

City of Kalamazoo  
PLANNING COMMISSION  
Minutes  
December 6, 2018  
FINAL

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

Members Present: Rachel Hughes-Nilsson, Chair; Gregory Milliken, Vice Chair; Jack Baartman; Alfonso Espinosa; Emily Greenman Wright; Derek Wissner; James Pitts

Members Excused: Charley Coss; Sakhi Vyas

City Staff: Christina Anderson, City Planner; Robert Bauckham, Senior Development Planner; Beth Cheeseman, Code Administration Clerk/Cashier; Clyde Robinson, City Attorney; Bobby Durkee, Planner I; Jeff Chamberlin, Deputy City Manager

**A. CALL TO ORDER**

Commissioner Hughes-Nilsson called the meeting to order at 7:03 p.m.

**B. ROLL CALL**

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

**C. ADOPTION OF FORMAL AGENDA**

Planner Anderson informed the Commissioners that hearing P.C. #2018.26 listed under New Business would be presented first.

**Commissioner Greenman Wright, supported by Commissioner Baartman, moved approval of the December 6, 2018 Planning Commission agenda as amended. With a voice vote, the motion carried unanimously.**

**D. APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

**Commissioner Milliken, supported by Commissioner Greenman Wright, moved approval of the November 1, 2018 Planning Commission minutes. With a voice vote, the motion carried unanimously.**

**E. COMMUNICATIONS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS**

None

## **F. PUBLIC HEARINGS**

P.C #2018.23: Request for a special use permit from Samaritas to allow a transitional residence at 703 W. Cedar Street for up to seven boys exiting the foster care program. **[Recommendation: approve the request.]**

Planner Bauckham came forward to give the staff report. The house is located in the Vine neighborhood and is a single family house with 5 bedrooms and 4 baths and one kitchen. The applicant is the Samaritas organization and they are leasing the house from the current owner. Samaritas is requesting a Special Use Permit (SUP) for a transitional residence use in this house. They plan to house up to 7 boys aged 16-19 years old currently in the foster care program. The boys will be required to participate in the program and they have to qualify for Michigan DHHS Independent Living Plus program. This means they must have an independent living status, be enrolled in school or have employment, pay a portion of the rent for the house and agree to abide by the program rules. They will have no legal parent or guardian. The participants will meet regularly with a case worker and life needs coach. The boys will follow a curfew and there will abstain from drugs or alcohol. They must assist with the upkeep of the property and house and participate with the Independent Living Program. The boys will be able to live in the house for up to 12 months. Staff will be available to them 24/7. They will receive counseling and life care assistance to help advance independent living status. The goal of the program is to transition them into more independent living arrangements within the year time period.

The SUP is needed because it is a defined group of individuals residing in a temporary residential situation with the goal of transitioning them to more permanent situation within a year. The applicant has gone door to door in the neighborhood and met with the Vine Neighborhood Association. There was a question raised about future use of the house if this program is approved, but ceases operation in the future – if that happened it could automatically revert to multiple family residential use with a traditional focus. A petition was submitted in September against the request that had inaccuracies. The applicant distributed and submitted a revised petition in favor of the request with about 250 signatures in support of the request. One email was sent in opposition of the request. Staff believes the request meets SUP guidelines. Planner Bauckham stated the rationale to allow the request is that it is a use allowed in this zone by SUP; the Master Plan and Strategic Vision support this use in this zone; this use is not uncommon in the fringes of neighborhoods and the neighborhood is a mixture of residential and commercial use. Staff is recommending approval of the request.

Applicant, Ms. Rachel Sykes, Director of SW Region of Samaritas, came forward to speak to the request. Ms. Sykes thanked many people, citing appreciation of the level of care the neighbors show about the neighborhood. She said they secured the home in August and spoke with Vine residents. Ms. Sykes directed the Commissioners to a folder that was distributed to them with the new petition (280 signatures) supporting their program, letters of support from seven different parties, and a FAQ sheet that was distributed to the neighborhood.

Ms. Sykes reviewed Samaritas history in the community and how many youth in foster care are in the City of Kalamazoo. She said 130 youth, on average, are Independent Living Youth that are 16 and up. Some do not have an option to live with family or friends. Some have been passed over for adoption or decided not to live with a foster family. Ms. Sykes said these youth

are allowed by the State of Michigan to live independently. She said these youth are, in fact, self-sustaining and have to meet requirements to be eligible to participate in the program.

