

Roll Call	<p>A special meeting of the Kalamazoo City Commission was held on Saturday, February 28, 2015 at 8:00 p.m. in the Metro Transit Governing Board Room, 530 N. Rose Street. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss the City Commission's priorities for 2014 and 2015.</p>
	<p>COMMISSIONERS PRESENT: Mayor Bobby Hopewell Vice Mayor David Anderson Robert Cinabro Don Cooney Eric Cunningham Barbara Miller</p>
	<p>COMMISSIONERS ABSENT: Jack Urban*</p>
	<p>Also present were City Manager Jim Ritsema, City Attorney Clyde Robinson, and City Clerk Scott Borling.</p>
Commissioners Excused	<p>Commissioner Cinabro, seconded by Commissioner Cunningham, moved to excuse the absence of Commissioner Urban. With a voice vote the motion passed.</p>
Opening Remarks and Meeting Format	<p>Mayor Hopewell provided opening remarks and introduced Tim Fallon, who facilitated the discussion that followed.</p>
	<p>Mr. Fallon reviewed the agenda for the day and stated the purpose of the meeting was to recalibrate the City's Commission's priorities.</p>
	<p>*Commissioner Urban arrived at 8:09 a.m.</p>
Review of 2015 Accomplishments	<p>City Manager Ritsema provided introductory remarks and briefly reviewed the document <i>2014-2015 City Commission Priorities Work Plan Outline and Accomplishments</i>.</p>
	<p>City Manager Ritsema stated the issue of new revenue would directly impact the provision of core services, and being able to show the results of the City's work would intersect the discussion about new revenue. City Manager Ritsema recommended the creation of a community-based task force to discuss revenue options.</p>
	<p>Commissioner Cinabro expressed support for the idea of an outside task force and stated Commissioners and City staff should not be members.</p>
	<p>Commissioner Urban requested that City Commissioners be able to have input as to the selection of task force members.</p>
	<p>Mayor Hopewell asked City Manager Ritsema to explain why the municipal finance model in Michigan was broken.</p>
	<p>City Manager Ritsema explained the limitations of property tax revenue and highlighted the high percentage of properties in the City that were tax exempt.</p>
	<p>Mayor Hopewell reviewed the work that had been done on Priority #5 – (Fostering Collective Action to Reduce Unacceptable Poverty) and</p>

presented future opportunities related to poverty reduction. A copy of the Mayor's PowerPoint presentation was included with the papers for this meeting.

Commissioners and City staff offered comments on the City's efforts to address Priority #5.

The meeting recessed at 9:47 a.m.  
The meeting resumed at 10:04 a.m.

Mr. Fallon observed the following themes emerging from the discussion:

1. Significant good work had been done on all of the priorities.
2. The work on the priorities was not close to being done.
3. There was a need to potentially make adjustments to the priorities and/or the implementation of the priorities.

Mr. Fallon asked Commissioners to propose changes and adjustments to the priorities, if they had any. Discussion followed.

At 11:07 a.m. citizens were given an opportunity to meet in two small groups, each with a City staff facilitator and recorder, to discuss the five priorities and provide feedback.

At 11:44 a.m. the meeting reconvened, and the small group recorders and facilitators shared the comments generated by their groups.

Parks and Recreation Director Sean Fletcher and Public Services Director Sue Founé shared the following comments from their group:

- the City needs to work collaboratively with the business community and non-profit organizations to provide whatever assistance is needed for students and the homeless.
- the City should provide fiber optic utilities as part of its core services.
- the City should encourage volunteerism
- the City needs to maintain the current infrastructure.
- the City should advocate to change state policies that hinder the movement of people from public assistance to gainful employment
- place making is important.

Deputy City Manager Jeff Chamberlain and Management Services Director Tom Skrobola shared the following comments from their group:

- the City does not have the resources to do anything.
- the City should avoid putting the burden of new revenue on people who are already struggling.

Review of 2015 Accomplishments (cont'd)

Recess

Adjustments to the Priorities

Citizen Input/Small Groups

Citizen Input/Small Groups (cont'd)

- the City should avoid operating in crisis mode: engagement should be continuous to avoid disengagement.
- keep "shared prosperity" in the forefront when thinking about the other priorities, especially job development.
- the City should implement a service delivery tracking system.
- perhaps the phrase "intentional engagement" should replace "authentic engagement" in Priority #3

Recess

The meeting recessed at 11:57 a.m.  
The meeting resumed at 12:32 p.m.

