

Roll Call

A special meeting of the Kalamazoo City Commission was held on Saturday, March 13, 2021 at 10:00 a.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. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss future goals and priorities.

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:

Mattie Jordan-Woods, City resident, asked that the City Commission concentrate affordable, single-family homes in the core City neighborhoods rather than multi-family dwellings. Ms. Jordan-Woods stated the Northside Neighborhood was working well with City staff, but more single-family homes were needed to help residents build wealth and fight gentrification.

Robin, a non-resident, stated the City Commission's recent action to oppose the hiring of Lee Chatfield by Southwest Michigan First did not reflect the value of inclusion.

Discussion of Future Goals and Priorities

Next, the City Commission discussed future goals and priorities.

Mayor Anderson remarked this would be a Commission-led retreat with a focus on getting Commissioner input, rather than having staff presentations and Commissioner response. Mayor Anderson stated 2021 budget was already in place, and the focus of the discussion would be the 2022 budget.

Vice Mayor Griffin stated the Commission was trying to change the budget process trajectory from "City Staff → City Commission → the Public" to "The Public → City Commission → City Staff" Vice Mayor Griffin stated this retreat would be just one of many opportunities for the public and Commissioners to shape the budget.

Facilitator Demarra West of Change Agent Consulting explained the purpose of the retreat was to have a discussion of goals and priorities leading to clarity.

Deputy City Manager Laura Lam stated the retreat would start with the end in mind, the 2022 budget. Deputy City Manager Lam noted the typical pattern was for the best discussions about the budget to happen late in the year, when it was

too late to make changes. Deputy City Manager Lam reviewed the diagrams *Goal & Actions Analysis 2022* and *Prioritization Process 2022*. Deputy City Manager Lam discussed the biennial Community Survey, which would be conducted from end of March through the beginning of May.

In response to a question from Commissioner Praedel, Deputy City Manager Lam stated it was common practice to do community surveys every two years, but the City could depart from that frequency Deputy City Manager Lam stated the key was having a good understanding of the information Commissioners and staff wanted from the community and the best methods for getting that information.

In response to a question from Mayor Anderson, Deputy City Manager Lam explained the City had standard questions that were asked each time, which enabled internal benchmarking from survey-to-survey and external benchmarking against other communities. Deputy City Manager Lam stated the City was able to ask custom questions to address current issues, like the Foundation for Excellence, the Census, and diversity/equity/inclusion. Deputy City Manager Lam added the consultant would select the recipients, but the City would determine the timing of the survey release.

Commissioner Urban asked if the City Commission could discuss and set goals for how Commissioners deliberate, interact, and communicate.

Ms. West stated there would not be enough time to address City Commissioner interactions during this retreat, and she recommended this topic be parked until the discussion of next steps.

Ms. West reviewed the agenda for the day.

Ms. West stated a pre-retreat survey resulted in the following initial prioritization of goal areas:

- Housing (ALICE, policies, and zoning considerations)
- DEI (anti-racism, microaggressions, systemic racism, universal lens)
- Economic/Business development (incentivize jobs)
- Public safety/gun violence
- Employment
- Homelessness
- Infrastructure/Roads
- Mobile Nuisance Parties
- Environment

Ms. West stated Commissioners would be asked to focus on the following questions for each priority:

- What is missing or what has changed since the Imagine Kalamazoo (IK) plan was approved?
- What does success look like?
- What is the role of City vs. community partners?
- What do we want to learn more about this topic?
- What questions do we have to pose to the community to shape future engagement beyond the Community Survey?
- Policy opportunities: are there policy opportunities we can consider to advance our goals?

Discussion of Future
Goals and Priorities
(cont'd)

Discussion of Future Goals and Priorities (cont'd)

Ms. West stated the City Commission also needed to consider which of the following roles the City would play for specific goals or actions:

Connect. The City will bring sectors together to establish connectivity, identify partnerships, and align work around goals, strategies, and tactics. The City may not provide direct resources but may contribute to some aspect of the activity.

Act. The City is the leading sector and will direct meetings, resources, and has direct influence over the outcome of the strategy or activity.

Advocate. The City will act as a guide, resource, or champion for aspects of the activity.

Commissioner Praedel left at 10:35 a.m.

Priority #1: Housing (ALICE, policies and zoning considerations)

Ms. West facilitated Commissioner discussion of the Housing priority.

Commissioner Praedel returned at 10:53 a.m.

The meeting recessed at 11:15 a.m.

The meeting resumed at 11:35 a.m.

Ms. West shared a list of strategies developed from the Commissioners' discussion of the housing goal.

Discussion took place regarding additional housing strategies, the availability of housing data, and funding sources.

City Manager Ritsema stated the City Commission needed to identify its priorities, and City staff would identify the resources that would be needed.

When an opportunity was given for staff to provide input on the list of strategies, Deputy City Manager Lam suggested it would be more effective for Commissioners to prioritize the strategies and tell staff the definition of success and then let staff come back to the City Commission with a report on current work in these areas and ideas for implementing the new strategies.

Ms. West facilitated the prioritization and refinement of the Housing strategies.

By consensus, Commissioners identified the following six Housing strategies for staff to focus on with measurement and reporting:

- Zoning considerations, better responding to community needs
- Increase homeownership in core neighborhoods
- Ensure we are maximizing our rental certification and code enforcement programs
- Identify non-traditional funding sources to address systems change in housing
- Increase the number of grassroots community developers
- Leverage for-profit housing development partners - community benefits

The meeting recessed at 12:36 p.m.

