

City of Kalamazoo
PLANNING COMMISSION
Special Meeting Minutes
July 29, 2020
FINAL

Electronic meeting
under the authority of Executive Order 2020-110
issued by Governor Gretchen Whitmer

Members Present: Gregory Milliken, Chair; Emily Greenman Wright, Vice Chair; Shardae Chambers; Derek Wissner; Coreen Ellis; Brian Pittelko; Alfonso Espinosa; Sakhi Vyas

Members Excused: James Pitts

City Staff: Pete Eldridge, Assistant City Planner; Clyde Robinson, City Attorney; Beth Cheeseman, Executive Administrative Assistant; Joseph Ulery, Deputy Chief Information Officer; Neal Conway, Communications Coordinator

A. CALL TO ORDER

Commissioner Milliken called the meeting to order at 7:01 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 clarified that the Annual Report is for 2019 and not 2018 as shown on the Agenda.

Commissioner Espinosa, supported by Commissioner Greenman Wright, moved approval of the July 29, 2020 Planning Commission agenda as amended. With a voice vote, the motion carried unanimously.

D. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Commissioner Ellis, supported by Commissioner Chambers, moved approval of the May 7, 2020 Planning Commission minutes. With a voice vote, the motion carried unanimously.

E. COMMUNICATIONS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

None.

F. NEW BUSINESS

None.

G. PUBLIC HEARINGS

Commissioner Milliken reviewed the process for the public to comment on the public hearings.

1. P.C. #2020.10: A request to rezone the subject lots from Zone CN-1 (Commercial – Neighborhood District) and Zone CC (Commercial – Community District) to Zone RM-36 (Residential – Multi Dwelling District): 118 Fellows Ave./ 110, 114, 120 and 124 Burr Oak St. **[Recommendation: The Planning Division supports a recommendation to the City Commission to approve the rezoning.]**

Commissioner Milliken explained that he needed to abstain from the discussion and vote on this item because he is a member of the KNHS board. Planner Anderson announced that Vice Chair Greenman Wright would be leading the discussion.

Planner Eldridge shared the maps and pictures of the properties. He stated there were five parcels in the proposed rezoning, all owned by KNHS. Some of the parcels were zoned CC and some were CN-1 with one parcel having split zoning. Planner Eldridge explained there is a mix of vacant, commercial and residential lots in the area with the predominant use being residential. KNHS is proposing infill housing for these sites. The lots are small and not easily developed for commercial use. Planner Eldridge spoke about the outreach efforts to the neighborhood. Planning staff sent out the usual mailings in the 300-foot radius of the properties. KNHS reached out to the Vine Neighborhood Association, and they provided a letter of support. Planner Eldridge forwarded that letter to the Planning Commissioners. KNHS sent letters to adjacent property owners and then sent fliers to three additional parcels in each direction of the area to be rezoned.

Planner Eldridge stated that the request is consistent with the 2025 Master Plan. The rezoning better aligns the zoning map with the future land use map. The commercial zoning designation hasn't brought significant changes to the interior of the block due to traffic flow and the small lot sizes. The infill housing will result in five new homes in the downtown. The zoning designation RM-36 extends up to all the properties, so this is a logical extension of that zoning district. Rezoning supports the Strategic Vision Goal of Complete Neighborhoods by creating a variety of housing types.

The applicant, Mr. Matt Lager, Executive Director of KNHS, shared that their mission is to foster homeownership and revitalize neighborhoods. They work with low- and moderate-income homeowners or prospective homeowners. Mr. Lager explained that their focus has been on the Vine, Northside, Edison and Eastside neighborhoods with a fair amount of time spent in the Oakwood and Stuart neighborhoods. He spoke about how a group of nonprofits (Building Blocks, the Vine Neighborhood Association, Community HomeWorks, KNHS, Kalamazoo Collective Housing, the Land Bank), and the City of Kalamazoo came together and pooled energies and resources in this area of the Vine neighborhood due to concerns of deteriorating conditions.

A few years ago, KNHS purchased 12 parcels in this area. They have rehabbed and sold four houses with two more slotted to be sold. They have partnered with Kalamazoo Collective Housing to rehab another one of those houses. KNHS just recently entered into an agreement where the Public Housing Commission purchased another house. Mr. Lager explained that all these houses are for residential use, focused on low- and moderate-income residents - under 80% AMI. He shared that last year, in

partnership with the Homebuilders Association, the City and LISC, they have been building infill houses. Mr. Lager explained that last year was a pilot year. They are looking to build four new houses on these lots now. FFE is providing some of the funding to make this possible. He said the housing they propose to build will be valued at about \$185,000 not including all the soft costs. The appraised values of homes that will sell in this area are in the \$140,000. Mr. Lager said that KNHS helps people with credit repair and home readiness. At any given time, they have a few dozen customers shopping for mortgages and houses. Each year they help 100 low to moderate income households become homeowners. He anticipates finding excited home buyers for these houses.

