

Roll Call

The Kalamazoo City Commission met as a Committee of the Whole on Monday, April 5, 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
Chris Praedel
Jack Urban

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT:

Erin Knott

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

Also present were Deputy City Mr. Patsy Moore, Deputy City Mr. Jeff Chamberlain, City Attorney Clyde Robinson, and Deputy City Clerk Shelby Moss.

Commissioner Excused

Commissioner Cunningham, seconded by Commissioner Hess, moved to excuse the absence of Commissioner Knott. With a voice vote the motion passed.

Public Comments

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

Jeff Messer, City resident, requested City Commission meetings return to in-person meetings and he requested the vaccination status of the Commissioners.

Review of Items on
Upcoming City
Commission Agendas

Deputy City Mr. Chamberlain reviewed items for upcoming City Commission meeting agendas, including items on the Regular Agenda for the 7:00 business meeting. Deputy City Mr. Chamberlain stated the April 19th Committee of the Whole meeting topic would be a continued discussion on housing from the City Commission retreat. Deputy City Mr. Chamberlain stated the following items would come before the Commission at the April 19th regular Business meeting: public hearings; affordable housing projects; and quarterly odor mitigation report. Deputy City Mr. Chamberlain reviewed the following topics for future Committee of the Whole meetings: the use of federal stimulus funds; Public Safety; and an in-depth discussion on diversity, equity, and inclusion.

2021-00
Retreat Follow-Up:
Economic Development

Community Planning and Economic Development (CPED) Director Rebekah Kik provided introductory remarks for a discussion about economic development as a follow-up to the City Commission retreat on March 13th.

The following staff delivered a presentation entitled *Economic Development in the City of Kalamazoo*: Community Investment Manager Antonio Mitchell, Neighborhood Business and Special Projects Coordinator Melody Daacon, and Development Project Coordinator Paul Thuringer. A copy of the slides from this presentation was filed with the papers for this meeting.

Mayor Anderson thanked the Economic Development Staff for their time and hard work. Mayor Anderson welcomed the new Economic Development staff to the City of Kalamazoo.

In response to questions from Commissioner Praedel, Mr. Mitchell stated CPED was continuing to work with Neighborhood Associations to expand the partnership they could provide to drive economic development forward. Mr. Mitchell stated the City was working with the Eastside and Eddison Neighborhood Associations to expand their community impact in housing and being a resource in their neighborhoods. Mr. Mitchell stated new development projects in neighborhoods often spur existing business and residents to make improvements. Mr. Mitchell stated the City would be working towards more of a collaborative effort with South West Michigan First and Kalamazoo Downtown Partnership, Inc. to develop site specific properties. Mr. Mitchell remarked on the success of the public event to market the 501 N. Westnedge site to developers and promote business opportunities.

Commissioner Praedel expressed support for the focus on home-based and small startup businesses, especially as many families had been forced to keep a parent at home with children due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

In response to questions from Commissioner Urban, Mr. Mitchell stated Economic Development staff were working with staff from the Office of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion and the City Attorney's Office to develop a proposal to reinvest 25% of the tax funds from marihuana businesses back into the City in an equitable way as stated in the City Commission policy. Mr. Mitchell stated the money could be invested creative ways, including investments in the City's workforce development initiative plan and loan program in SPK Neighborhoods. Mr. Mitchell stated the City did not own any part of Can-Do Kitchen, but the City did make referrals to the business. Mr. Mitchell stated a business incubator partnership with Can-Do Kitchen was something the City could consider in the future. Mr. Mitchell stated the City was looking to attract mixed-use and mixed-income developments, like the 140 South Edwards site.

Commissioner Urban expressed support for a public art exhibition space in the community.

Commissioner Cunningham thanked the Economic Development team for building Shared Prosperity Kalamazoo initiatives into the plan and keeping them a priority. Commissioner Cunningham emphasized the amazing capabilities of the Salesforce software program and the importance of benchmarking to measure growth and goals. Commissioner Cunningham highlighted the importance of the City's microbusinesses to the economy, and he expressed his appreciation for the City working with faith-based organizations and educational institutions to develop property in the City. Commissioner Cunningham requested the City make it a continued priority to work with Michigan Economic Development Corporation. Commissioner Cunningham highlighted the importance of working with minority contractors and local contractors to provide opportunities for local businesses. Commissioner Cunningham express support for inter-governmental cooperation.

In response to questions from Commissioner Hess, Mr. Mitchell stated the City was working with Discover Kalamazoo to develop additional information to include with the marketing site materials. Mr. Mitchell stated information from Discover Kalamazoo was especially important when marketing to relocating employees.

2021-00

Retreat Follow-Up:
Economic Development
(cont'd)

2021-00

Retreat Follow-Up:
Economic Development
(cont'd)

Commissioner Hess suggested adding WMU Med to the list of medical and educational opportunities available in Kalamazoo and remarked on the opportunities of working with the City's higher education institutions. Commissioner Hess remarked on the importance of retaining students to work and live in Kalamazoo after graduation. Commissioner Hess emphasized education as a community asset and using it as marketing tool to recruit prospective businesses.

Attorney Robinson provided clarification on the requirements of Michigan residency for the state's marihuana business application process.

In response to questions from Vice Mayor Griffin, Mr. Mitchell stated a copy of the presentation would be made available to Commissioners.

Vice Mayor Griffin expressed support for marketing the City to potential residents, but she questioned what efforts were being made to retain the residents already living in the City. Vice Mayor Griffin remarked on the importance of the City being open about its values and working with people and organizations that shared the City's values so that outcomes and goals would be identical.

Commissioner Cunningham expressed support for marketing the City to former students to bring them back to the community to raise a family. Commissioner Cunningham suggested the idea of working with the Western Michigan University Business College to market the City to current and former students as a place to live, work, and raise a family.

Mayor Anderson thanked City staff for their presentation and thanked them for their efforts to market the 140 S. Edwards Street site. Mayor Anderson thanked Commissioner Hess for lifting up Discover Kalamazoo as a resource. Mayor Anderson highlighted the resources of the Downtown Development TIF District and the Northside Cultural Business District Authority as community opportunities for development. Mayor Anderson stated growth in those districts would attract additional businesses and grow resources. Mayor Anderson expressed support for creating family wealth and prosperity by being in business for oneself and having that business in the construction trades. Mayor Anderson encouraged all Commissioners to work on their "elevator speech" to market the City to others and noted that to have prosperity we need to have a strong and diverse economy.

Commissioner
Comments

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

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 6:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Shelby Moss
Deputy City Clerk

For City Commission approval on September 7, 2021

Approved by:

David F. Anderson, Mayor
Dated: September 7, 2021

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