenzi provided a general overview of the City's various funds, the Capital Improvement Program, and trends for revenues, expenses, and unreserved fund balance.

In response to a question from Commissioner Praedel, City Manager Ritsema stated it was his understanding any stimulus package approved in 2020 would not include funding for local governments, but a 2021 stimulus package might include such funding.

2021 Project Highlights

Community Planning and Economic Development Director Rebekah Kik, Public Services Director James Baker, Parks and Recreation Director Sean Fletcher, and Deputy City Manager Patsy Moore reviewed projects planned for 2021 under the IK 2025 Strategic Goals:

Shared Prosperity Kalamazoo – Director Kik

- Incentives Policy
- Affordable Housing/Housing Support
- Clearing Clouded Titles
- Foreclosure Prevention Program

Complete Neighborhoods – Director Kik

- Code Repair Program
- Continue Neighborhood Planning and Projects
- Neighborhood Beautification
- Eco Gardening Pilot
- Site Rehabilitations

Economic Vitality – Director Kik

- presented by Director Kik
- Business Development Fund
- Pop Up Retail
- Neighborhood Business Signs

Environmental Sustainability – Director Kik

- presented by Director Kik
- Sustainability Strategy
- Reduce Impact of Park Maintenance
- Inventory and Expand Tree Canopy
- Home Energy Efficiency Audit Pilot
- Neighborhood Tire Recycling
- Lead Hazard Mitigation

Connected City – Director Baker

- Traffic Calming
- Two-Way Street Conversion
- Non-Motorized Improvements

Safe Community (General) – Director Baker

- Lead Water Service Replacement
- Maintain and Improve Street Condition

Youth Development – Director Fletcher

- Youth Advisory Council
- Continue Youth Development/Employment Programs
- Digital Access for All and Learning Hubs

Inviting Public Places – Director Fletcher

- Kalamazoo Farmers Market
- Park Improvement Projects

Good Governance – Deputy City Manager Moore

- Customer Service Improvements
- Retiree Healthcare Savings
- Expanded Elections Services

2020-0

Presentation and
Discussion re: the
FY2021 Proposed
Budget (cont'd)

2020-0

Presentation and
Discussion re: the
FY2021 Proposed
Budget (cont'd)

Commissioner Questions and Answers

In response to a question from Commissioner Urban, City Manager Ritsema explained there are actuarial accrued liabilities with the Other Post-Employment Benefits (OPEB) Trust Fund, and those liabilities were expressed over the life of the retirees. City Manager Ritsema stated the healthcare cost savings that had been realized would help the City manage its OPEB liabilities.

In response to questions from Commissioner Cunningham on the two-way streets conversion project, Director Baker indicated the design work would take place in 2021-22, with construction happening after 2025. Director Baker noted the Ransom Corridor Extension and Harrison Street Extension projects would need to happen first. City Manager Ritsema added there would be a lot of work involved in identifying federal and state funding to accomplish the two-way streets project.

Commissioner Cunningham remarked that the two-way streets project was an important project, and he urged Commissioners to support it in future years. Commissioner Cunningham congratulated Deputy City Manager Moore on her planned retirement. Commissioner Cunningham thanked staff for their work on the Portage Creek Dam project.

In response to a question from Commissioner Cunningham, City Manager Ritsema stated the Youth Mobility Fund partnership with Kalamazoo Public Schools was on hold, but the Learning Hubs and Digital Access for All partnerships would continue in 2021.

Commissioner Hess thanked Director Kik for her work on sustainability projects and urged the City to keep sustainability at the forefront of its thinking. Commissioner Hess remarked that City internships were a good opportunity for young people. Commissioner Hess thanked Director Fletcher for planned updates to MLK Park, and she thanked Deputy City Manager Moore for her service and leadership.

In response to questions from Commissioner Praedel, Director Baker described the chip/fog and seal process. Director Baker stated Burdick Street between Stockbridge Avenue and Cork Street had been treated this way a few years ago as a pilot project, which was very successful. Director Baker reported the City was studying whether the current bike lanes on Kalamazoo Avenue could be extended to both the east and west, but the City planners and engineers needed to do more work before pop-up bike lanes could be added. Director Baker added that Westnedge Avenue and Park Street were well situated to host pop-up bike lanes. Regarding bike safety and accessibility projects for 2021, Director Baker reported the City had just received a safety grant from the Federal Highway Administration to improve 30 intersections. Director Baker stated staff would continue to educate the public and install bollards and signs for mid-block crosswalks. Director Baker indicated the Safe Routes to School Plan would be funded and implemented, and the Sidewalk Improvement Program would continue with FFE funding. Regarding the tree inventory, Director Baker stated the goal was for the inventory to cover the whole City. Director Baker explained the purpose of the project was to better inform the City's tree planting program so that trees were planted in the right places, and he stated the work might extend into 2022.

In response to a question from Commissioner Praedel, Director Kik stated Milwood, Westnedge Hill, West Main, Douglas, and Stuart were the neighborhood plans targeted for completion in 2021.

Mayor Anderson remarked that the chip/fog and seal project was an award-winning collaborative project with the Kalamazoo County Road Commission. Mayor Anderson commented that the lowering of the City's OPEB liability had been a phenomenal piece of work. Mayor Anderson thanked Deputy City Manager Moore, Management Services Director Vicenzi and the budget and accounting staff for spending thousands of hours preparing and monitoring the City's budget. Mayor Anderson acknowledged the daily work done by staff in all departments to make the City run. Mayor Anderson noted the budgets in his first several years as a Commissioner were about cutting services and resources, and he contrasted those budgets with recent budgets that enabled investments in the City and its residents. Mayor Anderson stated the City should be a canvas on which people painted the pictures of their lives, while the City organization quietly went about its business.

