



City of Milwaukee

200 E. Wells Street
Milwaukee, Wisconsin
53202

Meeting Minutes

MKE COMMUNITY IMPACT COMMITTEE

AMANDA AVALOS, CHAIR

Anita Johnson, Vice-Chair

*Nik Kovac, Bill Christianson, Steve Mahan, Jordan Schettle,
Brook Stanley, Tammy Rivera, Jamaal Napoleon, Christlyn
Frederick-Stanley, and Ashley Harrell*

*Staff Assistant, Chris Lee, 414-286-2232; Fax: 414-286-3456,
clee@milwaukee.gov
Legislative Liaison, Beka Bein, 414-286-3789,
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Tuesday, April 14, 2026

5:00 PM

Virtual Meeting

This is a virtual meeting via GoToMeeting. Should you wish to join this meeting from your phone, tablet, or computer you may go to <https://meet.goto.com/312479285>. You can also dial in using your phone United States: +1 (571) 317-3122 and Access Code: 312-479-285.

1. Call to order.

The meeting was called to order at 5:03 p.m.

Mr. Lee presiding over the meeting initially.

2. Roll call.

Present 11 - Mahan, Avalos, Kovac, Christianson, Stanley, Rivera, Napoleon, Frederick-Stanley, Harrell, Johnson, Schettle

Also present:

*Beka Bein, Legislative Reference Bureau
Kathy Brengosz, Legislative Reference Bureau
Ald. Milele Coggs, 6th Ald. Dist.
Atty. Peter Block, City Attorney's Office
David Kuta, Public Information Division
Devin Anderson, African-American Roundtable
Shari Davis, Center for Economic Democracy*

3. Election of a chair and/or vice-chair.

Mr. Lee called for nominations, noted that resumes and/or biographies of members were forwarded to members to review in advance, and noted interests from members. Member Avalos had indicated interest in the chair or vice-chair position. Member Johnson had indicated interest in the vice-chair position.

Member Christianson moved to nominate member Avalos as chair. Seconded by member Johnson.

Ald. Coggs moved to nominate member Johnson as vice-chair. Members discussed a point of order raised that nominations be made by committee members.

After clarification, member Stanley moved to nominate member Johnson as vice-chair. Seconded by member Mahan.

Members Avalos and Johnson both thanked the committee and said they were willing to serve in those roles.

There were no other discussion or nominations made.

There were no objections to the motions. Both motions prevailed unanimously.

Member Avalos elected as chair, and member Johnson elected as vice-chair.

Chair Avalos presided over the remainder of the meeting.

4. Review and approval of the previous meeting minutes from March 24, 2026.

The meeting minutes from March 24, 2026 were approved without objection.

5. Presentation on open meetings and public records law.

Atty. Block gave a presentation on the open meetings law, according to Wis. Stat. 19.81. The purpose of this law was to ensure governmental bodies conduct business publicly – that the public be provided with essential information regarding the affairs of the government, the public be assisted in becoming an informed electorate, and for the prevention of governmental bodies from governing in secret. The committee was considered a governmental body and subject to the open meetings law. The law was to be liberally interpreted in favor of openness. A meeting was defined as a convening of members of a governmental body for the purpose of exercising the responsibilities, authority, power, or duties delegated or vested in the body.

Determination of a meeting was based on two requirements – purpose and number. The purpose requirement pertained to whether a meeting body was engaging in government business including discussion, decision-making, or information gathering. Not included were social or change gatherings or a conference; however, there was a rebuttal presumption that governmental business was being discussed if half or more of the body was present. The numbers requirement pertained to whether the number of members present were sufficient (quorum) to determine the meeting body's course of action on the business under consideration. A quorum was a majority of members present. Prohibited were walking and negative quorums. A negative quorum pertained to a non-quorum gathering of enough members to block an action. A walking quorum pertained to a series of non-quorum gatherings among separate groups of the members of a body, each less than the quorum, who explicitly or passively agree to act in sufficient numbers to reach a quorum.

Meetings could occur via conference calls, text messages (analogous to conference

calls), and emails (strongly discouraged). COVID guidance had allowed for fully remote meetings. Meetings must have public notice of a meeting setting forth the time, date, place, and subject matter. Agenda items must be reasonably specific – no "new business" or "old business". The order of taking up agenda items was flexible unless specific times were listed. Closed sessions required specific citation. Returning to open session after closed session required a 12-hour wait unless noticed to return into open session.

