



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 Schettler,
Brook Stanley, Tammy Rivera, Jamaal Napoleon, Christlyn
Frederick-Stanley, and Ashley Harrell**

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Tuesday, September 22, 2026

5:00 PM

Room 301-A, Third Floor, City Hall

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1. Call to order.

Meeting called to order at 5:03 p.m.

2. Roll call.

Present 9 - Mahan, Avalos, Kovac, Christianson, Napoleon, Frederick-Stanley, Harrell,
Johnson, Schettler
Excused 2 - Stanley, Rivera

Also present:

3. Review and approval of the previous meeting minutes from August 18, 2026.

Meeting minutes from August 18, 2026 were approved without objection.

4. Public comments and/or announcements.

Mariah Weddle, representing the African-American Roundtable Participatory Budgeting Committee, thanked the committee for countless volunteer hours and shared a statement of concern. With the November 1 deadline quickly approaching, focus on structure had created a state of indecision for the committee. The committee should create a launching timeline to ensure funding would be used in a timely fashion to make Milwaukee safer and more empowered. There should be reassurance that the

process was aligned with participatory budgeting best practices and that all residents, especially on the far northwest side including youth and young people, would have a platform to propose and vote. The rollout of the committee's participatory program should be intentional in allowing community-driven decision-making and that funding go to leaders and organizations the community believed would be most impactful and outcome-driven. Community members needed to feel empowered to vote and remain engaged. There should be collaboration with the Participatory Budgeting Project, noting that a \$5,000 investment would provide access to a digital PB handbook with step-by-step guidance on designing the process, collecting ideas, developing proposals, voting, and implementation, covering leadership, inclusive design, equity criteria, and outreach.

Dr. Yvonne Greer testified. She was the project lead and director for several major health equity and disease prevention grant initiatives in Milwaukee in collaboration with the State of Wisconsin Chronic Disease Prevention Program. Particular grants of importance were those associated with MKE Action Movement Initiative and MKE Heart Health Learning Collaborative. These grant initiatives helped to promote health and wellness citywide. Participatory budgeting funds from the City would be vital to help fund and continue the momentum of these grant initiatives and organized efforts.

Chair Avalos said she appreciated so many people coming out and that she wanted the process to be very collaborative.

5. Update(s), discussion, and/or recommendation(s) from work groups for review and/or approval by the MKE Community Impact Committee.

a. Eligible Projects & Proposals Work Group

Member Christianson presented on an initial proposal relating to definition and criteria for eligible proposals, overall budget and limits on funding for proposals, and process and requirements for proposal submittal. Not included and to be deferred to the Community Building and Outreach Work Group to address was the voting process over proposal submittals.

Member Christianson said that those who could submit a proposal would be proposed as any City of Milwaukee resident or community organization that was either based in Milwaukee or whose primary mission was focused on the city.

Members discussed and said that the definition of community organization should be reworded to be as expansive as possible. Perhaps add a definitional term in the rulebook using "including but not limited to" to cover neighborhood organizations, volunteer groups, and others to avoid future eligibility disputes.

Member Christianson continued. There were ten proposed eligible project criteria. The first criterion would require proposals be focused on non-police public safety measures, as directed by the charter establishing the committee, with public safety interpreted broadly and proposers required to explain how their proposal advanced public safety. The second criterion would allow for programs, services, or capital projects, such as a swing set cited as an example of tangible infrastructure. The third criterion would require a detailed budget accounting for design, permitting, administration, and implementation. The fourth criteria would require projects take place within the City boundaries and have direct benefit to city residents. The fifth criterion would require construction or improvement of permanent or semi-permanent infrastructure be located on property owned or controlled by the City, with

improvements on private property not eligible for funding.

Members and Ald. Coggs questioned the limitation against private property eligibility and discussed that City money had gone to private uses before, that a community organization serving neighborhoods on private property could still serve the community and provide public access, and that “controlled” was a key word that would permit solutions, such as City easements on a private property. The committee should work with the City Attorney’s Office revise the criterion language to focus on control and public accessibility, that improvements can be on private property but must be controlled by the City, be accessible to the public for a period of years, and to claw back that money if public access was not maintained. Rogers Street Academy was cited as a model.

Member Christianson continued. The sixth criterion would require compliance with all applicable laws, statutes, and ordinances including city purchasing requirements. The seventh criterion would require proposals identify the specific project, program, or service but not identify a specific vendor, person, or community group to execute.

Members, Ald. Coggs, and Christal Shipp (from the public) raised concerns and discussed the seventh criterion restricting vendor identification. Requiring bids and RFPs would go against the resident-led purpose where groups proposed work they themselves would execute and had existing relationships. Proposers would not think about City purchasing processes when preparing proposals. Proposers would want to apply and submit their ideas for their group to perform or offer. Projects under the City purchasing threshold of \$50,000, could be sole source without adhering to the full purchasing process, vendor procurement, and service delivery. This criterion should be fixed to conceptualize funding as functioning as a grant to a community organization, allowing proposers to identify who will do the work. There should be legal review from the City Attorney's Office on this criterion. Member Christianson would seek clarification from the City's Purchasing Division.