Summary of the Discussion re: the City Commission Priorities

Mr. Fallon summarized the morning discussion on the priorities as follows:

*Priority #1: Create long-term stability/sustainability given new realities.*

- priority Based Budgeting would be a significant activity in 2015; there were interconnections between Priority Based Budgeting and the other City Commission Priorities.
- the need to generate new revenue was urgent. One recommendation was to establish an outside task force to deal with the revenue question.
- there was a need to advocate on behalf of the statewide millage question for road funding.

*Priority #2: Building a New Organizational Culture by Engaging the Post-ERI Workforce in Developing a High Performance Organization*

- it was important for the City to maximize the use of its internal workforce.
- Items 1-3 would be ongoing efforts (Strategic Alignment Plan/ERI/Workforce Realignment, Optimize the Talent of the Workforce, Foster a High Performance Culture/Expectation).
- Item 5 (Technology Use to Increase Service Efficiency) needed to expand to a broader view that included an impact on economic development and community engagement.

*Priority #3: Creating a Shared Vision/Future Direction Based on Authentic Community Engagement*

- community engagement was important for the future direction of the City, not just for solving problems.
- engagement needed to be intentional.

*Priority #4: Continuing to Provide Exceptional Services – “Core”*

- service provision needed to be metric-driven.
- the discussion of service provision flowed back to the topics of community engagement and Priority Based Budgeting.

*Priority #5: The Kalamazoo City Commission will take a leadership role in fostering collective action to reduce unacceptable poverty – especially of children – in the City of Kalamazoo.*

- there was an appreciation for the work that had been done on this priority.
- there was a recognition that jobs need to be addressed first.
- there were effective programs in the community on a small scale, but the problems were so large these good programs did not seem to make a difference.

Next, when Mr. Fallon asked if the five priorities were the right priorities, Commissioners agreed the priorities were correct and offered the following comments:

Priority #1

Commissioner Urban stated he was going to make the issue of new revenue a campaign topic during the next City Commission election.

Commissioner Cooney stated new revenue solutions should not put a greater burden on people who were struggling.

Priority #2

Mayor Hopewell stated the idea of cultural competency needed to be a part of the tactics under this priority.

Commissioner Urban stated the City needed to be intentional about addressing good customer service practices, especially for those areas that dealt with customers

City Manager Ritsema remarked that the City was in the process of developing customer services standards.

Mayor Hopewell expressed hope that there would be an assessment of the customer service standards.

Priority #3

Commissioner Cooney noted the importance of treating and valuing people as resources.

Commissioner Cunningham asked how the City would create a standard or a metric for measuring authentic engagement.

Summary of the Discussion re: the City Commission Priorities (cont'd)

Confirmation of the Priorities as the Correct Priorities

Confirmation of the  
Priorities as the  
Correct Priorities  
(cont'd)

Mayor Hopewell remarked on the need for a larger vision for the community.

Commissioner Urban suggested incorporating a larger definition of sustainability in the priorities (natural resources, financial resources, human resources).

City Attorney Robinson suggested the word "authentic" be change to "intentional."

Commissioner Urban stated people knew when they had been engaged in an authentic manner.

Mayor Hopewell noted the City Commission business meetings were not the forum for good, authentic engagement, and the question was whether the City could identify or create other portals that would offer opportunities for engagement.

#### Priority #4

Commissioner Cooney thanked staff for their work, especially as resources had diminished over the years.

#### Priority #5

Commissioner Urban noted the City had become a promoter of the Kalamazoo Promise, and he suggested the City use the 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration of the Promise to get a commitment from the community to make kids Promise-ready. Mayor Hopewell stated Von Washington, Chair of the Promise Celebration Committee, wanted to make the celebration about the community's responsibility.

Deputy City Manager Chamberlain reported there would be four community dialogues in 2015 about the Promise and how the community could support Promise students.

City Manager Ritsema suggested that Kalamazoo Communities in Schools be invited to give a presentation to the City Commission on its work.

Management Services Director Tom Skrobola stated the drop in the City's property assessments in recent years, although bad, was less than the drop experiences by other core cities in Michigan. Director Skrobola stated Kalamazoo's experience in this area could be result of the Promise.

Mayor Hopewell asked whether the priorities should include a connection between economic development and poverty reduction.

Commissioner Urban stated the City was the hole in the economic donut, and there was a hole in the City itself, the Arcadia Commons West site, that could connect the downtown with other parts of town. Commissioner Urban indicated the City needed to control this development so that the site did great things for the City.

Mr. Fallon asked Commissioner to discuss the role economic development should play in the 2015 priorities.

Commissioner Urban stated the termination of the Southwest Michigan First contract was an opportunity to reconsider the City's economic development role. Commissioner Urban suggested there needed to be a reassessment and refocusing of how the City did economic development.

