

City of Kalamazoo
PLANNING COMMISSION
Minutes
May 7, 2015
DRAFT

Second Floor, City Hall
City Commission Chambers
241W. South Street, Kalamazoo, MI 49007

Members Present: Rachel Hughes-Nilsson, Vice Chair; Charley Coss, Geoff Cripe, Susan McBain, Derek Wissner, Rico White, Emily Greenman Wright

Members Excused: Josh Cook

City Staff: Rebekah Kik, City Planner; Robert Bauckham, Assistant City Planner; John Kneas, Assistant City Attorney; Wendee Felcyn, Recording Secretary

Guests: None

A. CALL TO ORDER

Commissioner Hughes-Nilsson called the meeting to order at 7:05 p.m.

B. ROLL CALL

Planner Kik proceeded with roll call and determined that the aforementioned members were present.

C. ADOPTION OF FORMAL AGENDA

Commissioner Wright, supported by Commissioner Wissner, moved approval of the May 7, 2015 Planning Commission agenda as presented. With a voice vote, the motion carried unanimously.

D. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Commissioner Coss, supported by Commissioner White, moved approval of the April 2, 2015 Planning Commission Minutes. With a voice vote, the motion carried unanimously.

E. COMMUNICATIONS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

None

F. PUBLIC HEARINGS

P.C. #2015.02 Consideration of a request for Ministry with Community for a special use permit to allow a new drop-in center use and facility. Recommendation: Motion to recommend approval with two conditions.

Planner Bauckham presented a staff report. The proposal is to use 2.7 acres of undeveloped property on North Edwards. Ministry with Community has outgrown its current space and would like to build a new building for its programs. They will seek a variance on the parking requirements (zoning requires 100 spaces and Ministry with Community is planning for 56 spaces). Ministry with Community is working on finalizing its plans and will also need to have site plan review.

Staff recommends approval for plan with two conditions; a variance for the parking and a final site plan for the project need to be submitted and reviewed by the city for final approval.

Rob Oakleaf, the executive director for Ministry with Community presented. Currently Ministry with Community serves over 2,000 people a year. There is not enough room in the current facility to serve all those in need, especially when there is bad weather. The Ministry with Community board is currently raising the necessary funds for the project.

Commissioner Hughes-Nilsson abstained from voting as there is a work conflict with this organization.

Commissioner White asked, how does Ministry with Community plan to deal with drug problems around their property. Mr. Oakleaf responded that the site plan has an enclosed outdoor patio area to try to control what happens on their property. Also, they will be checking people into the facility and tracking who they are serving. They will be they will be creating a smoking area for individuals so they are not vulnerable to predators.

Commissioner Wissner asked will there be an increase in the amount of people or will it enhance the current number of people. Mr. Oakleaf responded that Ministry with Community believes the new site will actually decrease the customers with better tracking and that the services provided will increase.

Commissioner Wissner asked based on the current status of the organization, this property will not be on the tax rolls. How would the organization remedy this concern. Mr. Oakleaf responded that he believes the sale of the current facility will put that property back onto the tax rolls. All of Ministry with Community current services are based on donations and there is no government funding.

The Commission opened the floor to public comment.

James Christie of 130 E Ransom raised a few questions regarding the state of the property and who is currently maintaining the exterior of the property. Mr. Christie believes that people come from around the country for free meals during the summer. He asked if property values would be affected by the new building. He questioned whether the organization was utilizing the property effectively. He also asked why the organization does not work with the neighborhood associations. He regularly picks up trash on the current site and wants to be sure that it will be kept clean.

Dan Mayley of 5856 Wynding Wood Drive stated that, Ministry with Community is a gem in our community. It helps those in need. He understands the trash concerns and the vacant lot problems. Looking at the site and the area around it, they are trying to make it easy to maintain and to keep it looking good. The current building no longer serves the needs of Ministry with Community and they need the new building.

There were no more comments from the public. Commissioner Greenman-Wright asked about the dimensions of the outdoor patio and if they are adequate, she also asked if the patio is in proportion to the total property space. The current dimensions are 20x60 feet. It will be an outdoor area, a patio space that will be fenced in. Ministry with Community shares many of the concerns with the public. Many of their current struggles are because of the overflowing capacity at their current location. Ministry with Community is looking at the best possible use for the land.

Commissioner White questioned if the concerned citizen's inquiries should be readdressed. City Attorney Kneas responded by saying that everyone is responsible for their own properties and any concerns should be directed to Community Planning and Development.

