Members Present: Kym Hollars, Cyekeia Lee, Vice Mayor Patrese Griffin, Tim Ready, Brenda Hughes, Carol McGlinn, Don Cooney, Ben Damerow, Sholanna Lewis, Bobby Hopewell, Alyssa Stewart

City Staff: Kevin Ford, Shared Prosperity Kalamazoo Coordinator; Dorla Bonner, Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Director; Neal Conway, Communications Coordinator; Laura Lam, Deputy City Manager

Members Absent: None

Guests: Ms. Shaady Salehi, CEO, Trust Based Philanthropy Project; Ms. Heather Peeler, CEO and President of ACT Alexandria Community Foundation

Call to Order

Director Hopewell called the meeting to order at approximately 12:30 p.m.

Roll Call

Mr. Ford conducted roll call of the organizing committee and determined quorum existed.

Approval of (regular/special) minutes of the last meeting

Director Hughes, supported by Director Damerow, moved to approve minutes of the last meeting. A voice vote was taken, and the motion passed.

Approval of Agenda

Director Hopewell asked the members if there were any additions or changes to the July 6, 2020 agenda. Seeing no changes or additions, the agenda was approved by consensus. No formal motion was made at that time.

Reports of Officers, Boards and Committees

None.
New Business

Director Hopewell explained that the Go-Team Chairs and the Vice Chair met to talk about opportunities to grow, develop and change using the 2Gen approach in the post-Covid world. He believes there are unique opportunities as they wrestle with racial justice, equality and Covid.

Trust Based Funding Presentation

Mr. Kevin Ford introduced Ms. Shaady Salehi, CEO of the Trust Based Philanthropy Project and Ms. Heather Peeler, CEO and President of ACT Alexandria Community Foundation. Board members introduced themselves.

Ms. Salehi explained they are a peer to peer initiative that seeks to proactively address the power imbalances between foundations and non-profits and within funder/grantee relationships. She said they have a goal of engaging in peer learning among grant makers around the country. They offer insights on trust-based approaches, and they advise organizations and grant making entities to be more intentional with grant making efforts. Ms. Salehi said their goal is to eliminate unnecessary roadblocks and burdens that face non-profits. She said it is a values-based approach. It is rooted in power sharing, equity, humility, transparency, curiosity, and collaboration. A trust-based approach recognizes that the work of grant making is about relationships that can flow out to organizations and the greater community.

Ms. Salehi went over the six principles of trust-based philanthropy: give multi-year unrestricted funding; do the homework; simplify and streamline paperwork; be transparent and responsive; solicit and act on feedback; offer support beyond the check. She explained that these are guideposts to think about being more power aware in grant making.

Ms. Salehi introduced Ms. Heather Peeler to talk about her experiences. Ms. Peeler gave an overview of the demographics/population of Alexandria. She said they have about $100,000 per year of discretionary grant making. Ms. Peeler emphasized that relationships are key for how they do their work. They wanted to get out of the funder-non-profit dynamic that makes non-profits perform for the money. Ms. Peeler said they initially took baby steps in this process. They looked at capacity building grants. Originally, they would give two payments to each nonprofit and require a mid-term report and an end report. They went to one grant payment and eliminated the grant reports. At the end of the project they had a conversation about what was accomplished. The next year they took away the application process. Instead, they went to a Letter of Intent (LOI) process based on specific criteria. This process is more open ended. It asked why are you considering this project, what do you hope to achieve, how will it advance your mission, what are the challenges you’ll face, what questions are you still exploring, and how are thinking about this work unfolding. Based on that information, they selected organizations. They were committed to funding organizations that were selected for next round. Then they would have a conversation, create a grant agreement and award the grant. No proposal was submitted. They didn’t ask for data they could get – they put that responsibility on their team. They found the conversations were more focused and more informed.
Ms. Peeler said as they participated in a Covid response, they had a simple grant process. Grant requests for up to $10,000 could be submitted on a weekly basis. Their organization was committed to being as responsive as possible. They reviewed and responded within a week’s time. Ms. Peeler said they asked less than 10 questions and there was no reporting requirement. She said they are now going back and doing some interviews to see how the funds have made a difference.

