



Rotary Club of Kalamazoo

January 23, 2023

Editarian: Charles Ofstein

President Kristin Chesak called our meeting to order at approximately 12:10 PM. The Club recited the Pledge of Allegiance. Past President Sid Ellis presented our invocation.

Rotarian Alisa Carrel presented Arts News today. There are several events coming up before Valentine's day! This includes an Art-Hop Boot Camp, events at the KIA, and The Great Leap at Farmers Alley Theatre. For up-to-date information, such as times, locations, and other information for events in our area, click: <https://www.kalamazooarts.org/>.

Rotarian Chris Shook introduced his guests, Sue Brockelbank and Fred Colgren. Steve Newell was a guest of Rotarian Kelley O'Reilly. Joe Neu introduced guest Laura Veldhouse. Rotarian Rob Peterson played host to David Taylor. Additional guests included prospective Rotarians Amy Thill and Nicole Meert. There were no visiting Rotarians.

Announcements

- President Kristin reminded the club that there will be a world community service meeting at 4:00 this coming Thursday, January 26th.
- Next week will be the club assembly. All Rotarians are encouraged to attend.
- Thell Woods' life will be honored this coming Saturday, January 28th at 11:00. The location will be the First United Methodist Church.

Happy Bucks!

- Rotarian Jeff Murphy contributed two happy bucks because Red Rose nominations are open! Please contact him to obtain an application.
- Past everything Rick Briscoe requested any member who is in the Portage Central School District to contact him. The club is looking for a 2nd host family.
- Rotarian Bob Miller will be organizing a club outing to a Western Michigan University Basketball game. Tentative date is February 28th. There will be no corresponding hockey game because WMU is currently 10th in the nation!
- Past everything Jim Cupper was happy to see so many people in person.
- Rotarian Amy reminded everyone that she bought her boss to the meeting last week and that President-Nominee Martin Velten was a gracious host!
- Past President Steve Kreider was pleased to report that he was now covered under Medicare.
- Rotarian Denise Hartsough reminded all of us to sign up as Strive Mentors.
- I hope that I did not miss anyone! Several members were just happy to be present.

Presentation:

Today's speaker was introduced by Rotarian Diane Schafer. Our speaker, Rebekah Kik, is currently the director of Community Planning and Economic Development for the City of Kalamazoo. Her topic was Imagine Kalamazoo 2025: Kalamazoo Imagines; Kalamazoo Acts.

Rebekah brought our club up to date on Kalamazoo's master plan. She was proud to announce that the plan developed almost a decade ago was now 60% complete.

Rebekah held up 2022 as a model of reaching Kalamazoo's strategic goals. She concentrated on six strategic areas that Kalamazoo excelled in last year. This included complete neighborhood visioning in several new neighborhoods and beautification projects in others. There have been 1000 trees added to the city since 2017.

Did you know that Kalamazoo recycled over 3,000 tires over the past few years? Those recycled pellets have improved city parks and city walkways. Additional recycling projects have been announced.

Kalamazoo is working hard on obtaining economic vitality for all citizens. They have allocated specific assets to assist businesses with growth and façade improvements. In addition, the city is hosting two minority business certifications focused on construction and general contracting.

Kalamazoo is also becoming a connected city. Last year, Kalamazoo added 2 miles sidewalks, seven plus miles of improvements to existing sidewalks and 10 additional miles to the previously existing 45 miles of bike lanes. Improvements to roadways have occurred on Stadium Drive and Parkview Avenue. These improvements are all tied into Kalamazoo's plan to convert downtown into 2 way streets beginning in 2025. The goal is to calm traffic by reducing speeds.

Kalamazoo is also safer. The city has replaced over one thousand lead lines, provided citizens with water filters and with home remediation projects where necessary.

Kalamazoo is working with parents and youth on several additional projects. These all fall under the area of "shared prosperity." Specific projects include caregiver and child care centers, parent literacy, and a significant contribution to KC Ready 4s.

Rebekah thanked the Foundation for Excellence for their tremendous support of all of these projects. All of the endowment funds are going to these significant projects and more!

I speak for all Rotarians in saying thank you to Rebekah for an inspiring presentation. We should all be proud to be associated with the City of Kalamazoo.

Additional information about all of the projects that Rebekah identified can be found here: <http://www.imaginekalamazoo.com/projects/>.