



Board of Directors Meeting Minutes July 2, 2026

Present Dana DeLuca, Valerie Leith, Jim Ratliff, Craig Vaughan, Wilson Xu

Absent Qianna Decker, Steve Glista, Zach Ehmann, Lynn Lupini, Lanny Potts

Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 5:49 pm by Wilson Xu, Board President.

Approval of Agenda

Motion to approve agenda approved unanimously.

Approval of Previous Minutes (June 4, 2026)

Motion to approve June 2 meeting minutes approved unanimously.

Guest Speakers

Carmela Hostiguin and Jason Adams, Code Compliance Inspectors from City of Kalamazoo, attended the meeting to discuss code enforcement, blight enforcement, and opportunities for neighborhood partnership. Malcolm Hankins, City Manager, also attended.

Overview of Code Enforcement

Carmela explained that the Code Enforcement Division addresses blight-related issues, including:

- Vacant homes
- Homes without utilities
- Broken or boarded windows
- Tall grass and weeds
- Trash and debris
- Junk vehicles
- Other nuisance and blight violations

The division handles both proactive enforcement and complaint-based enforcement, with many complaints coming through the City's **311 system**. Carmela noted that the City

previously attended neighborhood meetings before COVID and is now working to rebuild those neighborhood connections. The City would like to share ordinance reminders and other useful information with neighborhoods through newsletters, websites, email lists, or other communication channels.

Enforcement Process

The City outlined the general enforcement process:

- A complaint is received or an issue is identified.
- An inspector visits the property.
- If a violation exists, the City sends an enforcement letter.
- The property owner is given time to correct the violation.
- Trash or debris on private property generally receives a **10-day notice**.
- Junk vehicles may receive a **30-day notice**.
- Because of mail delays, the City often allows additional time before reinspecting.
- If the violation is not corrected, the City may send a contractor to abate the issue and bill the property owner.
- More serious cases (including blighted properties) may take longer and can involve court proceedings.

The Board discussed specific blighted properties along Westnedge Avenue, including properties near the former Happy's Pizza area and near Lake Michigan Credit Union. Carmela stated that one property is expected to be demolished by the City, likely by November, and another is within the longer enforcement process.

Right-of-Way and Natural Garden Concerns

A question was raised about natural gardens in the curb/right-of-way area, particularly when plantings block sidewalks, sightlines, or access. Jason explained that if vegetation is tall or untamed, it may fall under tall grass and weed enforcement. If it creates a right-of-way or visibility issue, it may also involve the City's right-of-way coordinator. Residents may submit concerns through **311**, and the City can help route complaints to the correct department.

Demolished Properties

The Board asked what happens to properties after the City demolishes a structure. Carmela explained that if the owner continues paying property taxes, the property generally remains with the owner, even after demolition. The City views demolition as a last resort because of the cost and because the property may remain a vacant lot.

Citizen Engagement

The Board asked how residents can better support the City's work. Malcolm noted that residents can stay engaged informally through neighborhood associations, 311 reporting, and communication with City staff, as well as formally through City boards and commissions. The City representatives were invited to participate in **National Night Out** at Crane Park.

Financial Report

Craig provided a financial update. The current cash balance reflects checks that have been deposited but may not yet include all funds received through PayPal, Benevity, or other sources. The Board discussed the second \$5,000 donation received through the Kalamazoo

Community Foundation. Craig raised the possibility of placing some funds into a low-risk interest-bearing account, such as:

- A Consumers Credit Union CD, potentially around 4% for 12 months
- Treasury bills, potentially offering more flexibility with shorter terms, such as six months

The Board discussed the need to keep sufficient funds liquid for possible upcoming expenses, particularly the proposed Westnedge Hill neighborhood sign.

Action Item: Revisit options for placing funds into a low-risk interest-bearing account at the September or October meeting, once the Board has a clearer sense of grant funding and upcoming sign expenses.

Neighborhood Plan Feedback Sessions

The Board discussed the recent neighborhood feedback sessions related to the neighborhood plan. Participation was minimal, but Board members contributed input as well. The feedback generally aligned with the existing draft framework of the neighborhood plan.

Feedback Themes

Feedback related to **Crane Park** included:

- More shaded areas
- Music nights
- Exercise equipment
- Drinking fountain

Other feedback included ideas for neighborhood activities, such as:

- Cooking clubs
- Art classes
- Other special-interest activities

For communications, limited written feedback was received. One person identified email as the best communication method, and another asked which Facebook group should be followed for neighborhood information.