Ms. Sykes said these youth usually have a check from the state of Michigan and are looking for places to rent. She reported they are vulnerable, find themselves in unsafe places, and some are trafficked. Samaritas is trying to put them in a home where they can have resources available to them. A place that will support them and prepare them to make better choices when they are truly on their own.

Ms. Sykes reviewed national statistics for youth such as these if no one intervenes. She said Samaritas feels it is their responsibility to intervene and provide an opportunity for the youth. Ms. Sykes said they reviewed programs in other cities and saw positive outcomes of 75-80% success rates in life skills building, stability factors and ability to stay and remain engaged in the program voluntarily.

To be eligible for this program, they need to see that youth have the capability to live in a home and have good judgement, personal responsibility and the ability to work with the life skills coach and look at their goals to stay in school or employed. Ms. Sykes stated that this home is not a landing point, but a serious time to promote their goals.

Commissioner Milliken asked if there are any licenses required for this particular use and what the staffing would look like. Ms. Sykes responded that there are no licenses required. She said the staffing would consist of case managers, access to a life coach, and staff in the home from 3pm to 7am.

Commissioner Milliken asked if there are other programs in progress that can provide a roadmap for them. Ms. Sykes stated that the State of Michigan developed this program, and they have contracted with them for this particular program. She said stipulations of program are stated in contract. Ms. Sykes shared that Samaritas has decided to increase availability of these homes in the state. Currently there are 9 homes open, including the one in Kalamazoo. Some of the homes have been operating for up to 4 years, so they have been able to see how the model is working before bringing it to Kalamazoo.

Commissioner Wissner asked how those homes are working, if they have an eviction process, and where the youth typically stay. Ms. Sykes responded that they do have pre- and post-testing for life skills. She said they use life skills materials which have been identified as the best practice tools nationwide for this population. She said they are looking at the ability to succeed in education, career needs, self-care, and nutrition. Ms. Sykes said they do not have a formal legal process for eviction, but they are able to ask people to leave because it is agreed upon in advance through their guidelines. As far where the youth stay, she said the best scenario is to have a relative who will welcome them or family friends. Otherwise, they find a place to rent anywhere in the city.

Commissioner Espinosa asked what the statistics are on how many finish the program successfully and if they are able to find affordable rent afterwards. Ms. Sykes stated that they have a 74% success rate of youth who voluntarily remain in the program. They have an 80% success in the life skills portion of the program. Ms. Sykes added that building a supportive circle is a huge skill they work on by discerning who healthy people to have in their circle are.

They attempt to get them plugged into a career path or stable employment so they are able to rent and have more options.

Commissioner Baartman asked how they decided to start a home for boys vs girls. Ms. Sykes said they worked with partners to see what was needed in the community. We chose not to mix the sexes in this home. She said they thought the youth would be more successful if we chose one sex.

Commissioner Greenman Wright asked why Samaritas chose the Vine Neighborhood. Ms. Sykes responded that the neighborhood is centrally located with access to bus lines, schools and employers. She said they feel this is an up and coming neighborhood that cares about people and is looking to revitalize – to provide a resource rich environment. Ms. Sykes said they wanted to insert the youth in a situation where they could thrive. They wanted them to be able to look around, see families and students and feel they fit into that fabric.

Commissioner Pitts asked if there is anything in place for the youth if they don't meet requirements or if they opt out or are kicked out of the program. Ms. Sykes explained that the foster care Case Managers is skilled at looking for the next best course of action for the youth. They would consider the best way to direct the individual. She said that the youths may continue in foster care for another year or two. She said there is the possibility in the future of funding coming down which could extend their services to go all the way up to age 24.

**Commissioner Hughes-Nilsson opened public comment portion of the hearing.**

Ms. Martha Gonzalez, Community Leader/Organizer in Vine, came forward in opposition to the request. She gave a history of the Vine neighborhood from when she first lived there, saying it was dangerous at that time. She said she and the neighbors worked hard to make the neighborhood better. They fought to get the liquor license taken from the Oak Street Market, got rid of a crack house and a meth house. She said that right now the neighborhood is nice and quiet and the neighbors work hard to keep it clean. She said they planted gardens in every corner, they have a community garden. Mrs. Kirk Janson, friend of Martha Gonzales, came forward and asked Commissioners to listen to her friend because Ms. Gonzales has done a lot for the Vine Neighborhood and has concerns about this house. Ms. Stephanie Ceron, daughter to Ms. Gonzalez, cited all of the work her Mom and the other neighbors have done to clean up the neighborhood. She said they have many different kinds of these houses in the neighborhood - half-way houses, mental health, and sex trafficking houses. She believes the neighborhood is saturated with these types of houses. Ms. Ceron believed that the kids would be prompted to party like the college kids do even though they are under age. She believes that these are kids with uncertainty, instability and frustration which could lead to aggression/violence. Ms. Ceron said that this could turn very chaotic when staff is not there to monitor. She also referenced the incident which happened recently in the neighborhood.

