



**Minutes**  
**Committee on Equity, Diversity & Inclusion**  
**Wednesday, August 26, 2020 @ 6:00 P.M.**

Via zoom: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/88542907776>; ID: 885 4290 7776; Dial In: (301) 715-8592  
Email comments prior to the meeting to [sherrie.boak@lansingmi.gov](mailto:sherrie.boak@lansingmi.gov)

**CALL TO ORDER**

Council Member Spitzley called the meeting to order at 6:01 p.m.

**PRESENT via audio/video**

Council Member Spitzley, Chair  
Council Member Dunbar, Vice-Chair  
Council Member Spadafore, Member

**OTHERS PRESENT via audio/video**

Sherrie Boak, Council Staff  
Jim Smiertka, City Attorney  
Lisa Hagen, Assistant City Attorney  
Jane Bidwell, LPD Social Worker  
Chief Green, LPD Chief  
Claretta Duckett-Freeman  
Sarah Williams  
Sam Ingot  
Tanisha Ash-Shakoor  
Michael Lynn  
Amanda Thomashow  
Angela Water Austin  
Council Member Jackson  
Emily Dievendorf  
Fonda Brewer  
Ethan Schmitt  
Jonathan (No last name given)  
Daniel Long Hoffman  
Charlotte (No last name given)  
Emily (No last name given)

**MINUTES**

MOTION BY COUNCIL MEMBER DUNBAR TO APPROVE THE MINUTES FROM AUGUST 12, 2020 AS PRESENTED. ROLL CALL VOTE, MOTION CARRIED 3-0.

Council Member Spitzley noted that sign up for public comment will end 15 minutes after the first speaker starts.

Council Member Spitzley asked for prayers for the people in the path of Hurricane Laura, and Jacob Blakes' family in Wisconsin, and the two victims involved in a recent shooting.

## **DISCUSSION**

Council Member Spitzley introduced Ms. Bidwell, and noted that Council has heard from the public the need for more social workers, so she appreciated her time in providing details on her role in the LPD. She also acknowledged her for the “ride alongs” she has already done with some of the Council Members.

Ms. Bidwell first outlined her 40 year career including the work at other agencies before coming to the City. During this time she saw that people were falling through the cracks, noting that there is an expectation for conduct and treating people. She then outlined her role in the LPD including meeting with all the providers that assist her in working with the victims and their families. She also meets with the officers to deal with situations where they have responded to calls or callers repeatedly and she provide them with the connections they need for services. Ms. Bidwell works with the officers if they need to talk, and they accompany her on some calls of crisis, and if the caller is okay speaking with a social worker, the officer will leave. The goal is to meet the needs of the people in need but sometimes there are situations where a matter of health and safety. Ms. Bidwell did note that in her 40 years, she has not seen this level of exposure to the level of suffering that she is seeing now and cannot get to everyone on her own. She has had great support from the department on connecting with great providers, and she will be working with the prosecutors and judges in the future to assist the people in their system she advocates for. In addition to that task, Ms. Bidwell she is working on an intern program and hopes to have them assisting her in the near future. The presentation then lead into the daily tasks of follow up on reporting over the last 72 hours when she comes in to work to determine who to reach out to for critical assistance first. With incoming interns she hopes she will be able to make sure people are getting met in a timely manner. It was noted that the LPD used to have 18 sectors and now have 4, the lines ups sometimes only have 7 officers per shift and other times more but those include recruits who cannot work by themselves yet. Ms. Caldwell concluded that she constantly communicates with other municipalities on their interest in staffing a social worker.

Council Member Spadafore acknowledged Ms. Caldwell for allowing him to participate in the recent ride along and acknowledged the respect the officers had for her for assisting with site visits on a daily basis. They consider her an intrigue part of the health and care of the people they service. Council Member Spadafore witnessed the LPD involved in the first assist, but then when she is able to work with the caller, family or victim she can alleviate the initial call for the officers so they can move on to other calls. Council Member Spadafore supported funding for social workers, acknowledged her role in the LPD so she can speak to the officers and do the triage on who is in the most need. Ms. Bidwell noted that 85% of social workers are female, and to send them out unprotected is dangerous because it can be unpredictable. Officers are trained in ways social workers are not trained in and yet they are exposed to danger. Council Member Spadafore, by referencing the budget, noted there is an IT barrier where each employee is counted for a cost of computer and also counted for the computer itself, so interns will not be have confidential access because the funds are not there for them each to have the technology they need. Council Member Spitzley concurred with the IT statement by Council Member Spadafore. Council Member Spadafore then suggested more FT social workers, not just interns. He asked Ms. Caldwell if Council proposed budgeting and hiring four (4) social workers and an administrative assistance, if that would be realistic. Ms. Caldwell confirmed it would be helpful because she does not just work with the person that is in crisis but also their families. Council Member Spadafore proposed to the Committee to consider potentially \$500,000 in the budget priorities to assist in these positions. Council Member Dunbar concurred with the amount, and asked Ms. Bidwell what shifts she currently works. Ms. Bidwell explained she does vary her shifts with 4-10 hour shifts a week but sometimes does work 12 hours. She was then asked if there were 4 more FT staff, how would she see them being disbursed into the community. Ms. Bidwell was not prepared for that question so she stated she

