

City of Kalamazoo
PLANNING COMMISSION
Minutes
December 1, 2016
DRAFT

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

Members Present: Rachel Hughes-Nilsson, Chair; Charley Coss, Vice-Chair; Josh Cook; Geoffrey Cripe, Tracy Hall, Gregory Milliken, Derek Wissner, Emily Greenman Wright

Members Excused: None

City Staff: Rebekah Kik, City Planner; Rob Bauckham, Senior Development Planner; Amanda Coeur, Recording Secretary; John Kneas, Assistant City Attorney

Guests: None

A. CALL TO ORDER

Commissioner Hughes-Nilsson called the meeting to order at 7:32 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 Cook, supported by Commissioner Milliken, moved approval of the December 1, 2016 Planning Commission agenda as presented. With a voice vote, the motion carried unanimously.

D. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Commissioner Greenman Wright, supported by Commissioner Milliken, moved approval of the November 3, 2016 Planning Commission minutes as presented. With a voice vote, the motion carried unanimously.

E. COMMUNICATIONS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

None

F. PUBLIC HEARINGS

P.C. #2016.12: Continuation of the public hearing on the request from the Community Planning & Development Department to rezone 45 parcels located between S. Pitcher Street and Mills Street, and between E. Michigan Avenue and the Portage Creek/King Highway area from Zone M-1 (Manufacturing, Limited District), Zone M-2 (Manufacturing, General District), and Zone CCBD (Commercial, Central Business District) to Zone CMU (Commercial, Mixed-Use District) and amend the Riverfront Overlay Zoning District to include the new Subarea 9 and apply it to the

parcels. [Recommendation: motion to recommend to the City Commission to approve the rezoning and amendment request.]

Planner Bauckham presented the staff report. Consideration of this request is being continued from the October 6th Planning Commission Meeting. The request is to rezone 45 separate parcels located between S. Pitcher and Mills Street, and between E. Michigan Avenue and the Portage Creek/King Highway area from Zone M-1 (Manufacturing, Limited District), Zone M-2 (Manufacturing, General District), and Zone CCBD (Commercial, Central Business District) to Zone CMU (Commercial, Mixed-Use District), and amend the Riverfront Overlay District with the new Subarea 9 and apply it to the subject parcels. This request has been modified to address concerns raised at the October Planning Commission meeting. City staff spoke with three of the property owners to discuss their request for their sites to remain industrially zoned, and a request to add drive-through facilities as a permitted use. Following the discussions, staff decided to amend the request by removing eighteen of the southern parcels from the target rezoning area. If these partials change or become available in the future, staff will re-visit the issue of including them in the new zone and Subarea. Drive-through facilities were also added as a permitted use with certain limitations. The property owners were informed of this decision prior to the meeting and they expressed support for it.

Planner Bauckham spoke about how the downtown core area is expanding and developing. He also explained that the Riverfront District was created by the City in 2006, and it includes eight different subareas to allow for different types of uses. Most of the parcels included in this rezoning request are currently industrially zoned, and new residential uses are not permitted. With downtown expanding, the area is being targeted for new development that will likely include mixed uses and stand-alone residential facilities. The proposed rezoning and subarea application will allow such development without the need for use variances.

Under the proposed zone, new buildings would need to be built near the street frontages and include attractive facades containing durable materials and window space. Front entrances would need to face the streets with parking to the side and rear of the building. A goal of the new subarea would be to encourage a pedestrian-friendly environment. Subarea 9 would allow the same permitted uses as Subarea 7, plus grocery stores, attached and cluster housing, and hotels.

The public hearing was opened. Mr. Larry Bell spoke regarding concerns about his property that sits along the Portage Creek. He questioned if he could have the building face the creek with a parking lot next to the road. Mr. Greg Aolvanigian spoke thanking staff for removing his business, Arvco Container, from the rezoning request. He is in support of this rezoning if it does not include his property. Ms. Tobi Hanna-Davies expressed her support for the City in creating more pedestrian oriented usage close to downtown. She applauded the City for creating a vibrant city scape. She does encourage the use of inclusionary housing for new projects in the target area. She states that many people cannot afford market rate housing costs, and the need for low to moderate income housing is significant in Kalamazoo.

Ms. Kik answered the citizens' questions. In regard to Mr. Bell's question, if he were to develop his property the building could face Portage Creek with the parking lot toward King Highway. This would help to maximize the appeal of the creek. Ms. Kik shared that the State of Michigan does not require inclusionary housing in municipal zoning regulations. Tax breaks and other incentives to promote

inclusionary housing are provided through the City of Kalamazoo and quality, affordable rental housing is a priority.

Commissioner Milliken spoke about how the Planning Commission needs to be vigilant with the Master Planning process in order to assure the vision for this area is obtained.

Commissioner Milliken, supported by Commissioner Wissner, moved to recommend to the City Commission to approve the rezoning request as presented, as well as the amendment to the overlay zoning district to include Subarea 9 and apply it to the subject parcels. With a roll call vote, the motion carried unanimously.

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

None

H. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

Planner Kik offered an Imagine Kalamazoo project update. The next phase of Imagine Kalamazoo is Design It! There are many neighborhood meetings scheduled, which will start on December 7th at Winchell Elementary for the Oakwood, Oakland Drive-Winchell, Hill N'Brook and Parkview Hills Neighborhoods. At these meetings residents will have the ability to focus solely on planning for their neighborhoods. There will be a series of activities to be completed during these open house style meetings, such as identifying the sidewalk and crosswalk improvements that are needed near the neighborhood centers and schools. Also, participants will be able to provide input regarding the need for bike lanes and routes, and parks within their neighborhoods.