Mr. Ford asked her to explain how they hold people accountable when there is no reporting. Ms. Peeler said the accountability comes from the relationship and the knowledge that they would be working together over the long run. If things don’t unfold the way they planned, the grantee can go to them right away and talk with them about it. She said they still report to their board about grants that are awarded and the associated projects. With their Covid grants, they are doing a qualitative examination to document to the community. Ms. Peeler said because the issue of transparency was very important, they published on a weekly basis who was getting money and its use. Because of this transparency, more organizations could fine tune their requests and receive grants.

Director McGlinn asked how often they touch base with grantees and if it is formal or informal? Ms. Peeler said they participate in formal and informal contacts with the donors, grantees, and other partners. For the Covid response grants, they asked grantees to share photos, videos, or something to show the community how the funds were used. They also did Tuesday Talks with two grantees per webinar. They created an interview protocol to collect feedback and conduct interviews with some constituents.

Director Stewart asked if they had found that only some of the funders are embracing this idea and they are still stuck in this power dynamic paradigm? Ms. Peeler said their regional association has a lot of active conversation about trust-based philanthropy. It is something the funders in their community are discussing. She felt it is their responsibility to be an advocate for these principles and use their influence to guide different approaches they can take. Ms. Peeler admitted that that some of their funders are wedded to seeing extensive proposals and budget analysis. She said other grant makers in their region will accept any proposal from any foundation.

Ms. Salehi added that there is some unlearning that needs to be done on the non-profit side. There is almost a disbelief that it is a legitimate process. She believes the tipping point is now while there is a renewed understanding of how power manifests and who holds power and how that gets perpetuated. In response to Covid, many organizations shifted from restricted grants to unrestricted. That was as simple as putting an amendment on the grant contract. She thinks with more advocates, this approach can shift to become the norm.

Director Lewis asked what it would look like for capacity building if they commissioned evaluations. She also wanted to know how they build relationships with new types of nonprofits and how they increase giving to grassroots organizations?
Ms. Peeler responded that they don’t have a significant budget or focus for a formal evaluation process and methodologies. She said that when it comes to building new kinds of relationships, the trust-based approach is phenomenal. Ms. Peeler indicated that you must be intentional in order to expand the kinds of organizations you support. She said you need to do due diligence and take time to talk with a new applicant. Ms. Peeler said the simplicity of the process has been a big part of attracting and diversifying the applicant base. She said they must analyze gaps and take active steps to reach out to those diverse community partners.

Director Hopewell asked if they’ve seen a difference in impact from traditional to this process? Ms. Peeler said their conversations have become more personal in a way that helps her understand what’s going on in their organizations. This helps them be a champion and supporter of nonprofits and have a true understanding of what their needs are to succeed.

Ms. Salehi said that if these shifts can be made among many types of grant making institutions, they would see a lower burnout rate among nonprofit executive directors of color. She also believes that a lot of promising and visionary organizations are being left out of the equation just by nature of how the systems have been built – they exclude those without formal training or experience in grant writing.

Mr. Ford thanked the presenters and let the Directors know that Ms. Salehi and Ms. Peeler will be available for further conversations.

**High Impact Fund discussion**

Mr. Ford informed the SPK Board that they have roughly $1 million left from the initial FFE ask. He asked the board to consider allocating those funds for three items for the next year: 2Gen approach, increasing support of black led social change, and narrative work. If they decide on that, then the next steps would be to establish how much is going where. Mr. Ford said they can have small meetings and pull people in from the community.

Director Lewis reported on a couple of projects that TRHT is working on. They have a local history project that will be announced soon. They are also exploring hiring an investigative journalist that would support doing more media-based work and investigate stories not shown in the news media. They also work with artists in general. Director Lewis indicated she is happy they will be involved in narrative work.

Director Hopewell said they needed to know how CDAAC will be expected to work within the realm of the shared prosperity clan? How is the Inclusion Director aligning with that work? Mr. Ford agreed and said the potential next steps are to revisit the CDAAC and HUD discussion and get clarity on Director Bonner’s work with the City and the Equity plan.

Director Hopewell encouraged the Directors that this may be a good time to try new things. Sometimes a small change can have a huge impact. He also wanted to make sure there is some discretion for staff to use small amounts if they see an opportunity for an immediate benefit that makes sense.
Director McGlinn thought this gives us a clear focus on where we should move forward. She said they need to hear the group’s feelings about moving forward in this manner.

