



# WASHTENAW COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

June 7, 2023

## WORKING SESSION

### I. ROLL CALL

A session of the Washtenaw County Board of Commissioners was held at the Administration Building, in the City of Ann Arbor, Michigan, on June 7, 2023.

The meeting was called to order at 05:30 PM by Comm. Somerville, Chair of the Working Session.

Members Present: Comms. Justin Hodge, Andy LaBarre, Crystal Lyte, Jason Maciejewski, Yousef Rabhi, Caroline Sanders, Katie Scott, Annie Somerville

Members Absent: Comm. Shannon Beeman

Others Present Greg Dill, County Administrator; Andrew DeLeeuw, Interim Deputy County Administrator; Michelle Billard, Corporation Counsel; Jason Fee, Facilities Management; Tina Gavalier & Catherine Jones-Alther, Finance; Brady Peck, Director of Operations; Alize Asberry Payne, Racial Equity Officer; Marie Pfeiffer, Finance; Ashley Hall, BOC Communications and Operations Manager; Bryce Allmacher, Clerk's Office; and members of the public.

### II. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

### III. REPORT FROM THE COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR

### IV. REPORT FROM THE BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS LIAISON

### V. DISCUSSION ITEMS

#### A. Food Gatherers Update - Eileen Spring, President/CEO

Eileen Spring, President/CEO of Food Gatherers, gave a report on current trends in food insecurity related to the expiration of COVID-19 protections. Food Gatherers is currently prioritizing support for partner organizations which serve ZIP codes 48197 and 48198, which have the highest concentrations of food insecure people. Spring said that COVID-19 required the organization to accelerate their network's ability to overcome common impediments to food distribution, such as poor access to transportation. Spring gave a brief overview of the Community Kitchen at the Delonis Center.

Each year, Food Gatherers programs reach 55,000 unique individuals. Black and Latino/Hispanic households in Washtenaw County are disproportionately at risk for food insecurity. Since the expiration of emergency SNAP allotments, Food Gatherers has experienced increases in visits and requests for service. Food Gatherers anticipates that the organization will be increasingly reliant on purchasing food in the coming years; Spring noted the challenges inherent to such a strategy given

the projected increase in costs for food in the coming years.

Comm. Sanders asked about Food Gatherers' grant with Door Dash.

Spring said that the grant allows clients who use food pantries to have their food delivered at no cost.

Comm. Rahbi said that the coming recession will disproportionately affect people without wealth; spoke to his concerns regarding wage growth and housing costs. Rahbi said that supporting organizations like Food Gatherers is a responsibility of County government.

Comm. LaBarre asked if Spring has concerns about the viability of some of Food Gatherers' partner organizations.

Spring said that Food Gatherers provides robust operational support to its community partners.

Comm. Macijewski asked Spring to describe how to make a donation.

Spring said that [foodgatherers.org](https://foodgatherers.org) is accessible and provides detailed instructions for donors.

Comm. Hodge asked about Food Gatherers' deficit and for a specific dollar amount that would help stabilize the organization moving forward.

Spring said that Food Gatherers anticipates a lack of federal support for at least the next 2 years, making financial projections difficult.

**B. Destination Ann Arbor Presentation - Sarah Miller, President & CEO Destination Ann Arbor**

Sarah Miller, President/CEO of Destination Ann Arbor, gave a report on tourism in Washtenaw County. Visits to Washtenaw County generated \$33.1 million in state and local tax revenue in 2021. In 2023 (year-to-date), 407,000 people visited Washtenaw County, 45% of which stayed for at least one night. Miller stated that business travel is experiencing a resurgence in 2023. Destination Ann Arbor has made efforts to promote Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion at the organizational level.

Comm. Macijewski asked Miller to talk about the organization's activities on the Westside of the County.

Miller shared that Destination Ann Arbor is making improvements to their marketing to better highlight some of the area's venues and natural space.

Comm. Sanders shared that 1 out of every 10 jobs in Washtenaw County is directly affected by tourism.

Comm. Lyte said that Destination Ann Arbor has an important role to play in stimulating population growth in Michigan.

Comm. Rahbi asked about Destination Ann Arbor's survey regarding the service industry.

Miller said that their stakeholders list is comprised primarily of upper-level staff in the service industry; agreed with Comm. Rahbi that the organization could seek to expand its outreach to service workers occupying different roles.

Comm. LaBarre suggested the organization highlight Michigan's recently approved LGBTQ-inclusive policies.

Comm. Scott shared about her recent interactions with non-Michigan residents; she said that they were impressed by Washtenaw County's natural spaces.

Comm. Somerville thanked Destination Ann Arbor for their support of Black-owned businesses in

Ypsilanti; stated that our communities should prioritize the provision of affordable housing so that service workers in our Cities and Townships can live where they work.

C. First Quarter Budget Report - Catherine Jones-Alther - Finance Budget and Operations Director

Catherine Jones-Alther, Washtenaw County Finance Budget and Operations Director, gave the First Quarter Budget Report. Jones-Alther projected a net shortfall of approximately \$1.6 million. The County projects a revenue shortfall of \$632,590. The County projects an expenditure shortfall of \$998,218.

Comm. Rahbi asked about projected surpluses and shortfalls for general fund revenues; shared concerns about lump-sum budgeting with the Sheriff's Department and Courts.

Jones-Alther said that those departments who are allocated resources through lump-sum budgeting have surpluses in expenditures which offset their shortfalls in revenue.

Comm. Sanders asked about the MOUs which allow the Sherriff's Dept. and Courts to retain budget surpluses.

VI. ITEMS FOR CURRENT/FUTURE DISCUSSION

VII. ADJOURN TO NEXT SESSION

Comm. LaBarre, seconded by Comm. Sanders, moved to adjourn. Voice vote - motion carried.

The meeting adjourned at 06:52 PM.

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Annie Somerville,  
Chair

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Lawrence  
Kestenbaum,  
Clerk/Register  
By: Bryce Allmacher, Deputy Clerk

Board Approved: July 12, 2023