Open meetings must be held in a reasonably accessible (does not mean total access) place to members of the public, be open to all citizens at all times, and be in the local jurisdiction where the meeting body was serving. There cannot be arbitrary exclusions of persons. Meeting location must be large enough to accommodate expected attendance. Citizens have the right to tape record or videotape meetings in open session as long as doing so does not disrupt the meeting, and reasonable efforts must be made to accommodate them. Citizens have the right to attend and observe meetings during open session, but they do not have the right to speak or actively participate in the meeting. A body may grant or set aside a portion of the meeting for public comment.

Every meeting of a governmental body must first convene in open session. Convening into closed session can occur if one of the 11 exemptions in Wis. Stat. 19.85(1) would apply. Penalties for violations of the open meetings law include personal liability. Any action taken at a meeting in violation is voidable through court action.

Atty. Block gave a presentation on the public records law, according to Wis. Stat. 19.31. There was a presumption of complete disclosure and public access to records. There were certain exceptions to deny access to public records or redact records. A record was based on content and not medium, format, or location. Records included, but were not limited to, written pages, photos, recordings, optical disks, maps, emails, electronic documents, text messages, social media posts, and contractor records. Purely personal materials created or maintained on personal devices were not considered records. Work materials on personal devices or accounts were subject to disclosure. Committee members' communications related to committee business may be records. Violation of the public records law included attorney fees, damages, civil forfeiture, and punitive damages.

Further details of the presentation from Atty. Block can be found within Common Council file number 251987.

Members questioned instances of there being a quorum of members present at a non-committee gathering or function and instances of when a non-quorum number of members were to collaborate outside of meetings to work on tasks.

Atty. Block replied. Social gatherings were permitted, and members should avoid discussing committee business. If known in advance, the City Clerk's Office should be notified to post a notice of quorum stating the gathering of members of the body but that no official business of that body would be taking place. Presumption of members conducting meeting business was rebuttable through completion of affidavits. Informal collaboration among members and informal work groups were permissible so as long as there was no action to predetermine a future vote and no formal structure was created for those members. Creation of formal subcommittees or any groups with collective power, defined structure, or authority making power would trigger open meeting requirements. He could be contacted further with any additional

questions.

Chair Avalos thanked Atty. Block for his time and presentation.

6. Presentation from the African-American Roundtable on its community budget programming efforts.

Mr. Anderson, Campaign Director for the African American Roundtable (AART), and Ms. Davis, Co-Executive Director for the Center for Economic Democracy, gave a presentation. AART had been advocating and working on participatory budgeting for many years. He would be sharing to the committee AART's modeled process on Milwaukee's northwest side and best practices. Participatory budgeting gave people real power over real money to make the decisions that affect their lives. The process entailed a steering committee designing the process, brainstorming of ideas through meetings and online tools from participants, development of feasible proposals (real projects) from volunteer budget delegates, voting of proposals that best serve community needs, funding of winning projects, and evaluation of the process and goals.

AART's northwest side model had a steering committee made up of 7 volunteer members, including the project coordinator. Members resided on the northwest side or had businesses there. Member Johnson had joined the steering committee with belief in AART's mission, board membership, residency, and to have the chance to determine how to allocate government dollars. The project took time and commitment to implement. The process was intergenerational with older and younger participants bringing different ideas. The steering committee presented opportunities for \$10,000 grants. The highlight of the program was seeing 4 recipients each receiving \$10,000. AART gave away \$40,000 total to 4 organizations following its model.

Their core step was designing the project via a steering committee. The steering committee's key task was creating the rule book to determine voting eligibility, type of projects that could be funded, and maximum funding amounts. Ald. Coggs and Ald. Chambers, Jr. also helped the steering committee to determine parameters and put focus on community safety. Following development of the rule book there was the brainstorming of ideas, development of proposals through resident conversations, building of the final ballot, ample voting time, funding winning projects, and evaluation of what worked and lessons learned. Engagement included radio interviews, tabling at community events (Juneteenth Day and other northwest side events), community education events explaining participatory budgeting, in-person gathering voting parties after finalizing a final ballot, and Facebook live broadcasting throughout the process. Community education included the hosting of 2 sessions over the last 6 months at MLK Library and Villard Library. Both sessions were packed with over 75 attendees at each session.