Mr. Matt Milcarek spoke about the project. Last year they used a two-story, three- or four-bedroom home model and built one home in the Eastside, Vine, Edison and Douglas neighborhoods. He said they will use the same model with some modifications based on feedback from last year's buyers. Mr. Milcarek said they will use appropriate design and setbacks to match the neighborhood. He was excited to share that they have arranged a pilot project to partner with Consumer's Energy this year. These homes will be very energy efficient, so homeowners should have very low energy costs. They will have solar rigs on the roofs. KNHS will be tracking energy uses and savings. Mr. Milcarek said these homes are high quality, and the buyers have been very satisfied.

Commissioner Espinosa asked Mr. Lager if the people going into the houses need credit repair and mortgage help, will they own the properties or rent them. Mr. Lager confirmed that all these properties will be for home ownership.

Commissioner Greenman Wright opened up the public comment portion of the hearing.

Ms. Tina McClinton, resident, asked Planning Commissioners to vote no on this item. She said that the Southtown neighbors were not notified about this rezoning. She said they should have been involved in this planning since it will affect their neighborhood.

Mr. Richard Stuart, resident, called to say that the parcels at 914 and 908 were shown in yellow as residential. He said that is not true. He recently sold those to the hospital, and they were zoned CC. Mr. Stuart said he fought to keep them CC because it raised the value of them. He asked Commissioners to vote no or postpone their vote until this can be presented to the Southtown neighborhood. He said it borders this property, but it was never brought to them for discussion. Mr. Stuart said they were excluded from the conversation. He believes that high-density residential like RM-36 can have a negative influence on surrounding properties. Mr. Stuart said he didn't think that good faith was done to include the neighbors. He also commented that they would like the Southtown Neighborhood Plan to be considered with all other neighborhoods. Mr. Stuart said they continue to be excluded and it is well known that they exist.

Commissioner Greenman Wright closed the public comment portion of the public hearing.

Commissioner Vyas, supported by Commissioner Espinosa, made the motion to approve P.C. #2010.10: the request to rezone the subject lots from Zone CN-1 (Commercial – Neighborhood District) and Zone CC (Commercial – Community District) to Zone RM-36 (Residential – Multi Dwelling District): 118 Fellows Ave./ 110, 114, 120 and 124 Burr Oak St.

Commissioner Vyas said it seemed like a great plan from KNHS. She appreciated the research that goes into rezoning and knowing the lots will be put to a use that aligns with Imagine Kalamazoo. She

commented on the two callers not knowing about the zoning and asked City staff to talk about the protocol being used to inform neighbors about upcoming zoning changes.

Planner Anderson said the neighborhood map for the City shows these properties in the Vine neighborhood. The Vine neighborhood was consulted by the applicant and they provided a letter of support to him. That letter was given to the Commissioners as a result of that interaction. Planner Eldridge mentioned all of the activities done for outreach. Planner Anderson said that on occasion applicants present at neighborhood meetings. It is not currently required, and other methods are being used. Planner Anderson said that for the most part, the typical process was followed.

Planner Eldridge added that they did a 300-foot radius around the properties for the City mailings. He also sent an email to the Vine Neighborhood Director. Mr. Lager had already scheduled a Vine Neighborhood meeting at that time.

Commissioner Ellis asked about the process from start to finish to getting people inside a brand-new home. Mr. Matt Lager said they are a NeighborWorks organization, and they are a HUD certified counseling agency. They provide home buyer education and have home ownership coaches – financial capabilities and mortgage readiness. The education portion is an eight-hour course. They pull a full credit report and go through it with the customer to see how the loan officer will evaluate them. In that process, they create a customer action plan for each of them. Action plans can last from a few months to a number of years. Coaches meet with the customer on a monthly or quarterly basis. When a customer has achieved their goals on the plans, the coach does an assessment to see if the mortgage lender will say yes. If they believe it will be possible to get a mortgage, KNHS gives referrals to a number of lenders in the area. They will then assist the lender and the customer getting from that point to closing. In partnership with the City, there is down payment assistance available. Mr. Lager said they follow the national industry standards for coaching, and they meet HUD standards. He said they see 300 customers a year with 100 customers per year achieving home ownership.