Mr. Adam Peterson, owner of Seat-N-Sleep, came forward to support the request. He explained that he was a victim of child abuse and was in foster homes as a teen. He experienced amazing life coaches through foster care. He cautioned that the belief that the kids are bad is a misconception. He said often it is the parents and/or guardians who are abusive and/or neglectful. Mr. Peterson stated that these teens need courage to transition into happy and productive adults in community. He thanked Samaritas for having such a great concept to do

this. Mr. Peterson reminded Commissioners that these teens are part of our community already, and he believes homes like these can foster personal growth and allow the youth to go forward to become leaders in community. He believes Samaritas is on a great track toward improving the community for the future.

Ms. Susan Reardon, resident, came forward to say that Samaritas is a corporation failing miserably if they are putting children in this situation. She suggested they use the State hospital grounds where they should provide a good housing complex to accommodate the 106 children in this program. She said it is close to transportation and everything they need. Ms. Reardon suggested that putting kids with problems in a neighborhood with problems is a bad situation. She stated that Ms. Sykes' intentions are good, but this is a failure.

Mr. Michael Jacobis, resident, came forward in opposition to the request. He likened the residential home to letting 16-19 boys go to a field trip without adults. Mr. Jacobis said they are making this request for people who will not be making the best decisions who are not coming from the best backgrounds. Mr. Jacobis talked about a recent incident where a car stopped and 7 kids got out, grabbed a kid and beat him and videotaped it. He suggested there is already crime and party houses in the neighborhood, and he questioned putting these kids in that environment.

Ms. Barb Olsen, Director of Community Outreach at Seat-N-Sleep, came forward in support of the request. She has a history of working at DHHS with foster care teens. She stated that every one of the teens wanted to have a better life than where they came from. Ms. Olsen shared Samaritas vision, "we connect people with families and communities and empower them to live their fullest life possible and create a ripple effect of transformation." She believes the ILP homes are doing just that - connecting foster youth to their communities. Ms. Olsen said this will give the kids the opportunity to graduate college. She said she feels it is their moral and ethical obligation to support Samaritas in the Vine neighborhood.

Ms. Christina Smith, MSW, became aware and passionate of issues of youth facing foster care. She said those aging out of foster care experience co-occurring barriers of education, housing, employment, finances, life skills and health and well-being. Ms. Smith stated they are more likely to experience homelessness, unemployment and poverty. She is in support of this request. She shared that she loves the Vine neighborhood because of the residents' willingness to take care of each other. She believes Vine is lucky to have the Samaritas program.

Ms. Carol Cloyd, housing provider in Vine, noted that the boys are already living in the house. She cited the amount of crime in the neighborhood and said she is worried about the boys and the affect this house will have on her rental homes. She does not believe this is a good place to put 16-19 year old boys. She said this scares her to put this in this neighborhood. She believes it is a bad mix for this house.

Ms. Margaret Wilson, member of the Vine Neighborhood Association, came forward in support of the house. She believes Samaritas has done due diligence in outreach with neighborhood, and they have been doing this kind of work for over 100 years in one form or another. She has no reservations about this house near her children. Ms. Wilson believed they are hearing from a vocal minority and the silent majority is in support of the home.

Mr. Ken Schafer, owner of the house, clarified that the house is a 9 bedroom house, 2 ½ baths home with a large kitchen and 2 living rooms. He cited the ups and downs of renting, saying that

sometimes they have successes and failures. He said he rents to young adults with no parent co-signers and no supervising authority over them. Mr. Schafer said he does his best to do risk management. His three criteria for renters are that they pay rent, take care of the home and respect the neighbors. From his perspective he is leasing the house and they are subleasing it as a permitted, lawful leasing option. He said he liked the concept of what they are doing and that they are providing supervision at night. Mr. Schafer commented that when there is no supervision is when people would typically be working or at school. He said he cares about his neighborhood and his neighbors, and he hopes they will give it a chance. He reminded them it is a one-year lease that doesn't have to be renewed.