Strength Through Diversity

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Director Dorla Bonner reviewed work that had been done in 2020: the creation of a Social Equity Policy for marijuana businesses; DEI training for 130 staff; the development of a housing ordinance; and the creation and training of Civil Rights Board. Director Bonner discussed DEI projects that were planned for 2021, including: hiring a DEI Coordinator; supporting the external review of KDPS, performing a DEI Assessment, expanding training for City staff, developing an internal DEI task force, and developing a system for tracking demographic data for outward facing programs.

City Manager Ritsema expressed appreciation for Director Bonner's perspective and counsel on the Leadership Team. City Manager Ritsema stated Director Bonner helped the City make better decisions.

Kalamazoo Department of Public Safety (KDPS) Vision

City Manager Ritsema noted Public Safety Chief Vernon Coakley was recovering from the COVID-19 virus, and he read a statement from Chief Coakley. A copy of Chief Coakley's statement was filed with the papers for this meeting.

Assistant Public Safety Chief Victor Green and Assistant Public Safety Chief Dave Boysen presented the following projects for 2021 to address the Safe Community strategic goal:

- expanded community collaboration through enhanced communication and engagement
- reorganization of Office of Professional Standard into a Division of Community Affairs and DEI
- enhanced training for officers
- an emphasis on hiring diverse and local candidates
- continued use of collaborative community outreach programs
- the Group Violence Intervention (GVI) initiative
- focused enforcement through weekly crime reduction meetings, dedicated crime analysts, and the Crime Reduction Team

2020-0

Presentation and Discussion re: the FY2021 Proposed Budget (cont'd)

2020-0

Presentation and
Discussion re: the
FY2021 Proposed
Budget (cont'd)

City Manager Ritsema indicated Chief Coakley was also working with Kalamazoo Public Schools on a “youth-to-law enforcement pipeline.”

Commissioner Praedel welcomed Assistant Chief Green to the City’s team.

Commissioner Urban stated he was glad to hear that GVI and other initiatives were being restarted and were already making a difference.

2020-0

Update on Gun Violence
Reduction Efforts

Gun Violence Reduction Efforts

Deputy City Manager Laura Lam reviewed the City Commission’s action on December 7th regarding funding for gun violence reduction efforts, and she presented specific actions and timelines in the areas of Community Mobilization and Cohesion, Community Healing, Housing Rehabilitation, and Increased Security Systems.

Commissioner Cunningham remarked on the scope and trauma of 70 homes being damaged by gunfire, which highlighted the need for collaborations.

Mayor Anderson thanked Deputy City Manager Lam for putting the December 7th action within a framework that would allow the City to moving forward.

Commissioner Urban stated he was impressed with Deputy City Manager Lam, her thoroughness, and the fact that she was planning pilot programs that included community engagement.

Commissioner Hess thanked Deputy City Manager Lam for her work and asked if she had a sense of how the funds would be spent.

In response to Commissioner Hess, Deputy City Manager Lam indicated she did not have a good answer for how the funds would be spent. Deputy City Manager Lam noted the City could not use General Fund dollars to help individual people, so some of the initiatives might look different. Deputy City Manager Lam stated the City Administration would keep the Commission apprised of progress on the initiatives and would bring to the Commission and funding changes of 10% or more.

Vice Mayor Griffin expressed appreciation that the City Commission was not arguing about the root causes of gun violence, as the bullets were flying.

Commissioner Praedel asked that the City do more to provide resources through the annual budget process for gun violence reduction.

City Manager Ritsema acknowledged the City Attorney, City Clerk, and Internal Auditor for their work.

In response to a question from Mayor Anderson, City Manager Ritsema explained the City Commission would be asked on December 21st to set a public hearing for the budget on January 4th. City Manager Ritsema stated adoption of the budget was scheduled to take place at the second business meeting in January.

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

April Potgiesser, non-resident, requested that the City stop using contractors for maintenance at Riverside Cemetery and she asked the City Commission to allocate additional funds for maintenance at the cemetery.

Richard Stewart, City resident, asked why the City would not accept neighborhood plans from the neighborhoods, including the Southtown Neighborhood.

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

Commissioner Cunningham thanked City staff for their hard work and welcomed Assistant Chief Green to KDPS.

Commissioner Praedel wished his wife "Happy Birthday." Commissioner Praedel expressed support for the assistant elections manager position and for funding to address gun violence. Commissioner Praedel acknowledged that staff had worked hard over the years, especially when budgets were lean. Commissioner Praedel stated the Commission needed to make sure staffing levels were adequate.

Commissioner Hess stated she had hope because of the Foundation for Excellence and the hard work of City staff. Commissioner Hess stated the City needed to move forward with the idea of education at the core of its identity. Commissioner Hess reviewed the various types of educational institutions in the City and stated the City needed to embrace the concept of "education for all."

Vice Mayor Griffin thanked City staff for their work and, specifically, Deputy City Manager Moore for her years of service. Vice Mayor Griffin welcomed Assistant Chief Green. Vice Mayor Griffin asked the public to send their thoughts and feedback on the budget to Commissioners.

Mayor Anderson thanked everyone for sharing their comments and thinking on the budget.

The meeting adjourned at 8:38 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Scott A. Borling
City Clerk

For City Commission approval on

Approved by:

David F. Anderson, Mayor

Dated:

Public Comments

Commissioner
Comments

Adjournment