Dates and times for all neighborhood meetings are on imaginekalamazoo.com. The meetings will run through February 2017.

I. NEW BUSINESS

Mr. Tom Skrobola, City of Kalamazoo CFO, presented the Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) for 2017. Some of the highlights of the activities proposed in the plan are as follows:

- Bronson Park Design Improvements
- Buildout of the fiberoptic network through Information Technology. Create a ring network that would be owned by the City of Kalamazoo
- Replace the communication tower at the Crosstown Dispatch Center
- Public Safety Records Database upgrade
- Replacing two outdated fire engines
- City Hall roof replacement and basement concrete repair work
- Portage Creek Trailway - Phase 2
- Bonding for a new street paver and tract skid equipment
- New portable hoist and standstill hoist for Public Services

Commissioner Coss asked Mr. Skrobola where the windfall of available funds from the consolidated dispatch project would be allocated. He questioned if the funds would be put towards the records

database upgrades. Mr. Skrobola stated that Public Safety is looking at a plan regarding critical staffing levels, and these funds may be targeted for that purpose.

Commissioner Cook asked about the snow melt system equipment and repairs, and if the costs associated were in relation to advancements of the system. Mr. Skrobola answered that these costs were not for an extension of the system. Any expansion of the snow melt system would have to be paid for solely by the benefactors of the system. The expenses associated with the CIP are for portions of the existing underground equipment that need to be repaired or replaced.

Commissioner Wissner asked to have more clarification on the layout of the CIP, and additional information about the Streets, Water and Wastewater funds. Mr. Skrobola explained that street projects are funded through the streets fund. Public Services is working to coordinate the completion of street, water and wastewater projects concurrently. There is about \$1.5-\$2 million this is spent annually on wastewater and water projects. The Public Services director is also talking to surrounding townships who benefit from these services to participate in the capital reinvestment requirement to maintain the system.

Commissioner Coss asked what the city was doing in regard to the influx of water main breaks. Mr. Skrobola explained that Mr. Baker, Public Services Director, has been attempting to identify where breaks could happen in the current system in the near future to be better prepared for failures. It is not feasible to replace all of the lead services in the system all at once as it would likely take 5-10 years to do so with a crew solely focused on that issue.

Commissioner Cripe asked if street tree replacement was part of the CIP. Mr. Skrobola shared that this is a routine maintenance cost for the city and funding for such activity is being doubled for the upcoming year.

Commissioner Cripe, supported by Commissioner Coss, moved to recommend to the City Commission the approval of the Capital Improvement Plan for 2017. With a roll call vote, the motion carried unanimously.

J. CITIZENS' COMMENTS

None

K. CITY PLANNER'S REPORT

Planner Bauckham reported there are currently 52 site plan projects for the year and counting. Five other cases are currently on Planner Bauckham's desk waiting for needed information. With these cases and others anticipated to come in by the end of the year, there should be around 60 site plan projects for 2016.

Highlights of the site plan projects are as follows:

- RDR Properties is changing the use of a building on Kalamazoo Avenue to office/retail space
- A new, attached-unit apartment complex is planned on Sutherland Avenue
- The YMCA is building an addition to its facility at 1001 West Maple Street
- The Spirit Shoppe on West KL Avenue is building a new building on their site to be connected to the current building
- KPEP is well underway with the construction of their new coffee shop on S. Park Street - they hope to open in the spring

- The renovation of the former foundary building at 600 E. Michigan Avenue for offices is well underway
- The new Chemical Bank project on Parkview Avenue is well underway
- The new office building and headquarters for Rx Optical is well underway on S. Park Street
- The new building for the Family Health Center on East Alcott Street is well underway

Planner Bauckham also mentioned that work continues with the consultant regarding the review of the site plan review program. The project checklists have been distributed to the departments that are involved with the site plan program for review for possible changes. Developers in the area have also been interviewed regarding their experiences with the city process. Overall, the feedback was positive. A few suggestions were provided and they are being evaluated.

The new Marketing Strategy for the city is coming along well. A draft will hopefully be available at the end of December.

Staff has been trying to contact potential candidates to fill the vacant positions on the Planning Commission. One individual was recently provided with an application, and staff is waiting for it to be returned. At the end of March there will be at least one more vacancy on the Commission. Planner Bauckham encouraged the Commission to help recruit new candidates.

Commissioner Hughes-Nilsson asked Planner Bauckham if staff had talked to any engineers or architects to receive their feedback on the site plan process. Planner Bauckham said they haven't yet, but it is something staff can definitely do.

Planner Kik thanked Tracy Hall for her service on the Planning Commission, and congratulated her on her new position as a Kalamazoo County Commissioner.

L. MISCELLANEOUS COMMENTS BY PLANNING COMMISSIONERS

Commissioner Greenman-Wright asked about all of the new bank and credit union buildings being constructed within Kalamazoo. Planner Kik stated that she had heard some of the new buildings are small with minimal staff, and they are primarily being used as advertising for these institutions.

Commissioner Cook praised Planner Bauckham on the work being done on the site plan review process. He shared his experience with the process, and stated there was some disconnect between the site plan review process and building trade review process. He feels this is where the system is most lacking and would like to talk about this process at a future meeting.

M. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 8:37 p.m.