Commissioner Wissner asked what will happen with the current facility. Mr. Oakleaf responded that it will be sold with the funds going to an endowed fund for maintaining the new property. They would like it to go to a for-profit company and see it back on the tax rolls.

Commissioner Greenman-Wright stated that the property has been a discussion for a long time and that there should support for any project within reason which would take action on the property.

Commission Coss asked about how this plan coincides with future plans for the area. Planner Kik answered that there is street improvement project for North Street and Ransom Street over the next five years. Also, Northside Association for Community Development is working with MSHDA's MiNeighborhood Program, which addresses neighborhood needs, and connects existing and emerging opportunities to leverage resources in support of neighborhood revitalization. The Ministry with Community Project corresponds with the MiNeighborhood goal. This property is also part of the walkability plan, which the Planning department is currently working on.

Commissioner Cripe stated that it is a wonderful mission, and a capital campaign will prove the support of the public.

Commissioner Coss stated that it is a key anchor and positive presence in the area.

Commissioner Hughes-Nilsson stated that research shows that it is almost impossible to prosecute littering. She asked if it would be possible for the city to add trash buckets for litter throughout the city. Planner Kik stated that she would bring the case to Public Services. She also stated that this is probably a case of people taking advantage of the vacant lot. New development might deter some of the current littering problem.

Commissioner Greenman-Wright stated that she appreciates the pride, effort and time Mr. Christie devotes to cleaning up his neighborhood.

Commissioner Cripe supported by Commissioner Coss moved to recommend approval of P.C. #2015.02 Consideration of a request for Ministry with Community for a special use permit to allow a new drop-in center use and facility, with the conditions proposed by city staff. Commissioner Rachel Hughes-Nilsson abstained from voting as there is a work conflict. With a roll call vote the motion carried with a majority vote. Commissioner White voted no.

G. CITIZENS' COMMENTS (Regarding non-agenda items)

None

H. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

Planner Kik gave a Master Plan Project update. Planning staff have met with all city directors, some staff and Commissioners Coss and Fricke. They were asked to examine the goals within the master plan; what they have already achieved, what they are working on, what they should work on in the future, and what are unattainable goals. They have an abundance of data on each goal and are working on a list of transformative the projects for the next five years. There will be a bigger update at the next meeting regarding the chapter outline and what percentage of goals needs to be changed.

Planner Bauckham gave a sports field lighting ordinance update. Planning staff have met with the Winchell and West Main Hill neighborhoods on the ordinance. In April they did a measurement of the lights at Kalamazoo College. Maximum output is supposed to be 0.05 candles. The soccer lights could reach that level at 110 feet north of the field, which is well within the boundary of the complex, and 150 feet east of the field which is also well within the boundaries of the complex. Lighting has met the requirements of the 2012 agreement. The football field still needs to be looked at including the proposed lights, illumination of said lights and how it will impact the surrounding properties. The football field is closer to the neighborhoods. A subcommittee has been formed from both neighborhoods to begin meeting regularly on the sports field lighting ordinance. The research portion of the project is assessing model ordinances to properly address the city's needs. Planner Kik has reached out to all of the directors of neighborhoods on lighting concerns. It will be looked at more closely if any projects come forward.

I. NEW BUSINESS

None

J. CITIZENS' COMMENTS

None

K. CITY PLANNER'S REPORT

Planner Bauckham reported that there are currently 20 site plan projects for 2015. Highlights include:

- The Rentalex building on Gull Road, just west of Nazareth will use the site for a permitted zoning use. There will be a maximum size and weight restriction on equipment placed on the property. This condition will be kept in order to avoid the owners having to get a variance.
- Harold Zeigler on Stadium Drive is adding an addition to their building. The expansion will better utilize the space.
- JD Development is building a condominium development on Oakland Drive. They removed trees before getting plan approval or a permit, including city trees along the right-of-way. The city is asking them to plant new trees on another site within the city to replace what they took out. They are working with the Kalamazoo Country Club on an easement for the sewer line. The plan is for two and three story condominiums when they are done. Commissioner Wright stated that she has a list of places she would like to see the trees planted. Commissioner Coss expressed that he would like to see them planted in the Oakland area because that is where they originally were.

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Planner Kik has a schedule of non-motorized charrettes. The next one will be held on May 13th at City Hall in the Community Room. The plan is being updated after 15 years. There will be an introduction to the background and principles of the plan with the community. There are also open houses on Thursday May 14, and Friday May 15, at Mayor's Riverfront Park and City Hall.

L. MISCELLANEOUS COMMENTS BY PLANNING COMMISSIONERS

None

M. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 7:55 p.m.