would have to consider the options, but could lean towards having a staff 7 days a week, and would like dedicated units to ride around with them. She noted that some situations such as homeless camps, an officer is not needed because she works in tandem with other organizations and volunteers to assist those members of the community. In conclusion she stated to answer the question she would have to see what is needed, how to accomplish it and structure the tasks. Council Member Dunbar asked her to explain the difference of not needing an officer during some calls but needing their assistance for 911 calls. Ms. Bidwell explained that the initial visit an officer assists, but in the long term follow up with the victim, their family and whoever made the initial call can be done with or without an officer. Each case is different, and until she knows the safety of the situation she is not sure how to deal with each case. Her interest in additional FT employees would be 7 days, 8 hours a day. Council Member Spitzley asked Ms. Bidwell how she saw her role in violence prevention, homelessness prevention, or preventative measures to minimize the calls to LPD. Ms. Bidwell responded that it is hard to address because mental health services are inadequate, and there could be better treatment for severely mental health. There are not the same services available there used to be, but she is attempting to evaluate and begin to get organizations and agencies involved that can people moved into services. Prevention is hard to talk about, and anyone working in this role would have to do macro social work, letting people know what they need. Ms. Bidwell spoke in support of the great services for domestic violence, but admitted they don't have enough services. Council Member Spitzley asked her what she thought was the disconnect and agreed there needs to be a system in place, and people to work with the youth. Ms. Bidwell noted that she sees an issued with not prioritizing the most vulnerable. Some residential treatment centers are getting closed for children, so they are releasing 7 a week. There is not enough funding for the services. Council Member Spitzley asked what disconnect was in the City of Lansing because they are trying to reimagine and refocus on how to provide service to the Lansing community. Council Member Spitzley envisioned a grant writer position to be added to department so they can assist with the funding and resources. Encouraged with having an interactive office for this department which will go a long way to provide other outlets and reduces the probably there may still be violence. Ms. Bidwell stated that in the past they would have been teaching parenting, how to handle trauma and she thinks they should start parenting groups with young mothers, and develop an ongoing communication with young parents and how to teach the youth to choose better partners. Council Member Spitzley then spoke about the LFD where there are issues and asked her about the social worker aspect there. An example Council Member Spitzley provided was situations where the same person may call the LFD, the LPD and HRCS so there could be the opportunity for a system to track those so that each department would know where the other one was involved. Ms. Bidwell replied that some fire departments have a social worker that rides with EMT on frequent callers. She is interested in preventative aspects with both LPD and LFD. Council Member Spadafore acknowledged that in his ride along he witnessed where there are services needed but the social worker does not have the contacts work with other organizations. He would be interested in building a cross City solution system, linking people to other resources. Lastly, he too concurred on having a grant writer position for mental health, social equity and resources. Ms. Bidwell concluded the discussions by providing examples where with CMH, DHS, and others are reaching out a hand and saying they need help also, so this is about speaking up for the citizens to those providers. Back to the Badge is staffed by first responders and has peer support and debriefing. Being understaffed is not assisting anyone. Council Member Spitzley acknowledged Ms. Bidwell for attending the meeting.

#### Budget Priorities FY2020/2021

Council Member Spitzley stated this will be the discussion at the next meeting, because the Committee of the Whole will be reviewing them 8/31/2020 and potentially reformatting them.

**Public Comments/Listening Session**

**Limited to 3 minutes; sign up to speak at public comment will end 15 minutes after the first speaker starts.**

Ms. Duckett-Freeman stated her feelings that black people do not feel safe, that she did not support Ms. Caldwell in the social worker job, and asked the Committee to research more options for residents outside of calling 911.