Director Lee said it seemed like it would bring more alignment for our Go teams and allow them to be more responsive to current happenings.

Director Stewart asked if the Go team structure would need to shift too? Mr. Ford said he talked to two of three Go team chairs about what this would look like. He said originally when they had a project, there was a specific beginning and end date. Instead, they could gather and acquire subject matter experts to inform decision making. They could establish a project team when they received a project. Mr. Ford said the subject matter experts could be academia, residents, or grass roots folks.

Director Stewart asked if there had been a discussion on the proportion of budget that would go out for each of the three areas. Director Hopewell said that will come later.

Director Cooney asked for clarification about the trust-based funds. Mr. Ford said that would be used as an approach. He believed that they should have strong relationships with the folks they are supporting. Director Cooney said he loved that and the idea of black-led groups. Director Cooney said they should do what they can about basic needs and system change. He liked the idea of the 2Gen approach – helping kids and their parents succeed.

Vice Mayor Griffin thanked Mr. Ford for arranging the presentations. She is comfortable saying yes to the three points at this time. She thinks it is crucial to shift from the way things have been done if they are going to have impact on multi-generational poverty.

Director Stewart said it is a matter of semantics. She said trust-based is an approach to use for all three bullet points. She asked that black-led initiatives be considered an overall value as they do their 2Gen work and systems change work. She said they need to be explicit in their intent to allocate resources to BIPOC communities.

Director Ready asked them not to lose sight of the collective impact. That they have in mind a strategy that moves the needle on poverty and inequities of all kinds in this community. He said that needs to be explicit.

Director Hughes reminded them that they agreed on the 2Gen approach last year. Everything they do should have that lens. She said she agreed with everything else.

Director Lewis said she was supportive and liked the approach. She wondered what their role as a committee would be on each of these topics – especially detail strategies and emerging strategies. Director Lewis echoed the idea the trust-based processes and supporting people of color leadership should be across all areas. She asked what she should be focusing on, how she could support it, and what ideas she should bring?
Director Stewart asked for clarification as to who would take those next steps and where would they happen. Mr. Ford said they will establish work groups, and everyone can participate.

As they began speaking about making a motion, Director Bonner reminded them that someone recommended moving, increase support of black-led social change, under strategies.

Director Stewart clarified saying the three new strategies would be 2Gen, systems change, and discretionary spending. They would commit to using a trust-based approach in that grant making, and they would be committed to explicitly focus the funds on nonprofits and work led by and serving BIPOC communities.

Director Lee asked if they are saying Black Indigenous People of Color (BIPOC) or black. She was not against either, but she wanted to be clear. Mr. Ford stated that he had meant the black population and that was based on data. Director McGlinn said they did discuss specifically black, but that it was up to the committee which to use.

Director Lewis said she believed that people of color-led organizations should be overarching. She thinks it should be supporting people of color leadership and black led social change. They are not interchangeable. Director Lewis said that supporting black led social change should remain under systems change and under every category they should support black and people of color.

Director Cooney commented that it is important to include Hispanics. They are disproportionately impacted by Covid. Director Hughes said in poverty they find people of color and a few white folks. She expressed a desire to help them. She said system changes and social justice is separate.

Mr. Ford wanted to be clear that to be pro-black does not mean anti-anything else. He agreed with the sentiments expressed. If they decide to look at the data by race, it is a different story. He said if they’re going to live in these values, they need to put funding toward those values. It is not to the exclusion of any other groups. It will take helping as many people as they can and getting as many people involved to help them to do the work.

Director Hughes clarified that she was speaking to the increase of support of black led social change being where it is and separate from other programs.

Vice Mayor Griffin, supported by Director Damerow, made a motion for SPK to use their remaining million dollars for the year focusing on the three strategies that Mr. Ford addressed earlier with the understanding that black is meant to be black.

A roll call vote was taken, and the motion passed unanimously.

Unfinished Business (unfinished or pending matters)

None.
Public Comments - General

Mr. JaVaughn Head, Uplift Kalamazoo, shared that they are a black led initiative seeking funding for our Black Grad Bash that recognizes a black high school graduate, GED graduate and all those individuals who couldn’t participate fully in their senior year. He stated they wanted to make sure people were aware of the event and that they were looking for sponsors.