More than 850 northwest side residents voted for the top projects to increase safety and change lives. The 4 awardees were BYOCHI, Brentwood Church, Korey's Kids, and Vaun Mayes. BYOCHI focused on young people and mental health prevention. Brentwood Church focused on renovating their church kitchen to provide better fellowship activities for older adults. Korey's Kids provided clothing, pampers, diapers, toys, resources, and giveaways. Vaun Mayes of We Locked In MKE hosted lock-ins for young people to have safe activities.

Best practices used included developing communication committees with community members; developing clear decision making expectations, roles, and guide books to

support people in the process; inclusion of all expertise both on content/context (government staffing) and lived experience (community members), and having tools to support people's discussions and decisions and not to detract from them. Folks most impacted must be deeply involved. Communication strategies should be built with the desired people to be engaged and not for them. Folks should be invited to serve on committees/coalitions. Where possible, resources or stipends should be provided to pay for time and contribution. The rule book served to be a living document and was critical in listing expectations, next steps, and explicit roles.

Upcoming opportunities included the launching of a new Participatory Budgeting Handbook by the Participatory Budgeting Project. A free webinar would occur on April 22, 2026. Further information would be forwarded.

Further details of the presentation can be found within Common Council file number 251987.

Member Rivera inquired about how the committee could stay connected and support AART.

Mr. Anderson replied. The committee should keep its process true to participatory budgeting principles, ensure deep stakeholder engagement occur throughout, continue taking an active role in proposal development and writing rules, and make rules as inclusive as possible.

Mr. Anderson added comments. AART struggled with the age of eligibility between 15, 13, or lower, valued having an intergenerational steering committee, intentionality involved as many people in as possible, framed participatory budgeting as an opportunity for people to see government work for them, and valued transparency of its process. They would remain a resource to the committee, share materials of value, and connect the committee to other practitioners. Multiple articles from the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel, written by journalist LaRisa Lynch, documented AART's process and could be of value to the committee.

Chair Avalos thanked Mr. Anderson and Ms. Davis for their presentation.

7. Review of research on best practices, use cases, existing and/or past community budgeting programming efforts.

Member Rivera inquired about a synthesized report with resource attachments.

On behalf of Ms. Bein, who had to leave the meeting earlier, Ms. Brengosz provided an overview of the research memorandum that was forwarded to members in advance of the meeting. The memorandum report looked at other participatory budgeting programs from other jurisdictions, particularly those from Chicago (Illinois), Seattle (Washington), and Eau Claire (Wisconsin).

Chicago had 50 total wards. 13 of those wards use participatory budgeting. Each ward received about \$1.5 million in allotment. Wards using participatory budgeting dedicated between \$200,000 to \$1 million. Their rule book was published in 2021 and reused annually. Ward staff convened and trained committee volunteers. Final proposals were presented at a project expo. Voting occurred over weeks at ward offices, community locations, and online. Projects with the most votes were funded.

Seattle allocated \$27.2 million via participatory budgeting starting in 2020. Disputes

with community groups delayed implementation until August 2022. Eligible projects were those within the city boundaries, that did not require law or policy changes, that did not specify particular vendor(s), and those that were generally capital projects. A third party vendor was used to manage the process. Community members solicited via an open application, were offered a \$25 per hour stipend, and anticipated to work 25-30 hours per month. Voting eligibility was a minimum of 15 years of age, and a person had to live, work, or play in the city.

Eau Claire was the first Wisconsin community to use participatory budgeting. They authorized participatory budgeting in 2018 and started in 2021-2022. Proposals had to fund infrastructure, roads, buildings, land, and parks with a useful life of one year or more. Their steering committee consisted of 8 community volunteers responsible for overall design and implementation. There was no third party administrator. Voting period was 3 weeks. Voting eligibility was ages 11 and up. Voter outreach entailed 19 community events, voting at libraries and city hall. The amount of funding was \$300,000. 5 projects were funded.

Ald. Coggs requested that copies of rule books of the steering committees from those cities researched be forwarded.

Member Harrell said that the committee had until November this year to move forward and should discuss developing a timeline for community messaging and involvement at the next meeting.