The meeting resumed at 1:37 p.m.

Ms. West proposed that Commissioners move on to the next priority so that lists of strategies could be developed for each of the top four priorities, rather than spend time defining success for the housing priority. There were no objections to this proposal.

Priority #2: Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (anti-racism, microaggressions, systemic racism, universal lens)

Ms. West facilitated Commissioner discussion of the Diversity Equity and Inclusion (DEI) priority and developed a list of strategies based on Commissioner input.

In response to questions from Mayor Anderson, Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Director Dorla Bonner stated defining success was difficult because the issue was complicated, and the results were immeasurable. Director Bonner stated it would be better to set metrics after the DEI audit report was completed, so the City would have a starting point. Director Bonner stated it was her goal to have the audit report done by the November election.

In response to a question from Commissioner Praedel, Director Bonner stated there would be one DEI assessment covering all City departments, including the Kalamazoo Department of Public Safety (KDPS), but the report might have a supplemental section specifically for KDPS.

Ms. West facilitated the prioritization and refinement of DEI strategies.

By consensus, Commissioners identified the following five DEI strategies for staff to focus on with measurement and reporting:

- Internal hiring and promotions
- Equity in public safety department for practice and hiring and promotions from within
- In every aspect of what the city is doing we're applying an anti-racism lens by:
 - Emphasizing the application of the DEI lens in Commission Agenda reporting
 - Bridging the gap of the DEI efforts across all departments
 - Ensuring our forms are updated to have gender inclusive language and gender inclusive ways we address our constituents
 - Creating an anti-racist, DEI culture within the city that fosters respectful relationships across all identities (e.g. abilities)
 - Prioritizing resources for our response to our self DEI evaluation studies rooted in equity
 - Ensuring the City brand is reflective of DEI
 - Continuing to expand our partner base with DEI in mind
- Continuously assessing the strengths and opportunities for growth related to DEI
- Union contracts will promote DEI as a value

The meeting recessed at 2:42 p.m.

The meeting resumed at 2:52 p.m.

Discussion of Future Goals and Priorities (cont'd)

Discussion of Future
Goals and Priorities
(cont'd)

Priority #3: Economic and Business Development

Ms. West facilitated Commissioner discussion of the Economic and Business Development priority and developed a list of strategies based on Commissioner input. Ms. West facilitated the prioritization and refinement of the Economic and Business Development strategies.

By consensus, Commissioners identified the following five Economic & Business Development strategies for staff to focus on with measurement and reporting:

- Devise strategies to reduce the # of ppl living in poverty in Kzoo
- Maintain some of our focus to be on local entrepreneur employment
- Weave the emphasis on education in Kzoo to ensure accessible opportunities are available for all
- Invest in our neighborhood commercial corridors that feed into downtown
- Focus on creating Black business ownership

Priority #4: Public Safety

Ms. West facilitated Commissioner discussion of the Public Safety priority and developed a list of strategies based on Commissioner input. Ms. West facilitated the prioritization and refinement of the Public Safety strategies.

By consensus, Commissioners identified the following six Public Safety strategies for staff to focus on with measurement and reporting:

- Acting on the recommendations of the OIR report
- Continued growth in community policing and reaching out to neighborhoods
- Continued to work on gun violence intervention; proactive and treating the trauma that comes from it, and long-term impacts
- Continued community engagement plan that will address mobile nuisance parties involving neighborhood residents
- Strengthen community relations with people of color
- Build an internal culture of DEI w/in the dept.

Commissioners discussed and agreed on the following next steps:

- Have an internal work session with the commissions to further strengthen relationships
- Have additional concurrent sessions to explore what success looks like and how each strategy will be successfully implemented, including what the commission needs from city leadership to support the execution of the plan, and a baseline and realistic quantitative goals to measure impact
- Have a work session to explore expectations for union contracts
- Align goals and strategies with work that is currently happening at the city, the pre retreat survey data, and community survey data
- Identify additional ways the commission would like the community to be engaged

Commissioner
Comments

Finally, an opportunity was given for City Commissioner comments.

Commissioner Praedel stated this meeting had been good example of transparent government. Commissioner Praedel remarked on the importance of on-going, two-way communication with residents.

Vice Mayor Griffin noted this retreat was just one of many opportunities people would have to give input on the 2022 budget. Vice Mayor Griffin noted there was no grocery store in the Eastside Neighborhood.

Commissioner Cunningham expressed support for having pro-active work sessions, and he thanked Mayor Anderson and Vice Mayor Griffin for their work to make this retreat happen.

Commissioner Hess thanked Commissioners and staff for a good day.

Mayor Anderson spoke about the difficulty of prioritizing and choosing among very good programs and initiatives. Mayor Anderson thanked City staff and Commissioners for taking time to do this work. Mayor Anderson thanked the Vice Mayor for her efforts to organize a retreat that was different from past retreats. Mayor Anderson thanked Ms. West for being an excellent facilitator.

The meeting adjourned at 4:06 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Scott A. Borling
City Clerk

For City Commission approval on

Approved by: _____
David F. Anderson, Mayor
Dated:

Commissioner
Comments (cont'd)

Adjournment

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