Commissioner Chambers asked about the voice mails and the Vine Neighborhood. Planner Anderson responded that the addresses listed by the callers do not fall into the Vine neighborhood.

Planner Eldridge added that the parcels in yellow on the current land use map were residential along with an office on the property. It was zoned commercial, but it did have a residential unit on it. Planner Eldridge thought that was why the land use showed up as residential. The map hasn't been updated, but he said they will take care of that.

Roll call vote was taken, and the motion passed. Commissioner Milliken abstained.

1. P.C. #2020.11: Presentation of Parkview Hills Neighborhood Plan for incorporation into the 2025 Master Plan. This is a joint request of the Neighborhood Association of Parkview Hills (NAPH) and the City's Community Planning and Economic Development Department. The neighborhood plan draft document is available for review at <http://www.imaginekalamazoo.com/plans/#neighborhood-plans> **[Recommendation: approve recommendation for neighborhood plan adoption by the City Commission]**

Planner Anderson stated that Ms. Katie Reilly, Neighborhood Activator, was attending another meeting, so she would introduce the Parkview Hills plan. She said this is the seventh neighborhood plan to come before

the Commission. Mr. Greg Nakken was present to speak to the plan. Planner Anderson explained that the Parkview Hills process started with the re-creation of their Neighborhood Association. They are continuing to meet and organize even after the planning pieces for this document were done. They used focus groups, community events, meetings and 1:1 discussion to engage their residents and stakeholders. Planner Anderson explained that the Parkview Hills neighborhood is unique because it was all created at once as a planned unit development. Their plan focuses on the strategic vision goals of connected city, inviting public places, environmental responsibility, safe community, youth development, complete neighborhood and good governance.

Mr. Greg Nakken from Parkview Hills spoke on behalf of the neighborhood. He said their neighborhood development began in the 70s as a result of the vision of H. Lewis Batts and the financial backing of Burton Upjohn. Mr. Nakken said that Parkview Hills reflects the philosophy of commitment to environmental sustainability within a relatively densely populated area. He said it is a beautiful property with hills, water features and walking trails. It is governed by an elected board of neighborhood residents, the Parkview Hills Community Association. They have 1900 residents, 776 housing units - comprised of nine different condominium associations, two apartment complexes and individual homes. The neighborhood plan was started in 2018. In 2019 a committee met with Katie Reilly, Neighborhood Activator, to understand the process of initiating a neighborhood association. He said they created a neighborhood association in conjunction with the Parkview Hills Community Association. Mr. Nakken said they continued to work on what was initiated in 2018. The plan was finished in March of this year and submitted for review and approval and to be incorporated into the 2025 Master Plan.

Mr. Nakken shared that they have already accomplished a couple of items. They have the goal to create a safe and accessible pedestrian network. Their neighborhood was developed without sidewalks and many people walk along the road and feel unsafe. Sidewalks would be difficult to install because of cost and limited space. They will have two speed monitors installed with the data to be sent to KPS. He said they hope this will slow the speed of traffic and show when traffic surveillance is best. Mr. Nakken said they have an environmental goal of reducing the impact of invasive species. They have a couple committees, Trails Committee and Natural Area Stewardship Committee, looking at the invasive species. They are also addressing erosion and catch basins throughout the neighborhood. He believes that neighborhood plans will allow them to partner with the City to complete goals and do projects.

Commissioner Chambers asked when the monitors tracking the speed would be installed. Mr. Greg Nakken said there is no date yet. Everything is in place. They are just waiting for the monitors. He suggested that the City's Traffic Engineer might be able to answer that question.

Commissioner Espinosa gave a quick observation. He said it is a great plan, but when he looked at the partners to be engaged, he was struggling to find the City of Kalamazoo. Planner Anderson said that the City is not listed with other action partners because they have their own column.

Commissioner Espinosa said it is awesome that some things are already complete. He believes it will be important for Parkview Hills and the Oakwood Neighborhood Association to collaborate on common goals because they are neighbors.

Commissioner Milliken didn't notice any reference to the commercial section of the neighborhood. He asked Mr. Nakken to speak to that.

Mr. Nakken said they do not share a commercial corridor with any neighborhood or along the main street. Within Parkview Hills they have a small privately owned retail area. He said they reached out to the owners, and they did not have any specific concerns. Mr. Nakken said they didn't have a lot of commercial goals simply because they don't share commercial property. He added that they are unique in the fact their neighborhood is completely developed. He didn't think there was space for additional commercial development.