Ms. Loraine Jacobus, resident, said she is not in favor of the house at all. She has two small children and there are other small children in the neighborhood. Ms. Jacobus said having this in the neighborhood so far has been bad. She also talked about the recent altercation in the street. Ms. Jacobus stated that Vine not the place for the home, noting that robbery and some drugs are an issue there. She believes it is premature to think of Vine of somewhere that can handle that kind of responsibility.

Mr. Brandon Dellario, Landlord and licensed SW in Arizona, encouraged Commissioners to take a closer look to see if the program fits the neighborhood. He said he couldn't think of a lot of other neighborhoods that are centralized downtown which would be better, but he was hearing people with a lot of concerns. He said the State hospital ground was a great idea. He also cautioned that a social service agency isn't part of the problem with crime in the downtown area.

Ms. Jessica Dwyer, Foster Care Case Manager, Samaritas, came forward in support of the request. She said they are some of the most resilient youth and are more responsible than your average 16 year old. She said the location is ideal for someone to gain employment and get on the City bus for school. She reminded Commissioners that every youth can make bad choices, not just the ones in foster care. She said their program is designed to be a support for the youth. The staff in the home is very quick and motivated to address any concerns and the kids choices. Ms. Dwyer highlighted that they receive a referral packet with a case history which allows them to recognize anyone who is not a good fit for the program. The youth in the home were chosen because they demonstrated a capacity and a willingness to learn and ability for good choices.

Ms. Cecily Barrett came forward to speak on behalf of her boyfriend who lives in the neighborhood. She said her bike was stolen at his home and there are already enough criminals and crime in the neighborhood.

Mr. Jesse Garrison, Case Manager at Samaritas, said he has helped guide a mix of youth to navigate the system. He noted that they are living life on hardest difficulty – making decisions that sometimes make no sense to him. He believes they can make it easier for the youth and make it so they are not living life in the hardest difficulty. He appreciated the concern he is hearing for the neighborhood. Mr. Garrison said he wants the youth to see a neighborhood that functions well and cares about their properties, neighbors and the direction the community is going.

Ms. Alexis Parker, Independent Living Plus supervisor at Samaritas, came forward to emphasize the need to help these youth. She said the program provides them with tools which help them be successful. Ms. Parker also spoke of the selection process, saying they meet with the youth to

make sure they will be successful and have a level of responsibility. They must be youth who want to participate in program and change their story.

Ms. Jennifer Bittner, resident, said she has dogs and love walking through neighborhood. She said she is thrilled with the program coming to this neighborhood.

Mr. Danny Higgs, resident, said he recognizes a need for a facility like this. He noted that the neighborhood has problems, and there would be some drawbacks for people who are at risk. Mr. Higgs stated that he was sure the majority of residents would not be a problem, but one or two can cause many problems. He believes the program could be a benefit to the boys and/or City, but would be negative for the neighborhood.

Mr. Gunnars Kairi, resident, stated that the negative impact of a group home in Vine would be devastating to neighborhood. He declared that the Vine neighborhood is not the right place for it.

Ms. Laura Mitchell, oversees the state-wide foster care for Samaritas, came forward to reassure Commissioners of their role in the home. She said their intentions are to help children, not disrupt the neighborhood. Ms. Mitchell assured that they have a screening process and are aware of the dynamics of neighborhood. They believe it is a good fit for the boys. She also reminded them they have 280 signatures in support of the home – with 136 from neighbors. She believes there is strong support in neighborhood for this. Ms. Mitchell encouraged for everyone to not fear the worst, but hope and plan for the best. She said they provide support, supervision and guidance to these boys.

**Commissioner Wissner, supported by Commissioner Greenman Wright, moved to close the public comment portion of the hearing. With a voice vote, the motion carried unanimously.**

Commissioner Wissner asked for more information about the altercation that was mentioned during the comments. He wondered if that was a participant of the program or a neighbor. The applicant came forward and said she was informed of an incident in neighborhood on the block near this home and they are looking into it. She said safety is the number one concern for the youth at the home and for the neighborhood. If the youth was injured or a participant of the incident, it will be addressed.

Commissioner Milliken noted that this is in the RM-15 district. He asked about the maximum density requirement for parcel/structure this size. Planner Anderson stated it is 15 dwelling units per acre. She said information for individual parcels is on a table that talks about square footage per lot. She indicated that it is more difficult to divide a single-family unit, but it has been operating as a legal rental property for many years with 9 bedrooms.