Safety Mapping

The committee used a neighborhood map and colored dots to identify areas where people feel unsafe:

- Walking
- Biking
- Driving

The strongest feedback related to walking safety. Some feedback also related to biking and driving safety. Additional comments included concerns about:

- Speed hump warnings on Maple St
- The bike lane ending on Maple St (near Park Street)

National Night Out Engagement

The committee proposed bringing neighborhood plan materials to National Night Out to gather additional input from more residents. The Board discussed using National Night Out as an opportunity for residents to quickly indicate whether certain priorities are important to them. The goal is to gather additional public input before finalizing the plan. Board members

emphasized that the committee should not be responsible for staffing the plan table for the entire event.

Action Item: Board members should help rotate staffing at the neighborhood plan station during National Night Out.

Action Item: The plan committee will prepare Board members before National Night Out so they understand the posters, questions, and engagement process.

National Night Out

The Board discussed plans for **National Night Out at Crane Park** on August 4 from 4-7 pm.

Estimated Expenses

Current projected expenses total approximately **\$878**, not including an additional \$100 placeholder for yard games.

Anticipated costs include:

- Face painter: \$250
- Balloon artist: \$300
- Yard signs: \$150 placeholder
- Entrance balloons: \$8
- Porta-potty: \$150
- Ice for water bottles: \$20

Donations and Sponsorships

Confirmed or anticipated support includes:

- Kalamazoo Ice Cream Social to donate food
- Kazoo Cream donating \$100 and \$100 in gift cards for raffle
- Qianna's nephew to contribute a \$250 donation
- Midtown Fresh to provide cases of water and a \$250 contribution
- Additional outreach continuing by Dana, Qianna, and Valerie

The National Night Out Committee has requested the same City participation as last year, including fire trucks, police, and City officials. The committee also requested:

- Road closures near Crane Park
- Extra trash, recycling, and compost containers
- Mowing of Crane Park before the event
- Attendance by City officials

Tables and Setup

The face painter requested a 10-foot table. Wilson offered to provide one. The neighborhood plan committee will need approximately **five tables** to display posters and materials. Lanny may have additional tables available, and City support may also be explored.

Action Items: Board members should notify the committee if they can provide tables for National Night Out. Valerie will ask the City whether tables can be provided or borrowed.

Classic Cars

Dana provided an update on efforts to include classic and antique vehicles at National Night Out. Potential vehicles include:

- A pedal-powered "mobile" vehicle from Paul Pansella

- A 1967 Mustang from a Westnedge Hill neighbor
- Four potential vehicles recruited by John Lacko through the Kalamazoo Antique Auto Restorers Association
- A possible vehicle from KC's Autoland

The goal is to have approximately six vehicles displayed along the curb near the Crane Mansion side of the park, if road closure logistics allow.

Action Item: Dana will continue coordinating classic car participation.

Action Item: Valerie will follow up with the City regarding road closure timing and whether cones or additional measures are needed to reserve the curb area.

RC Crawlers

Dana shared that John Lacko also offered to bring RC Crawlers, which are radio-controlled model vehicles such as Land Rovers and Jeeps. Children could potentially operate them under adult supervision. The Board was receptive to adding this activity as long as it's free and supervised.

Additional Vendor Inquiries

The Board discussed inquiries from My Boba and Bandana Bartending regarding participation in National Night Out. Because the event already has two food vendors and water may be provided by Midtown Fresh, the Board felt it should not overextend vendor participation this year.

Action Item: The committee will respond respectfully to new vendor inquiries, thanking them for their interest and keeping their information for possible future events.

National Night Out Signs

The Board discussed reusing last year's National Night Out signs by placing date stickers over the old date. Wilson estimated that new signs would cost approximately \$115, while sticker overlays would cost significantly less. The Board agreed to reuse existing signs if possible and place them in similar locations as last year, including high-traffic neighborhood entrances and near Crane Park.

Action Item: Wilson will confirm how many signs remain from last year and provide the information needed to order weatherproof date stickers.

Foam Machine

Wilson raised the possibility of a foam machine for children's activities. The Board discussed water and electricity needs, possible environmental concerns, and placement. The foam machine would need water and power. The only known outlet is near the garden area and may already be needed for music. A generator may be necessary. The Board also discussed whether the park has a usable water source and whether City permission would be needed. The Board discussed the need for clear signage, including that children participate at their own risk and should not eat the foam.

Action Item: Valerie will ask the City about access to water at Crane Park and whether foam activity is permitted.