Commissioner Espinosa asked if Greenleaf Boulevard was City owned or privately owned. Mr. Nakken said it is a City street. He said there are several other ancillary streets in the neighborhood that are City owned. The streets associated with the condominium associations are private.

Commissioner Milliken opened up the public comment portion of the hearing.

Planner Eldridge reported there were no public comments.

Commissioner Milliken closed the public comment portion of the hearing.

Commissioner Ellis asked what inspires them to keep going and how do they plan to continue to sustain themselves?

Mr. Nakken said, from a financial perspective, they pay city taxes. He explained there are additional assessments done and the money from that is used to sustain the Parkview Hills public property – trails, water ways, walkways.

Commissioner Greenman Wright, supported by Commissioner Ellis, made the motion to recommend the Parkview Hills neighborhood plan for adoption by the City Commission.

Commissioner Greenman Wright said it was a wonderful work and thanked Mr. Nakken for the thoughtful presentation.

Commissioner Milliken said he appreciated the history of the development. He said the Neighborhood Plan is consistent with the current Master Plan and the requirements of the ordinance.

Roll call vote was taken, and the motion passed unanimously.

H. OTHER BUSINESS

1. Annual meeting:
 - a. Review of annual report for 2019:

Planner Eldridge reviewed the Annual Report. Because of the late timeframe of the Annual Report (due to Covid-19), they have stretched the report to include some activities in the spring of 2020. Board members who moved on were Rachel Hughes-Nilsson, Charlie Coss, and Jack Baartman. Commissioners Coreen Ellis, Shardae Chambers, and Brian Pittelko came on the board. In 2019 there were nine regular meetings and one special meeting. Planner Eldridge mentioned they are linking Strategic Vision Goals with each item that has come before the board to make sure they're on track with the fulfillment of those goals. One rezoning was denied in 2019. It was an affordable housing project on Stockbridge Avenue with the Lyft Foundation. Planner Eldridge said the Lyft Foundation came back with a revised plan. They received a minor variance, and the project is moving forward in site plan review. He spoke about other notable items the Commissioners have reviewed: neighborhood plans, site plans in the WMU BTR park, demolition plans for the Sisters of St. Joseph church, and a site plan for the Bronson Hospital Cancer Center.

Planner Eldridge explained that the site plan review process is a responsibility of the Planning Commission that is delegated to staff. He said they did an update of the site plan process in 2018. Fully implemented the process in 2019. Site plan is a two-step process with pre-site plan meetings and full site plan meetings. Before Covid, they started reviewing and commenting on site plans digitally using Bluebeam software. Currently, they can review plans digitally and have Zoom meetings with applicants to talk about the plan. The site plans under review are posted on the website and are accessible to anyone who wants to look at them. There is a notification feature people can sign up for when new site plans are posted on the website. They can also specify to receive notice for certain neighborhoods. Properties within the NFP overlay go through an NFP site plan review in conjunction with the regular site plan review process to ensure that nothing is missed. They are preparing an online map to show where these site locations are for various projects. There were 70 pre-site plans submitted and 59 full site plans submitted.

He said they are doing public engagement in reference to an update of the NFP maps. They are making sure all the appropriate parcels are included. Planner Anderson is fully engaged in the downtown zoning process - D1, D2, and D3 districts – their boundaries and uses. Planner Eldridge reported that they should have a Transportation Planner in the Department before long.

Planner Eldridge said they continue to give the Commissioners the site plan spreadsheet to make sure they know of all the projects in the pipeline. In 2019, they had site plans for Graphics Packaging, Bronson Hospital Cancer Center, K-College Natatorium, a new hotel, and a number of medical marihuana provisioning centers. In 2020, they've had the Kalsee Credit Union project, an expansion at Vandersalm's Flower Shop & Garden Center, Graphics Packaging projects and the Kalamazoo Farmers Market expansion. They also had additional marihuana facilities approved.

- b. Site Plan Review Program administration discussion:

Planner Anderson asked Commissioners to renew the approval of the staff-run site plan process. She reported that the process is going well. The MEDC provided the City with Redevelopment Ready Certification. She said it was awarded, in part, because of a very smooth site plan process.

Commissioner Greenman Wright asked Planner Anderson to explain the criteria which bumps site plan to the Planning Commission.

Planner Anderson said the zoning code requires that any developments in WMU's BTR park go through the Planning Commission. Another reason site plans would come to the Planning Commission is if the Planning Commissioners requested to have a presentation on specific plans. Planner Anderson said they would continue to keep them up to date with a monthly list of site plans.