Commissioner Greenman Wright asked for clarification as to why a SUP was needed. Planner Anderson stated because it is a homogenous population with services provided and it is a temporary residence. Primarily because of the length of the lease. Planner Bauckham clarified that the intent is to move them out at a certain time. It is not open-ended as a usual rental situation would be.

Commissioner Espinosa asked how the youth living there would integrate with the Vine neighborhood during the program. Ms. Sykes said that is voluntary – they have been invited to

work in the garden or volunteer for Habitat. They have talked with the Vine Neighborhood Association for opportunities to volunteer and seek out employment.

**Commissioner Wissner, supported by Commissioner Greenman Wright, moved to approve P.C #2018.23: Request for a special use permit from Samaritas to allow a transitional residence at 703 W. Cedar Street for up to seven boys exiting the foster care program.**

Commissioner Wissner noted the passion on both sides of the request. He said social workers and foster care workers look for the best of the available options. He said these kids are already living in this community, and many will be or are living in the Vine neighborhood. He believes this program would give the youth some support while they are living there. Commissioner Wissner stated he was voting in favor of this. He thinks it is the best option we have right now.

Commissioner Greenman Wright reminded Commissioners and the public that they need to focus on if this is a proper use of the land and that is all they have jurisdiction over. They are not here to determine if it will be successful or not. She said this is an appropriate use. There has been documented success of group living situations, supportive housing situations, and adult foster care homes in Vine since the 1950s & 60s. They have co-existed with students, families, professors, factory workers since the neighborhood has been there. Commissioner Greenman Wright stated that the size of houses in Vine and the proximity to schools, colleges, work, to services downtown are reasons the Vine neighborhood is appealing for these types of homes. She believes they need to offer those amenities to young people who need the all of the support and resources. Commissioner Greenman Wright believes Samaritas has a strong reputation for well-thought out, data driven, supportive programs, and they have more than a one-hundred year history in this work. We have no reason to believe they won't be able to handle the situation. She stated she will vote in support, and there is no deviation from land use and it fits in the neighborhood.

Commissioner Milliken said he is looking at the standards for SUP and the one that comes up is if the use is compatible with the surrounding neighborhood. It appears the structure can support up to 9 people unsupervised as it stands today or up to 7 people (as proposed) who want to live there, who are supervised, who have guidelines and consequences if they violate those guidelines. He believes those are compatible and satisfy the standards.

Commissioner Baartman stated his support of the request. He noted there seems to be a stigma with these young men – that some would pre-emptively criminalize them when they are not criminals. Commissioner Baartman said that morally, he has to give them a chance. They have already lost the most important role models in their lives. He believes it is important to support the kids, and this is an appropriate use.

**Roll call vote was taken and passed unanimously.**

P.C. #2018.22: Request for a special use permit from Second Chance for Hope to allow a transitional residence at 137 Wall Street to serve homeless families. **[Recommendation: approve the request.]**

Planner Bauckham came forward and gave the staff report. He stated this property is also in the Vine neighborhood. It is a two story single-family home with 4 bedrooms and 2 bathrooms. The applicant owns the house and is requesting a SUP for a transitional residence use to serve up to two homeless families at a time. These families can only have up to five members max per family, they must have some form of income and pay a portion of the expenses of the house, and background checks – including criminal histories – will be done on family members. The length of stay would be between 8 weeks to 14 months with 24-hour staff coverage. Families will receive counseling and life skills education to transition into permanent homes of their own. The purpose of Second Chance for Hope is to assist homeless families. Such uses are allowed in this zoning district by SUP. Traditional single or multiple-family use could automatically go into this house if this program were to cease. The applicant attended a Vine Neighborhood meeting and has gone door to door to talk to the neighbors. She also received a petition of support with over 100 signatures and one letter of opposition from a resident. Planner Bauckham stated his rationale for approving the request: the use is allowed in this zone by SUP, the Master Plan and Strategic Vision supports this use in this zone, Uses like this are not uncommon on fringes of neighborhoods, the neighborhood is a mix of residential and commercial uses.

Commissioner Greenman Wright asked for clarification of the reason for the SUP. Planner Bauckham stated that it needs a SUP because it is a temporary use for homeless families with the intent of moving them on to more permanent housing after the time period.

Commissioner Pitts asked if it is a one or two unit property. Planner Bauckham stated it is a one unit home which would house two families with a maximum of 5 per family.

