

City of Kalamazoo

First Amendment Assemblies

Guidance for Organizers

At the City of Kalamazoo, our top priority is providing a safe environment for everyone who lives, works or visits our community. The First Amendment guarantees individuals and groups the right to express their opinion through non-violent, peaceful assemblies and demonstrations. After all, a safe community means safer neighborhoods and a culture that promotes respect for one another.

As you plan your event, use this checklist to ensure the lines of communication are open and safety requirements are met. For more information, visit www.kalamazoo.org/assemblies.

Planning a First Amendment assembly

✓ **Determine what kind of First Amendment assembly best fits your vision and goals.**

There are a broad range of ways to have your voice heard through a peaceful public assembly. Examples include:

- Marches
- Parades
- Picketing
- Rallies
- Sit-ins
- Street theater
- Vigils
- Flash events

✓ **When will the event take place?**

It's helpful to check community calendars to ensure your event doesn't overlap with other events.

✓ **Choose a location.**

City parks and sidewalks may be used without reserving the space, without the need for a permit or a fee, but those spaces will remain open to the public at large during the event.

If you wish to reserve a park, a sidewalk or temporarily close a street please refer to the "Use Of Parks, Sidewalks, Streets" which can be found at

www.kalamazoo.org/assemblies. Permits and fees may be required to reserve or close certain public spaces.

✓ **Open the lines of communication with the City of Kalamazoo and KDPS.**

Please have the following information available:

- Name of organizing group or person
- Name and cell phone number of lead contact person who will be the liaison to the City and KDPS

✓ **Determine the details.**

It's helpful to outline your event to determine any special needs and anticipate potential problems. Outline the answers to the following questions:

- Will someone give a speech, call to action or prayer?
 - If yes, will we need a megaphone or sound system so people can hear speakers?
- Will we have any visuals (large signs, poster boards, etc.)?
- How will organizers be visibly identifiable to KDPS?
- How will participants be identified?
- How is this event being promoted?
- Where will people park?
- What will you do in the event of inclement weather?
- Will there be access to restroom facilities or do you need rent portable restrooms for participants?

✓ **Promote your event with safety in mind.**

Inform your audience of the date, time and location of your assembly. It's important to ask for peaceful, non-violent assemblies. While the First Amendment protects speech, participants can be arrested for encouraging and initiating violence.

Managing a First Amendment assembly

✓ **Communicate often**

Be sure to maintain communication with KDPS and notify them of any potential conflicts or changed plans.

✓ **Stay on course**

As the organizer, do your best to keep the event to the planned timeline. If you are marching, stay on route.

✓ **Follow direction from KDPS**

KDPS can order a "disorderly" group to leave the area. If your group is ordered to disperse, please instruct all participants to leave immediately. Those who do not leave may be arrested.

✓ **How to contact the City of Kalamazoo or get more information:**

www.kalamazoo.org/assemblies

Kalamazoo Department of Public Safety
Office of Community Affairs
(269) 337-8270
greenv@kalamazoo-city.org

Special Event / Park / Street Reservations
(269) 337-8191
www.kzooparks.org/specialevents
cokparksandrecreation@kalamazoo-city.org

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