Commissioner Cooney stated economic development was critical, but it needed to result in shared prosperity: jobs in the City and benefits to the community.

Commissioner Urban indicated it was important to find models that showed the benefits of shared prosperity for businesses too.

City Manager Ritsema observed that economic development touched every other priority, and he stated staff would work to present something to the City Commission that wove economic development through the other priorities.

Mr. Fallon opened the meeting to questions and comments from City staff.

City Attorney Robinson reported that work had already been done on the legality of certain types of new revenue sources, and he stated this information needed to be shared with whatever panel or task force was formed to addresses the revenue issue.

City Attorney Robinson noted the Citizens Research Council of Michigan had just issued an interesting report on Michigan's State Shared Revenue system.

Director Skrobola stated staff did not know all of the legal restraints, econometric modeling, and other factors that would need to be considered in a review of new revenue options, and he suggested the City obtain an independent, outside evaluation of these factors.

Deputy City Manager Chamberlain stated one message of the day was that all 600+ City employees were supporting the City Commission's priorities. Deputy City Manager Chamberlain indicated this discussion would help leaders communicate the City's vision to the rest of the staff.

Mr. Fallon asked City Manager Ritsema and Commissioners to discuss the next steps in the process. Mr. Fallon noted some of the changes that had been suggested were replacing "authentic engagement" with "intentional engagement" in Priority #3 and eliminating the word "unacceptable" from Priority #5 as it gave the connotation that there were "acceptable" forms of poverty.

City Manager Ritsema stated he would update the priorities using the feedback/input from this work session and then bring the updated priorities to the Commission for approval at a future meeting. City Manager Ritsema questioned whether the priorities should be re-labeled the 2015-2016 priorities?

Confirmation of the  
Priorities as the  
Correct Priorities  
(cont'd)

Questions and  
Comments from City  
Staff

Discussion of Next  
Steps

Discussion of Next Steps (cont'd)

By consensus the Commission agreed that the priorities should be for 2015-2016.

Mayor Hopewell noted many of the results for the priorities included, or led to, next steps.

Commissioner Urban suggested the priorities include recognition of ideas/elements that had resulted from citizen engagement.

Citizen Comments

Next, an opportunity was given for general citizen comments.

Max Tibbitts, City resident, expressed support for a citizen task force on new revenue; suggested Commissioners and staff compile list of all boards/organizations they participate in; and suggested the City redirect all Community Development Block Grant money to address Priority #5 for one year.

John Schmitt, City resident, encouraged the City to support really small business (those with 1-3 employees).

Jacob Johnson, City resident, expressed excitement about the idea of "shared prosperity" rather than job creation. Mr. Johnson stated he felt excluded in Downtown Kalamazoo because of his race.

Cody Dekker, City resident, stated there were many changes that could be made that would make Kalamazoo better. Mr. Dekker spoke about community engagement. Mr. Dekker observed that he did not see much "fire" in people at the table.

Kimberly Jones, non-resident, stated Kalamazoo Public School students could be better prepared to use the Kalamazoo Promise and expressed concern that students who used The Promise were leaving town when they graduated. Ms. Jones suggested the City track the number of Promise students who stayed in Kalamazoo after graduating from college. Ms. Jones stated the community needed to create jobs so parents could move to Kalamazoo to take advantage of the Promise.

Kris Mbah, City resident, spoke about his personal history and stated education was the one tool accessible to everyone in the country. Mr. Mbah stated the Kalamazoo Public Schools were failing and noted 47 out of 100 students reported they could not do homework because they did not have books.

Commissioner Comments

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

Commissioner Cunningham stated the work session had been great, and he was excited.

Commissioner Cooney thanked people for attending.

Commissioner Urban asked Mr. Mbah to craft a proposal to help the City move forward with community engagement. Commissioner Urban invited Mr. Mbah to continue his comments.

Mr. Mbah stated the City needed to: 1) define terms like “authentic” and “prosperity” and the results that would indicate when these had been achieved; and 2) develop metrics to measure progress. Mr. Mbah stated the community needed to stop working in silos and start working on the same page to achieve results. Mr. Mbah stated the City needed an engagement plan. Mr. Mbah noted the neighborhood associations had low connectivity in general and needed to be held accountable, although the Stuart Area Restoration Association was a model in the area of engagement. Mr. Mbah indicated he would send the City a proposal. Mr. Mbah concluded by highlighting the importance of transparency.

The meeting adjourned at 2:18 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Scott A. Borling  
City Clerk

For City Commission approval on April 6, 2015

Approved by: \_\_\_\_\_  
Bobby J. Hopewell, Mayor  
Dated: April 6, 2015

Commissioner  
Comments (cont'd)

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