Applicants, Ms. Sandra Compton, Director & founder of second chance for Hope, and her daughter, Andrea, came forward to speak to the request. They said their mission is keeping families together while helping promote self-sufficiency. Their vision is families transitioning into quality of life through home ownership. They are proposing an income-based residential shelter that will sustain a family of 5 or less into affordable housing or home ownership. They are asking for a SUP to sustain two families of 5 or less.

Andrea said they will house these families for 8 weeks to 14 months and walk these families hand in hand into home ownership. The families will learn life skills. Second Chance for Hope will feed, clothe, shelter and provide transportation, but will also provide workshops and curriculums to give them the tools and knowledge they need to be self-sustaining. Some examples of workshops provided are personal financial literacy, substance abuse and drug awareness, spiritual, and home ownership workshops. After the family graduates the program, Second Chance will buy the home and provide the family with their own set of keys. Ms. Compton said those that can't afford home ownership, will be assisted to find affordable housing. She said the program will be managed on site with one manager and two volunteers morning, noon, and night. Their goal will be to sustain 10 families of 5 in a homelike setting.

They are starting with Ms. Compton's property. She said she owns the next door property and is willing to sell it to Second Chance of Hope. She did note that it is a new entity and they need everything that is written in the plan for it to be successful.

Commissioner Greenman Wright asked what partnerships they have formed. Andrea said they wanted to have the SUP before they started seeking and contracting with partners.

Commissioner Wissner asked about the funding mechanism for the program. Andrea stated that they are a L3C – established and legalized in 2009. They will get funding through sponsorships, donors, private, for-profit, non-profit, individuals, the equity in house, and MRIs – Mission Related Investments. They were following the process to get the SUP before they will actively seek funding.

Commissioner Milliken asked what they need to be successful in addition to the funding. Andrea said they need the buyout of 137 Wall Street, curriculums, and smart home features for the home. She said they already have an architect for the project. They intend to implement education with technology in the home. Once they get the funding, they will remodel the entire 137 residence.

Ms. Compton reported that the home being in a residential area will eliminate stigma for the youth. In addition, the families that live in the home will have a residential address and can go and look for a job. She said they plan to partner with the Vine Neighborhood, Community Homeworks and KNHS. Ms. Compton said the program will be an intense one where the participants want to change. They plan to get volunteers from K-College, WMU and KVCC.

**Commissioner Hughes-Nilsson opened the public comment portion of the hearing.**

Ms. Amy Dozier and Ms. Ashley Thompson came forward in support of their sister and mother. They cited their experience being homeless as a family and how it inspired their Mom to create Second Chance for Hope. They said their Mom is a strong woman and they are in full support of her and their sister.

Mr. Steven Vantuyl came forward to speak on behalf of Second Chance. He said he has had the opportunity mentor some adults by teaching some basic skills of home maintenance. Mr. Vantuyl has committed to volunteer with this program.

Ms. Amber Smith said she has watched these women build the program. She believes the curriculum will teach families to grow together, mature, build and become home owners and be able to maintain that life style. She said the program will not be for everyone and there is an application process.

Andrea brought forward letters of support from two Pastors of Mt. Zion church.

**Commissioner Greenman Wright, supported by Commissioner Pitts, moved to close the public comment portion of the hearing. A voice vote was taken and passed unanimously.**

Commissioner Baartman asked if the SUP would be affected if Ms. Compton sold property to Second Chance of Hope. Staff responded that the permit will stay with the property, so there will be no problem.

Commissioner Milliken and Commissioner Greenman Wright asked for clarification regarding consequences for subsequent users of the property if this SUP is granted, but the venture is not successful. Planner Bauckham stated that the permit will stay with the property unless it is revoked.

Commissioner Wissner asked about Ms. Compton's experience working with families, because it sounded as if the house and program is conceptual in nature. Ms. Compton responded that she has worked on a personal level with families for years, but she never had the curriculum to implement with them. Ms. Compton said she has wanted to go more in depth, but she had to write the plan. She is now ready to implement the whole program.

**Commissioner Pitts, supported by Commissioner Baartman, moved approval of P.C. #2018.22: Request for a special use permit from Second Chance for Hope to allow a transitional residence at 137 Wall Street to serve homeless families.**

Commissioner Pitts commented that he wants to advocate for her. He said he has seen that homelessness is a very big problem, and he believes they need to teach people to be home owners.

Commissioner Greenman Wright admitted she has concerns, but it is not in her purview to decide on the success of the venture. It is conforming to the neighborhood. She will hope and plan for the best and vote in support.