Mr. Demetrias Wolverton said he thinks it is important to support black led institutions and their capacity around advocacy, grassroots work, and innovative ideas. He also wanted to see an increase of people of color represented in leadership and elected officials. Mr. Wolverton believes it is important to support for grassroots organizations led by people of color to have sustainable capacity to do racial and gender equity work.

Ms. Tami Rey stated her appreciation that the City is looking to support black led social change initiatives. She requested that leadership and organizer training be added to the list. Ms. Rey asked them to consider funding community led initiatives to specifically address the trauma aspects of rising gun violence in neighborhoods.

Mr. Jacob Johnson believes that Kalamazoo needs radical change. He spoke about the economic gap between black people and others in the community. Mr. Johnson wants to see federal, state, or local intervention to address the economic wealth gap. However, he doesn’t believe that money alone will fix the problem. He said Kalamazoo needs bold and radical leaders who don’t worry about appeasing the institutions. Mr. Johnson said there needs to be a specific black agenda for Kalamazoo with a line item attached to it. He is in favor of backing a reparations agenda. Mr. Johnson called for the City Manager and Mayor to step into the boldness and radicalness and state that they will support a black agenda. He doesn’t believe they can expect to reform the system. It is broke and they need to imagine new ways. He asked the board to check out solidarity economy and that model and build new initiatives. Mr. Johnson thanked the board for the work they do, and he encouraged them to step it up.

Mr. Ellis Martin asked for funding to be earmarked for a formalized Juneteenth celebration in Kalamazoo.

Ms. Simal Wolfolk, also asked for funding for the Grad Bash event put on by Uplift Kalamazoo. She asked for funding to go toward a training program that results in lower income residents to get better jobs. Ms. Wolfol said the NACD is building a technology center for kids to be trained on different technology and software that will allow them to compete on an educational level when they get to college. She also stated the need for equitable housing solutions for African American homeowners in historically red-lined areas in Kalamazoo like the Northside.

Ms. Remi Harrington said she has operated a grassroots initiative in this community since 2005. She started The Urban Folkart Exploratory to provide a way for the hip hop communities to have a voice to activate social change through the arts. She believes grassroots initiatives, art space initiatives, and entrepreneurial programs surrounding culturally integrated systems design and culturally autonomous systems design are important in order to leverage cultural capital to
participate in the economy as citizens. Ms. Harrington believes it is only through maintaining the
nuances of their cultural capital that they can compete and participate. She said the existing white-
dominant institutions are not inclusive and they don’t integrate them in the way they operate and
function. Ms. Harrington stated that if they don’t have the ability to dismantle those things now,
they can fund black led initiatives. She also addressed the issue of representation – positioning
black people within the context of white dominant institutions as a tokenizing figure that is the
representative face and voice of the whole black community. She finds that to be violent and a
misrepresentation of the needs of the people. There needs to be a democracy with well-defined,
equitable processes and integration.

Mr. Ed Genesis, Community leader and lead organizer for Criminal Justice Reform. He called in
to voice his support for this initiative. He agreed with Ms. Rey that they need to include the trauma
part in the plan. He said he looks forward to support from the City and working with some of the
other leaders to bring down levels of poverty, gun violence and housing inequities.

Directors Hopewell and Cooney voiced appreciation for the public comments. Director Cooney
added that it shows the importance of black leadership supporting black leadership and the
narrative change. He agreed with Mr. Johnson’s comments that there need to be conversations
about reparations and what kind of economic system should be in place. It must be part of the
narrative they put out there.

Vice Mayor Griffin thanked Mr. Ford for pulling this agenda together and being on point with
what must happen. She was pleased to hear the community comments. It takes all this feedback
to make this work.

**Adjournment**

Mr. Hopewell adjourned the meeting at approximately 2:26 pm

Submitted by: Beth Cheeseman Dated: 7/13/2020
(Recording Secretary)

Reviewed by: Kevin Ford Dated: 7/13/2020
(Staff Liaison)

Approved by: Bobby Hopewell Dated: 7/13/2020
(SPK Organizing Committee Chair/Vice Chair)