

A neighborhood meeting of the Kalamazoo City Commission was held on Monday, November 16, 2009 at 6:00 p.m. in the Community Room at City Hall, 241 W. South Street.

Roll Call

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT:

Mayor Bobby Hopewell
 Vice Mayor Hannah McKinney
 David Anderson
 Don Cooney
 Terry Kuseske
 Barbara Miller
 Stephanie Moore*

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT:

None

Also present were City Manager Ken Collard, City Attorney Clyde Robinson, and City Clerk Scott Borling.

Commissioner Excused

Commissioner Anderson, seconded by Commissioner Kuseske, moved to excuse the absence of Commissioner Moore. With a voice vote, the motion passed.

Miscellaneous Communications

An opportunity was given for miscellaneous communications, but no communications were offered.

Neighborhood Communications

Representatives of the following neighborhood organizations were present:

Eastside Neighborhood Association

Michael Seals, Treasurer
 Pat Taylor, Executive Director

Western Student Association

Janine Putnam, Vice President
 Zach Spencer, Treasurer
 Joey Blaszczyk, Student Affairs Chair

Whites/Edgemoor/Bronson Neighborhood

Linda Wienir, President
 Karen Wellman, Secretary
 Freddie Heinz, Resident

Eastside Neighborhood Association

The Eastside Neighborhood representatives:

- congratulated Commissioners on their election and reelection.
- reported the Association's financial situation was stable and thanked the City Commission for continuing funding for the neighborhood associations.
- noted there was a partnership with LISC to identify a building for the future.
- discussed the Building Blocks sites on East Main Street.

Eastside
Neighborhood
Association
(cont'd)

- remarked on the purchase and redevelopment of the strip mall in the 1600 block of East Main Street.
- stated Legal Aid would be doing workshops for the Neighborhood beginning on November 17th.

Commissioner Moore arrived at 6:06 p.m.

- expressed concern about the high number of home foreclosures in the Neighborhood.
- reported the Association's focus in 2010 would be housing stabilization and business recruitment and revitalization.
- stated the Association continued to host a computer lab at the Community Center in cooperation with Michigan Works! and AARP.
- described other Association activities, such as home weatherization assistance and has coordination of several community gardens.

In response to a question from Commissioner Anderson, Ms. Taylor stated the Plan Kalamazoo event at St. Mary's Church offered participants good choices and a good selection process, residents were concerned about implementation of the plan and questioned whether their desires for the Neighborhood would be considered.

Mr. Seals stated Neighborhood residents participated in the planning process, but they felt the Comprehensive Plan did not really address the Eastside Neighborhood. Mr. Seals noted lighting was important to residents, and he reported trees had grown up and blocked the existing street lights in many areas of the Neighborhood.

In response to a question from Commissioner Kuseske, Ms. Taylor stated she did not know how many Neighborhood residents attended the planning session.

Mr. Seals stated recent efforts to revitalize older housing stock had heightened residents' interest in the Comprehensive Plan process.

In response to a question from Commissioner Cooney, Ms. Taylor stated the youth employment program really helped address youth violence in the Neighborhood, and she remarked that young people were starting to see Public Safety Officers as friends and not just enforcers.

Commissioner Moore asked City Manager Collard for information on the availability of federal dollars for residents in Renaissance Zones.

In response to a question from Commissioner Moore, Ms. Taylor stated the Association advertised housing assistance opportunities through Kalamazoo Neighborhood Housing Services. Ms. Taylor explained that outreach efforts were thwarted by residents who wanted their business to remain their business and were reluctant to ask for help.

Eastside
Neighborhood
Association
(cont'd)

Commissioner Moore encouraged the Association to continue reaching out to homeowners in danger of foreclosure.

In response to a question from Commissioner Moore, Ms. Taylor stated she had not received any feedback from residents about the proposed Metro Transit fare increases.

Western Student
Association

The Western Student Association (WSA) representatives:

- congratulated Commissioners on their election and reelection.
- thanked City Commission candidates for attending the candidate forum at WMU.
- stated Public Safety Chief Jeff Hadley would be attending the WSA meeting on December 9th and thanked Chief Hadley for his leadership and work to improve the relationship between students and the Department of Public Safety.
- described the Spring to the Streets and Fall to the Streets events.
- remarked on student participation in the November 3rd election.
- thanked the City for the Click Downtown event and for hanging WMU banners on utility poles.
- described a survey of WMU students by WMU Geological Club about downtown and transportation was an issue. Bussing is good, but paths were even better. Recommendations: provide tourist maps and kiosks; improved campus corridors; sidewalks in poor condition – repair them; create pedestrian islands and bridges; enhance walking routes (self-guided walking tours); integrate pedestrian activities with future development; improved physical safety (lighting, police call boxes, widen sidewalks, improve buffers); expressed support for trolley.
- expressed concern about the lack of sidewalks within the Campus Habitat apartment complex at Howard and Kendall and about the lack of snow removal from sidewalks along West Michigan Avenue.

Commissioner Cooney stated there was a tremendous need for students to volunteer in the community and highlighted the fact that Kalamazoo Communities in Schools (KCIS), New Genesis, and the Hispanic American Council were looking for tutors. Commissioner Cooney reported WMU would be opening a service-based learning center in the near future.

Commissioner Kuseske encouraged the WSA representatives to attend Planning Commission meetings and to participate in the Comprehensive Plan process. Commissioner Kuseske also suggested the WSA contact KCIS for volunteer opportunities.

Commissioner Moore suggested the WSA connect students with neighborhood associations to assist with home weatherization.

Western Student
Association
(cont'd)

Mayor Hopewell stated the City was not able to monitor all its sidewalks, and he emphasized the importance of communication between the students, WMU and the City. Mayor Hopewell acknowledged the Campus Habitat apartments did not have sidewalks within the complex, but he explained the developer had met all of the City's site plan requirements.

Whites/Edgemoor/
Bronson
Neighborhood

The White/Edgemoor/Bronson representatives:

- congratulated Commissioners on their election and reelection.
- thanked the City for street improvements on Bronson Boulevard.
- stated the Association was working closely with The Stewards of Kleinstuck.
- expressed concern about growing deer population.
- expressed concern about speeding traffic on Whites Road, stated speeding traffic was a problem in the entire Neighborhood, and requested strict enforcement.
- reported the City's snow plows threw snow on the sidewalks along Whites Road, and the frequency of plowing on this street resulted in large amounts of snow quickly filling the ends of driveways. Ms. Wellman inquired about reducing the speeds of the snowplows and reducing the frequency of plowing on Whites Road.
- noted there was a significant amount of broken glass on the ground in various parts of the City.

Mayor Hopewell assured the Neighborhood representatives that City Commissioners and City staff had heard their concerns.

Citizen Comments

Next, an opportunity was given for citizen comments, but no comments were offered.

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 6:44 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Scott A. Borling
City Clerk

For City Commission approval on November 30, 2009

Approved by: _____
Bobby J. Hopewell, Mayor
Dated: November 30, 2009