**A roll call vote was taken and passed unanimously.**

P.C. #2018.24: Request from the Kalamazoo Community Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services to vacate Cooley Street between W. Kalamazoo Avenue and the Amtrak Railroad property. **[Recommendation: recommend to the City Commission to approve the vacation with one condition.]**

**Commissioner Greenman Wright, supported by Commissioner Wissner, moved to postpone the hearing P.C. #2018.24 to the next meeting. A voice vote was taken and the motion passed unanimously.**

P.C. #2018.25: Request from the Community Planning and Economic Development Department for a text amendment to Section 5.1 Residential District Standards of Appendix A: Zoning Ordinance. **[Recommendation: recommend to the City Commission to approve the text amendment.]**

Planner Anderson came forward to give the staff report. She said they would like to make some changes to the Residential District Standard now to relieve some housing pressures while they are working on revisions of the zoning code. This action will minimize the quantity of nonconforming lots. The Master Plan, Imagine Kalamazoo, and Neighborhood Plans talk about supporting rehabilitation and development of new housing in neighborhoods and these revisions will assist with that. The revisions have been developed by community input and from some stress tests that organizations did for the City. Changes will help support the housing work of LISC and the Kalamazoo Land Bank.

Planner Anderson gave credit and appreciation for the work done by Mr. Bobby Durkee, Planner 1. They looked at lot area and lot width for 4 districts, with RS-5 having the greatest land area in the City, and found that 34% are non-conforming as it relates to the minimum lot area – 38% in lot width. In RM-36, 60% don't meet the minimum lot width designated. Planner Anderson reviewed maps showing nonconformities in lot width and lot area across the City. She said they do have a relief valve in the code if you can meet all of the other requirements. The issue is you can't always meet all the other requirements. Planner Anderson reviewed two maps showing a large increase in vacant lots from 1958 to 2018. She expressed hope of making those lots active again, and she believes the zoning changes will help encourage that.

After a lot of stopping and testing, Planner Anderson said they brought the lot area down to about 4,000 square feet for RD-19, RM-15, RM-36 and 4,500 square feet for RS-5 as a minimum. Lot width was changed so that anything 33' or more would be conforming. They changed (reduced it a bit) the side yard set-back. Some of the changes take out contradictions, for example: coverage for multi-unit residential sites, side-yard set-back increases for height. Planner Anderson stated that with the changes RS-5 is in the 90% for what is conforming.

Commissioner Milliken asked where RM-36 was located and why did it have so many small lots. He also noted that several districts were not touched. Planner Anderson said RM-36 is on the Northside, but also is scattered across the City. She said that as they update code, they will make more sense of the residential districts and how they work together and more importantly where they are mapped. She did say the districts changed will have the largest number of lots within the City.

Planner Anderson clarified for Commissioner Espinosa that they are just changing the text. No map designations are changing. She said as they look at the residential districts, there will likely be some re-mapping at that time. Planner Anderson said re-mapping will require a lot of outreach and consideration. It would probably be June before they would see those changes.

Commissioner Milliken stated that he thinks this is a good thing because it creates opportunities for affordable housing. People could split parcels, sell it off and put a house on it. Planner Anderson said that could work in places with vacant lots.

Commissioner Greenman Wright agreed that the idea makes so much sense. She said some of the Habitat houses look like trailers because of the setbacks. She said it is a blight when there are vacant lots that nothing can be built on.

Commissioner Hughes-Nilsson asked where tiny homes fit into the changes. Planner Anderson said that tiny homes can be built in Live Work 1 & 2 districts. They allow multiple buildings on a lot in the Northside only. Commissioner Hughes-Nilsson questioned large lot sizes with tiny homes. Planner Anderson confirmed they don't allow multiple structures on lots without a variance outside of Live Work 1 & 2.

**Commissioner Hughes-Nilsson opened the public comment portion of the hearing.**

No one came forward.

**Commissioner Greenman Wright, supported by Commissioner Espinosa, moved to close the public comment portion of the hearing. A voice vote was taken and passed unanimously.**

**Commissioner Greenman Wright, supported by Commissioner Espinosa, moved on the request for P.C. #2018.25 to recommend to the City Commission to approve the text amendment to Section 5.1 Residential District Standards of Appendix A: Zoning Ordinance.**

Commissioner Greenman Wright stated she thinks this is very smart and fits within goals of Master Plan and Neighborhood Plans.