Member Christianson continued. The eighth criterion for inclusion of a detailed budget was in error and repetitive of the third criterion. The ninth criterion would require projects be for new projects, programs, or services or result in direct, measurable, and tangible enhancement to an existing project, program, or service.

Members discussed that some effective work was unpaid and had been defunded, that retaining or restoring previously funded effective programs should remain eligible, and that term “or” already allowed existing programs to qualify with measurable enhancement, though rewording for plainness and inclusion in a clear template would help.

Member Christianson continued. The tenth criterion makes ineligible any projects with significant unfunded ongoing operating or maintenance costs. Minimum and maximum funding would be proposed as \$50,000 minimum and \$200,000 maximum per proposal from a \$600,000 total allocation, with 5 percent or \$30,000 set aside as contingency for overruns and for training, outreach, handbook, and other operational needs, leaving \$570,000 for direct project funding.

Members said that higher amounts would reduce opportunity and inquired about lowering the minimum amount.

Femi Akinmoladun (from the public) commented. A \$50,000 minimum would eliminate

intended submitters like neighborhood associations seeking \$5,000 for an event series while favoring larger nonprofits with more resources and ignore models in Atlanta and Chicago where \$30,000 or smaller micro-grants of \$5,000 to \$15,000 had directly funded youth safe spaces for a weekend or summer. With \$5,000 to \$20,000 and support from churches and other spaces, groups that do not receive major funding could think outside the box. He encouraged a \$5,000 to \$25,000 threshold to open up more proposals.

Ald. Coggs said that there should not be a minimum, that the focus should be on the maximum because the real question was how many people would be able to have their projects funded.

Members discussed the concept of funding categories, that the committee could have categories from \$5,000 to \$10,000, \$10,000 to \$50,000, and \$50,000 to \$200,000 to broadly encompass various ideas and proposals small and big. Categorizing should be broken down into different public safety - supported ecosystems. Perhaps \$600,000 could be split four different ways to be \$200,000 each, that a quarter could be saved and allocated to smaller projects, that big projects could be capped at \$150,000 maximum. Perhaps allocating smaller amounts to be a quarter or even less, suggesting splits like \$100,000, \$50,000, \$120,000, or \$30,000. A decision tree could be used where under \$50,000 proposals could pass through more quickly.

Lakeitha Cole (from the public) and Ms. Shipp (from the public) said that the committee needed to obtain the Participatory Budgeting Project handbook to assist the committee further. There could be the possibility to work out a deal to acquire the handbook and make the subscription payment at a later time.

Members concurred and said to also utilize 414Life Milwaukee Blueprint for Peace and that 414Life does not involve law enforcement in their operations.

Markell Crawford (from the public) commented. She was a member from Pathfinders Power of the Paths Youth Action Board. Their Zero Youth Corrections initiative was ending and needed funding to continue. Those initiatives focused on criminal justice and public safety transition plans, street outreach with speakers and microphones, and know-your-rights cards among other things. Larger organizations may need to communicate with each other to combine projects if they wanted more funding, especially if they aligned on the same thing. There should be focus on youth accountability, transparency for the City's participatory budgeting funds, and active outreach done inside the community.

Members discussed what would be an appropriate maximum for any single award in the entire bucket, asking whether \$200,000 was too much and whether \$100,000 or \$150,000 would be more appropriate. One opinion would be that \$200,000 was okay and that it was not necessary that something bigger had been done to justify identifying a maximum, and that an algorithm could help. If \$200,000 was the maximum the committee would not award more than one at that level which would leave \$370,000 to go further, or if \$150,000 was the maximum the committee would not award more than two at that level.

Members noted the complexity of establishing funding categories and maximum amounts. There could be complications between competing categories when it ultimately came time for voting and approving which ones fell above or below the funding line. The Participatory Budgeting Project handbook might address those

situations.

Chair Avalos said the work group should put something together based on the discussion heard today and bring it back.

Member Christianson continued. Concerning the process and requirements for submitting a proposal, preliminary proposals would be sent to a City vetting team for review. The idea of that team would be to ensure that a proposal met the eligibility criteria and to provide a review or workshop process where client points could be worked out.

Member Schettle asked whether the City vetting group would be the one that then made the final determination of which potential vendor or party would be selected to accomplish the goal, and how that process would look.