Member Napoleon commented. The committee should decide whether to fund one-time large disbursements (Seattle model) or multiple smaller projects (Chicago/Eau Claire models), should determine its engagement mechanics, and should not reinvent the wheel from scratch. All models showed a similar 4-pillar process and adhered to their rule book throughout. Communities struggled the most with determining voting eligibility.

Member Rivera and Harrell inquired about public participation or commenting in committee meetings and how meetings are shared to the public.

Mr. Lee said that the public did not have the right to participate in committee deliberations unless noticed or permitted by the committee. Future agenda could possibly include an agenda item to allow for public comments. Written correspondence could be sent to staff for distribution to the committee. The virtual chat should be used exclusively to offer essential information and not be used to provide excessive commentary, which is not part of the official proceedings of the meeting. Notice of meetings, agendas, and minutes are published and made freely accessible and available on the City's Legistar website and calendar. Notice of meetings are also sent via the City's e-notification for subscribers who sign up. Meeting materials are accessible via Common Council file number 251987. He can develop an email distribution list to send notices, agendas, and minutes of committee meetings to interested persons.

Mr. Lee said that the next agenda item was more germane to the subject of public outreach and should be discussed then.

8. Discussion on developing community budgeting program methodology, parameters, criteria, public outreach strategy, and/or other aspects.

Chair Avalos said that discussion should focus on a methodology, parameters, criteria,

outreach, and a rule book.

Members inquired about the City's capacity and ability to assist the committee to do public outreach such as posting updates, creating graphics, and maintaining a website.

Mr. Kuta, Public Information Division, replied. His office supports the Common Council and City departments in creating flyers, social graphics, and digital and physical surveys. They had assisted in producing tri-fold pamphlets with physical surveys, self-return mailers, and online survey link during public outreach efforts for the City's ARPA allocation process. They generally would need 1 to 2 weeks' advance notice for any design requests. They can tailor their support, if requested, to the committee once the committee decides its communication methods and timeline. They provided on-demand services. Their workload varies, but they can accommodate most design asks with 1 to 2 weeks' advance notice.

Members discussed priorities. Of urgency was to have community engagement and announcement of the funding opportunity to the public as soon as possible. A phased campaign approach with a clear timeline and established parameters should be done prior to doing a public launch. Doing so would help the committee and City to avoid the struggles and unpreparedness of other cities that had announced funding too soon without established parameters. Elements to define include public safety, timeline, voting process, voter and project eligibility and qualifications. "Public safety" should be defined to be as broadly and inclusively as much as possible (beyond policing) and include aspects such as healthcare, nutritious foods, and sober social spaces. The committee needed to determine whether to develop its own rule book, hire a consultant, or co-create with the community. The committee should draw upon existing plans such as those from the Department of Community Wellness and Safety and Cities United (national organization). There should be a sharable, initial FAQ document developed and made available in the interim for the public's benefit. A central website, as an integrated platform, should be established to share the FAQ document, program timeline, definitions, and other information as they become ready. Public Information Office would be requested to assist to establish, if possible, the website. A centralized website, similar to the one for the Community Collaborative Commission, was important for the public to track progress and anticipate next steps. Program design should be fully established prior to the website fully going live.

Chair Avalos commented. The offerings from the Public Information Division was welcomed. She supported having a centralized source to list the project timeline and project description. There should be a survey (digital and hardcopy) made for residents to respond to the question "What does non-police public safety mean to you?" A website should incorporate the survey and additionally provide information on what residents could do for each phase of the campaign. The committee's monthly meetings would allow time for survey data collection. Of importance were transparency and inclusiveness for every stage.

9. Next meeting date and time.

Tuesday, May 12, 2026 at 5 p.m.

10. Items for future agenda(s).

To be determined.

Implicit from meeting discussions, possible agenda items to include defining "non-police public safety"; review of additional research and/or rule books from other cities; design of a participatory budgeting process, rule book, methodology, and criteria; development of a public-facing website, and design of a survey portal.

11. Adjournment.

There was an emergency tornado weather shelter in place warning notification.

The meeting adjourned abruptly at 6:36 p.m.

*Chris Lee, Staff Assistant
Council Records Section
City Clerk's Office*

Meeting materials for this meeting and past meetings can be found within the following file:

[251987](#)

Communication relating to the activities of the MKE Community Impact Committee.

Sponsors: THE CHAIR