

Roll Call

The Kalamazoo City Commission met as a Committee of the Whole on Monday, June 21, 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

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT:

Jack Urban*

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.

Commissioner Excused

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

Communications

City manager Ritsema announced he would present a proposal to the City Commission on July 6th for a return to in-person meetings of public bodies. City Manager Ritsema indicated his proposal would include the City Commission returning to in-person meetings for the second meeting in July.

Public Comments

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

Heidi Slater, City resident, asked for more Public Safety enforcement against gun violence, the X-Train, and speeding traffic in the Eastside Neighborhood, and specifically on Dwight Street.

Review of Items on
Upcoming City
Commission Agendas

Deputy City Manager Chamberlain reviewed items for upcoming City Commission meeting agendas, including items on the agenda for the 7:00 business meeting and the following topics for future Committee of the Whole meetings: an update on Business Development Fund, and a discussion of ideas for transitioning back to in-person meetings of public bodies.

2021-00
Results of the 2021
National Community
Survey

City Manager Ritsema provided introductory remarks for a presentation and discussion of the 2021 National Community Survey.

Deputy City Manager Laura Lam delivered a presentation entitled *2021 National Community Survey, Monday, June 21, 2021*. Deputy City Manager Lam stated the Administration would be digging deeper into the results by demographics and geography. A copy of the slides from the presentation was filed with the papers for this meeting.

When an opportunity was given for Commissioner questions, City staff provided the following information and observations:

- 1,500 surveys were mailed inviting people to fill out and mail back a paper survey; and 1,500 mailings were sent inviting people to complete the survey online. The bulk of the results were based on mailed surveys. Results from online surveys, which involved around 300 respondents, were included in “total results” at the end of the report. Staff could look at the difference between the two sets of results, but that would be part of digging deeper into the results.
- utilities and infrastructure have always ranked high as priorities in prior surveys. Regarding residents feeling safe, the results indicated a significant decrease from prior surveys.
- it was surprising that only 30% of respondents said they were likely to share their opinions online, which was a reminder there are a lot of people who do not engage online.
- the top three priorities identified in this survey were similar to the priorities discussed at the City Commission retreat.
- it was surprising that environmental concerns scored as low as they did.
- there had been an increase in the number of people participating in City Commission meetings.
- 2020 was a challenging year for everyone, and some of this was reflected in the survey results. There is a lot of work to do.
- the City consistently received high marks for its Parks and Recreation programs. The Foundation for Excellence had allowed the City to expand these programs, which allowed more people in the community to participate.
- regarding the survey question about the City being honest, the results for people who responded positively were 48% in 2017, 46% in 2019, and 41% in 2021. A difference of 7 percentage points was considered a statistical difference.
- the “open and transparency” question and the “informing residents about issues facing the community” question were new for 2021, so there were no prior results for comparison.
- regarding the “treating residents fairly” question, the number of people who responded positively were 48% in 2017, 40% in 2019, and 31% in 2021.

Commissioner Cunningham observed the survey report gave a quantitative data analysis, but there was no qualitative data analysis. Commissioner Cunningham noted there were crossover impacts between some of the priorities, like Safety and Parks and Recreation, which meant the City might gain results in one area when investments were made in other areas.

Mayor Anderson noted this was the first, but not the last, public discussion of the survey results. Mayor Anderson stated it was mystifying that a 14% response rate was statistically significant. Mayor Anderson commented on the national distrust

2021-00

Results of the 2021
National Community
Survey (cont'd)

2021-00

Results of the 2021
National Community
Survey (cont'd)

of government and governmental structures, and he questioned how this could be addressed. Mayor Anderson wondered why people expressed concerns about the utilities and what was driving those concerns. Mayor Anderson stated it was very important that the City did a survey that could be used for benchmarking.

City Manager Ritsema indicated the City's next steps included: strengthening relationships and building trust; continuing to improve communications; translating data into actions through quadrant analysis, demographic analysis, planning, and performance evaluation; developing a plan for each department that would impact work plans and the 2022 budget; and incorporating additional opportunities for engagement, such as the stimulus funds survey. City Manager Ritsema indicated the survey results were one piece of information that would influence the City's plans. City Manager Ritsema stated the 2022 budget presentation would connect plans and initiatives in the budget to the survey results they were addressing.

Commissioner
Comments

Next an opportunity was given for comments from City Commissioners.

Commissioner Cunningham thanked Ms. Slater for her comments and spoke about the need to address speeding and gun violence in the Eastside Neighborhood. Commissioner Cunningham indicated he had been working on these issues and stated he would make contact with Ms. Slater.

Mayor Anderson expressed appreciation for people took a risk and offered public comments about problems in their neighborhoods.

Commissioner Praedel remarked on the establishment of Juneteenth as a federal holiday, and he asked the City Attorney whether state law permitted the display of consumer fireworks on federal holidays, as well as the days before and after. Commissioner Praedel asked if the City needed to take any action to allow fireworks on Juneteenth.

In response to Commissioner Praedel, City Attorney Robinson explained the state statute was amended a few years prior to allow 12 specific days for fireworks rather than federal holidays as category. City Attorney Robinson stated there was nothing that prevented municipalities from expanding the number of fireworks dates that were permissible. City Attorney Robinson noted Juneteenth was a floating holiday, which was a concern because that day could fall in the middle of the week. City Attorney Robinson also noted that years ago the state legislature designated the third Saturday in June for the observance of Juneteenth in Michigan.

Commissioner Praedel stated he did not like fireworks personally, but he was concerned about equity and the celebration of holidays. Commissioner Praedel asked that the City Commission consider adding Juneteenth as a day when fireworks were permitted. Commissioner Praedel expressed support for the contract on the business meeting agenda for traffic control improvements at the South Street/Westnedge Avenue intersection.

Commissioner Cunningham expressed his dislike for consumer grade fireworks and asked about opportunities to work with the state legislature on the fireworks statute.

Commissioner Hess spoke about respect for neighbors and the time of day when using consumer fireworks, and she stated any City approval of fireworks needed

to include respect for neighbors. Commissioner Hess remarked that she had seen multiple requests on social media for copies of the City's fireworks ordinance, and she asked how the City could provide this information. Commissioner Hess announced that at the 7:00 Business Meeting she would ask for Item G-11 to be moved from the Consent Agenda to the Regular Agenda to allow for a report on the impact of having a School Resource Officer at Loy Norrix High School.

*Commissioner Urban arrive at 5:56 p.m.

The meeting adjourned at 5:58 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Scott A. Borling

City Clerk

For City Commission approval on September 7, 2021

Approved by: _____

David F. Anderson, Mayor

Dated: September 7, 2021

Commissioner
Comments (cont'd)

Adjournment