Member Christianson replied. The original thinking had been to abide by City purchasing requirements, where pre-selecting a vendor without a sole source or single source justification would be difficult, and that the group might need to consult the City's Purchasing Division. The proposed submittal process was based on the City carrying out programs; however, feedback received today was for the process to be more focused on grants to community organizations, not city-executed projects. Because of that shift, perhaps the whole idea of the City vetting team needed to go back to the drawing board. If the process was not within the City's structure, purchasing, and procurement requirements, there could perhaps be a community review team.

Members had discussion. There should be a standardized, concise application format or template with all required elements provided so that proposals could be compared apples-to-apples and with consistency. The committee should establish a submission email and in-person submission options, and hire someone to do the actual reviewing of all submissions to ensure they met the criteria and to organize them into a system ready for review and voting.

b. Community Building & Outreach Work Group

Member Harrell said that the work group had no updates at the moment, was still working on arranging another meeting, and that the minutes previously shared were still in progress.

c. Rulebook & Online Organization Work Group

Member Schettle gave an update. The group had met the previous week and recommended that the committee purchase and acquire the Participatory Budgeting Project handbook subscription to help facilitate drafting and finalization of the rulebook.

Chair Avalos said she was interested to join the work group.

There was unanimous agreement from members to pursue the handbook subscription.

Member Harrell added comments. The steering committee for the 414Life Milwaukee Blueprint for Peace had a law enforcement chief, the chief was not in collaboration, and the steering committee used MPD data only. Their Blueprint for Peace categories included community, equity, individual, community, resilient, and action.

6. Discussion, review, and/or motion(s) on allocating MKE Community Impact Funds and their purpose(s).

Members discussed that the purchase would be for a \$5,000 subscription for 2 years, whether the committee needed to formalize the proposed division of funds first so there would be a budget concept to operate from, that legal review would be needed on the division of funds, that the committee could agree in principle of the proposed division of funds, that formal action by the body would be required to move immediately, and that the purchase would take some time requiring legislative approval by the City first.

Member Schettler moved that the committee purchase the Participatory Budgeting Handbook subscription. Member Frederick-Stanley seconded. There was no objection. The motion prevailed.

Mr. Lee said that he would check with the City Clerk on the legislative and timing process regarding the handbook subscription purchase.

7. Discussion on devising a method to allocate MKE Community Impact Funds.

Member Christianson commented. Based on the earlier proposal, the proposed division of funds was 95 percent, or \$570,000, dedicated to funding proposals from the community and 5 percent, or \$30,000, set aside as both contingency for cost overruns and as a source for training, outreach, handbook, and other necessary committee resources.

Member Schettler said that he was concerned that the 5 percent bucket combined two purposes, that if \$10,000 were used for training only \$20,000 would remain for a \$25,000 overrun.

Member Christianson said that if funding functioned as grants rather than City-executed projects, the likelihood of cost overruns would be essentially be zero because an award of \$5,000 would require staying within \$5,000, reducing need for contingency, though unforeseen costs such as hiring a consultant to consolidate numerous submissions for voting could arise.

Member Mahan suggested setting a hard amount for training because overruns were inherent in grant making and \$5,000 would go only so far, with \$30,000 spread thin across mini-grants.

Member Frederick-Stanley said that the \$30,000 would be set aside for operational expenses and any leftover would go back to funding proposals. The \$570,000 would be set aside for direct awards. Awarding \$5,000 meant the grantee must stay within that limit, so contingency might not be needed.

Members discussed that all suggestions agreed upon regarding the division of funds should be sent to the City Attorney's Office for review.

8. Next meeting date and time.

a. Tuesday, October 13, 2026 at 5 p.m.

Mr. Lee inquired if the next meeting date could be rescheduled to occur later in the evening, the following week, or on October 8th or 9th to avoid potential conflict with the City's 2027 budget hearing that same day. He and other members were involved with those budget hearings. The budget hearings would take place in the first three weeks of October, except October 8th and 9th.

Members noted that several committee meetings had been pushed back, canceled, and rescheduled, which had been detrimental, and suggested meeting on October 8th at 5 p.m.

Mr. Lee said that this meeting was rescheduled to allow the work groups more time to meet and work on their tasks. He will communicate with members offline to reschedule the next meeting and aim for October 8th at 5 p.m.

9. Items for future agendas.

Ms. Crawford (from the public) said she had timeline concerns, that there should be action to carry over the funds beyond 2027, that the committee needed to develop a very specific timeline to target next March for the committee's first public outreach, and for there to be transparency regarding the timeline and eligibility criteria.

Member Christianson replied that it was highly likely that the funds would be carried into 2027 and beyond, barring issues, should the process extend.

Members discussed revisiting and revising the timeline; a review or drafting of a rulebook; and review of the eligibility definition and criteria, funding amounts (minimums and maximums) and division of funds, and proposal submittal process.

10. Adjournment.

Meeting adjourned at 6:45 p.m.

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

Meeting materials for this 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

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