Block Party Discussion

Valerie shared information from the Edison Neighborhood Association that closing a street for a block party may require agreement from every neighbor on that street. Because this can

create barriers, future block-party-style events may be easier to hold in locations such as Crane Park or Parkwood-Upjohn rather than on a residential street.

Soap Box Derby Proposal

Wilson reported that Michael Harrison provided limited information about a possible Soap Box Derby revival and indicated that general liability insurance was used previously. The Board discussed that Michael has not yet clearly stated what he is asking WHNA to do or provide. The Board agreed that, as with other community proposals, the person proposing the idea should attend a meeting or present a clear plan, including what support is being requested from WHNA.

Decision: The idea will be parked until Michael is ready to engage more directly and provide additional details.

P.O. Box Renewal

Wilson reported that the WHNA P.O. Box is due for renewal. The cost is approximately **\$250 per year**. The Board discussed renewing the P.O. Box at the same level as last year.

Decision: Proceed with renewal of the P.O. Box.

New Business

Crane Park Adopt-a-Garden Bed

Valerie shared that Natalie Patchell is no longer coordinating the Crane Park adopt-a-garden-bed effort and that there is currently limited interest in maintaining the garden beds.

Valerie proposed that WHNA consider adopting one garden bed in Crane Park as a way to support beautification of the park. She noted that Melody, Monica, and partners connected with Kalamazoo in Bloom may be able to help identify whether plants are intentional plantings or weeds and provide guidance. The Board discussed that WHNA could adopt a bed and also invite neighborhood volunteers to help maintain it.

Action Item: Add the Crane Park garden bed adoption proposal to the August agenda for discussion and possible action.

Mid-Year Appeal Results

The Board discussed results from the mid-year appeal. Based on donations and expenses tracked so far:

- Donations tracked by thank-you notes: \$1,395
- Additional amount reported by Craig: \$220
- Additional amount provided by Wilson: \$475
- Total donations to date: \$2,090
- Print job expense: \$1,210.20
- Net result to date: approximately **\$879.80**

Additional donations are still expected, including employer matches through Benevity and other workplace giving programs. Dana shared that Sarah Harding from Harding's Market called after receiving the appeal letter to ask about WHNA's budget, goals, and whether the organization is nonpartisan. Dana explained that WHNA is nonpartisan, inclusive, and focused on neighborhood improvement. Harding's subsequently sent a \$250 donation.

The Board agreed that the appeal has been a positive first effort and has generated both donations and interest.

Old Business

Little Free Library Update

Wilson reported that he contacted three people about concrete work for the Little Free Library site. Two declined because the job was too small and a third had not yet responded.

The Board discussed alternatives to poured concrete, including brick, pavers and a less permanent base option. Valerie noted that because the installation is on private property, a less permanent option may be preferable in case future property owners want to remove it. The Board agreed to continue exploring feasible options.

Fall e-Newsletter Content

The Board discussed possible content for the fall e-newsletter. Suggested topics included:

- Code enforcement / 311 / compliance information from Carmela and Jason
- A “Meet Malcolm” feature introducing Malcolm Hankins from the City Manager’s Office
- Pet feature / neighborhood pet spotlight
- Crane Park garden bed information
- National Night Out follow-up
- Neighborhood Plan updates
- Infrastructure updates

Action Items: Dana will reach out to Malcolm Hankins about providing a brief introduction and photo for the newsletter. Board members were asked to send newsletter content ideas to Wilson by early September.

Other Updates and Announcements

Streets for All / Kalamazoo Avenue Update

Jim reported attending a recent Streets for All meeting. He shared that planned improvements related to Kalamazoo Avenue and traffic rerouting appear promising. Jim also reported that Bronson Blvd is expected to be repaved this year, with a four-inch grind and repave planned. The exact limits of the work were not fully confirmed.

Kleinstuck Preserve Article

Jim reported that a writer from the Historical Society of Michigan visited Kleinstuck Preserve and met with the Stewards of Kleinstuck. The writer is preparing an article on the history of Kleinstuck, noting its uniqueness as a 100-year-old preserve within the City of Kalamazoo. The article is expected in a future issue of ***Michigan History Magazine***.

Moped Army / Neighborhood Interest

Wilson shared that he met the founder of Moped Army, which began in Kalamazoo and later grew into a broader movement. The founder also has connections to Factory Coffee and lives in the neighborhood.

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 7:05 p.m. by Wilson Xu, President.

[The next meeting will be held on Thursday, August 6 at 5:45 pm at the YMCA on Maple Street.](#)

Minutes provided by Dana DeLuca, Secretary