Commissioner Milliken said he thought the digital process that was adopted is great. He was glad that the site plan review process can continue even with the pandemic. Commissioner Milliken didn't think the board would be able to foster that type of growth and development. He was in favor of keeping the program as it is and letting the City handle that work as they are trained to do.

Commissioner Wissner, supported by Commissioner Vyas, moved to grant site plan administrative approval authority to staff for the next year. A voice vote was taken and passed unanimously.

b. Election of officers for the Planning Commission:

Chair

Commissioner Milliken expressed willingness to run for another term.

Commissioner Chambers, supported by Commissioner Wissner, nominated Greg Milliken for Chair of the Planning Commission.

No other nominations were offered.

A voice vote was taken, and the motion passed unanimously. Commissioner Milliken will continue as Chair of the Planning Commission.

Vice Chair

Commissioner Greenman Wright expressed willingness to run for another term.

Commissioner Vyas, supported by Commissioner Chambers, nominated Emily Greenman-Wright as Vice Chair of the Planning Commission.

No other nominations were offered.

A voice vote was taken the motion passed unanimously. Commissioner Greenman Wright will continue as Vice Chair of the Planning Commission.

Secretary

Commissioner Wissner expressed willingness to run for another term.

Commissioner Espinosa, supported by Commissioner Vyas, nominated Derek Wissner for Secretary of the Planning Commission.

No other nominations were offered.

A voice vote was taken, and the motion passed unanimously. Commissioner Wissner will continue as Secretary of the Planning Commission.

Commissioner Greenman Wright asked how many Commissioners would be rotating off the board the next term.

Planner Anderson said the terms expiring in March 2021 are Commissioners Greenman Wright, Pitts, and Ellis (she was serving a partial term).

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

None.

J. CITY COMMISSION LIAISON COMMENTS

None.

K. CITY PLANNER'S REPORT

Planner Anderson said two City led zoning items will come before them for review this fall. One item is the Natural Features Protection Phase II overlay update. They are doing some engagement online and at lunch time live.

The second item coming before them is the Downtown zoning. The downtown was divided from one large district into three different districts. She said they asked the community to take a look at a map, do walking tours and give feedback. The next activity will be a review of dimensional standards and uses in those three districts. They will also look at where adult use marijuana businesses would be located downtown. Engagement will include a survey online and attendance at lunchtime live.

Commissioner Milliken asked how that process relates to what they did several months ago.

Planner Anderson said that several months ago they created three districts, including uses and dimensional standards. She said they will be reviewing to confirm with the public now that it has been mapped. They will need to add adult use marijuana to the uses and anything else that may come up.

Planner Anderson reported that the NFP ordinance received the Planning Award of Excellence for Environmental Projects.

Attorney Robinson reported there was a tree protection ordinance adopted by Canton Township and that our ordinance is similar. The Canton ordinance was challenged in federal court and was struck down in part. He said he will keep his eye on that case and will keep the Commissioners informed.

Planner Anderson said the next night they would have their first in-person engagement activity since Covid. It is a Traffic Calming Information Meeting in LaCrone Park from 5:30-7:30pm. They will discuss traffic calming solutions that the City will pilot in the Northside. People will hear a presentation and see a demonstration. Those will run every half hour. She encouraged people to wear a mask and come out the next night.

Commissioner Milliken said that was good to see and thought they would learn a lot from that.

L. MISCELLANEOUS COMMENTS BY PLANNING COMMISSIONERS

Commissioner Chambers commented that they did an approval for Lakeside. Since the facility lost their license and are about to close, she wondered if the project just falls away. Attorney Robinson responded that the special use permit goes with land. He said it is possible that a new entity could come in and take advantage of that unless it expires first.

Commissioner Espinosa asked for a list of permitted uses for each zone district to be included in the staff reports. It would be a quick way to see all the possible uses when they review the packet. Planner Anderson said they can provide the use table as part of the packet or reference it online.

Commissioner Milliken asked if there was a Planning Commission meeting for August. Planner Anderson said there were no items for that meeting, so it was cancelled.

Commissioner Ellis reminded Commissioners to remember to vote.

Planner Anderson reminded Commissioners that the next Planning Commission meeting is before Labor Day. It will be a virtual meeting on Thursday, September 3rd.

M. ADJOURNMENT

Commissioner Milliken adjourned the meeting at 8:48 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "C Anderson", is written over a horizontal blue line.

Christina Anderson,
City Planner
Community Planning & Economic Development