**A roll call vote was taken and passed unanimously.**

**H. NEW BUSINESS**

P.C. #2018.26: Request from the Community Planning and Economic Development Department to recommend approval of the City CIP for 2019. [**Recommendation: recommend to the City Commission to approve the CIP.**]

Mr. Jeff Chamberlin, Deputy City Manager, came forward to present the Capital Improvement Plan to the Planning Commission as mandated by state law. He reported they have started to do more than just maintain the infrastructure in recent years. Mr. Chamberlin reviewed charts of water infrastructure: pipes, mains, pumps, well fields, tanks and spoke about improvements at the wastewater plant, lines and maintenance. He reminded Commissioners that water and wastewater is a regional system which also

goes into townships. Mr. Chamberlin stated there has been a large jump in building repairs, buying trucks, parks & recreation activities. Finally, they are continuing a heavy investment in major streets and local streets.

Mr. Chamberlin said they are looking at approximately a 43 million dollar Capital Improvement Program for 2019. He gave a couple of highlights, citing a renovation of the Rockwell Park and Reed Street Park. He said Rockwell Park will put in a new pavilion for youth programming and there will be additional ADA work done on Upjohn park. Starting next year, they will conduct a study of the Milham Park dam to see if they can remove it. Mr. Chamberlin said a new Public Safety station is about to start in the Edison neighborhood – Bryant Street station. They have purchased property and will be hiring an architect. They also plan to work with Parks & Rec to get community space and for them to run programs out of it. They are ramping up through Foundation For Excellence the Great Neighborhoods Infrastructure. They will be using FFE money and putting it into roads, sidewalks, tree trimming and street lighting. There is \$1.9 Million set aside for this for throughout the city. Mr. Chamberlin spoke of a new water tank being built on 131 – across from the Business Park. As a regional agency, they are looking at some expansions in Richland Township. A new tank is in the planning stages for Texas Township to help with water pressure. The City Commission approved a \$14.5 million contract for Wastewater system upgrades to help with efficiency and with smells and sludge. He said they will be more construction on the streets in the City – a couple of main ones is the planning of a major continuation on Portage Street. One of the biggest projects for the year will be Cork Street between Portage and Sprinkle. They are trying to line up utility work with street work. Mr. Chamberlin stated that it is a very aggressive CIP program. He believes they have a great crew of staff working to see this through to completion. They are recommending approval of the CIP.

**Motion made by Commissioner Wissner and support by Commissioner Greenman Wright on P.C. #2018.26 to recommend approval of the City CIP for 2019 to the City Commission.**

**A roll call vote was taken and passed unanimously.**

**I. CITIZENS' COMMENTS (Regarding non-agenda items)**

None

**J. CITY COMMISSION LIAISON COMMENTS**

None

**K. CITY PLANNER'S REPORT**

Planner Bauckham said there are currently 60 projects for the year. Project 59 was equipment by AT&T on the Millcork tower and Project 60 is a new building for Quality Auto on S. Westnedge. He reviewed

the Exchange Building project saying they are starting to work on the outside, putting in windows, closing for winter and working on the inside.

Planner Anderson reported that the City Commission has placed a 6-month moratorium on re-zoning, variances, and new building permits for property designated on the future land use with the natural features protection overlay. She said that gives staff time to finalize a set of ordinances which Commissioners will see in March/April

Planner Anderson reviewed some changes to the Calendar for upcoming year. The April and July meeting dates will be on Tuesday, April 9 and Tuesday, July 9.

#### **L. MISCELLANEOUS COMMENTS BY PLANNING COMMISSIONERS**

Commissioners had a conversation regarding concerns noted during the public hearings. Commissioner Espinosa indicated that he believes the Master Plan will give assurance to the residents. He said it is important for the City to provide some sort of communication to the neighborhoods to let them know how things will help them in the long-run.

Commissioner Hughes-Nilsson asked for a count of transitional homes in the Vine neighborhood. She was wondering if there is a saturation point. Planner Anderson stated that they will have to address that concern when they do zoning code updates. She said there is a distance requirement between transitional homes, but only in commercial districts.

Planner Anderson shared with Commissioners there is a third Connected City presentation for Jurisdictional transfer, crosswalk ordinance and Complete Streets policy on December 13 at 5:30 pm at Metro Transit. She encouraged Commissioners to attend.

#### **M. ADJOURNMENT**

**Commissioner Espinosa, supported by Commissioner Wissner, moved to adjourn the meeting. A voice vote was taken and passed unanimously. The meeting was adjourned at 10:33 pm.**

Respectfully submitted,



Christina Anderson,  
City Planner  
Community Planning & Development