Ms. Williams introduced herself as a “macro social worker”, noting one of her jobs is to integrate systems to for equity. She asked for immediate needs for mental health services in the community, and a need to replace cops and white men with guns as “protector” because in her opinion they are not protecting the black and brown residents. Ms. Williams went on to ask them to reimagine the system in a tiered model offering community systems that are already happening. The more people are connected with assisting, the less police involvement, which she believed would then reduce the risk and violence. Ms. Williams agreed to having a social worker in certain situations, but did not agree to get more social workers just have them in every situation. She concluded by stating she is also a grant writer and would be interested in speaking to the Committee about what that can offer, at which Council Member Spitzley asked her to contact her.

Mr. Ingot spoke in support of the Betz/Dunbar resolution, spoke in support of not arming people with guns, asked for fewer police officers, requested more public and mental health services, and would support replacing retired officers with social workers. Regarding evaluating the budget priorities for next year he asked they consider cuts that are done equitably.

Mr. Lynn spoken on his role as a LFD fire fighter and supported the comments on Backing the Badge. Mr. Lynn then spoke on officers and fire fighters going through traumas and the believed the systems in place are not enough.

Ms. Thomashow noted her disappointment in remarks made earlier by Ms. Caldwell and her feelings on the importance of reimagining the way systems work. Ms. Thomashow did not support more police or more social workers coming into the department when she does not support Ms. Caldwell theory more police are needed. She concluded her comments by stated she does not support the police and wants the Committee to think about different solutions and funding appropriated to other resources and not more men with guns.

Ms. Waters-Austin spoke briefly on recent national incidents and the history how the social worker in the LPD is important, and there was data that drove that position, notably that black youth was 20% of the population and 70% of the black youth are the arrest. Ms. Waters-Austin stated she worked with the LPD Chief at the time on the social worker, she would never have supported it if she knew those were taking the role of the officers. BLM serves as a placement site and provides field experience and learning to the community. She then referenced earlier statements by Ms. Bidwell on advocating for women and more officers, but she asked why she did not advocate for the youth. Social workers have a role in transformation and in 2020 they must be proficient in creating direction for those roles.

Ms. Brewer acknowledged the Committee and encouraged them to work with the State to address a more proactive approach instead of reactive.

Ms. Dievendorf stated she did not hear anything about a priority in social justice from the earlier presentation and thought the comments had lack of empathy, and did not support a social worker who had to bring an officer with her to any call.

Mr. Schmitt supported the work by social workers, and asked for a discussion on police as perpetrators. Mr. Schmitt did not support Ms. Caldwell in the roll of the LPD social worker.

Jonathon spoke in support of not having a social worker deal with a violent person without officer assistance. He agreed with the statement that the effect of the State closing facilities in the past years has done harm. Jonathon then asked the Committee to look into strengthening families and supported solutions to be proactive. He concluded his time by speaking in opposition to the Betz/Dunbar resolution, in his opinion the way it is written is problematic. He believed the Committee should fund LPD, hire social workers, work with State agencies and reject the proposed resolution.

Mr. Long Hoffman spoke in support of the Betz/Dunbar resolution, supported earlier comments by Ms. Waters-Austin, Ms. Williams and Ms. Divendorf with the need to find out who is causing the harm and offer more victim oriented safety.

Charlotte spoke in support of the Betz/Dunbar resolution, felt uncomfortable with comments made at the beginning of the meeting by the social worker. She stated she did not support social workers working with officers because in her opinion they do not share the same code of ethics. She concluded by asking the Committee to spend more time with Ms. Waters Austin.

Ms. Ash Shakoor spoke on behalf of her role with Domestic Violence Organization of Michigan. She supported the statements of the stresses of the job, regardless if someone is an actual social worker, and she assured them there is a commitment of people on the ground that would love to support the City. Ms. Ash Shakoor supported more hands on approach, a grant writer and more help for the social worker because there is too much work for one person. She asked the Committee to have more people at the table to be a part of the discussions and allocate funding to those resources. Ms. Ash Shakoor stated she would reach out to Ms. Caldwell with her organizations information.

Council Member Spitzley acknowledged all the public for their comments and set the next meeting for September 2, 2020. The Committee then provided the public with their email addresses and asked for any suggestions and ideas on budget priorities. Council Member Dunbar recommended the Committee invite other communities with social workers be invited to the future discussions, and Council Member Spitzley asked Ms. Caldwell for recommendations of communities she knows that already have that position embedded.

**Other:**

**PENDING – RESOLUTION – Invest in the People of Lansing**

No discussion on this topic.

**Adjourn**

Adjourned at 8:05 p.m.

Submitted by, Sherrie Boak

Recording Secretary, Lansing City Council

Approved by the Committee September 2, 2020