

City of Kalamazoo  
PLANNING COMMISSION  
Minutes  
December 3, 2020  
*FINAL*

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

Members Present: Gregory Milliken, Chair; Emily Greenman Wright, Vice Chair; Derek Wissner; Coreen Phipps; James Pitts; Brian Pittelko; Shardae Chambers

Members Excused: Sakhi Vyas

City Staff: Christina Anderson, City Planner; Clyde Robinson, City Attorney; Pete Eldridge, Assistant City Planner; Beth Cheeseman, Executive Administrative Assistant; Amanda Cockroft, Marketing and Communication Specialist; Steve Brown, Foundation for Excellence Manager; Rebekah Kik, Director of Community Planning and Economic Development; James Baker, Public Services Director; Jack Urban, City Commissioner; Sean Fletcher, Parks & Recreation Director; Kevin Ford, Shared Prosperity Coordinator

#### **A. CALL TO ORDER**

Commissioner Milliken called the meeting to order at 7:02 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 announced they will be moving item F.1 New Business to H.2 Other Business. The first item to be heard will be G.1 Public Hearing.

**Commissioner Phipps, seconded by Commissioner Greenman Wright, moved approval of the December 3, 2020 Planning Commission agenda as amended. With a voice vote, the motion carried unanimously.**

#### **D. APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

**Commissioner Pitts, seconded by Commissioner Phipps, moved approval of the November 5, 2020 Planning Commission minutes. With a voice vote, the motion carried unanimously.**

#### **E. COMMUNICATIONS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS**

None.

## **F. NEW BUSINESS**

None.

## **G. PUBLIC HEARINGS**

1. P.C. #2020.17: Request for Rezoning of 902, 912, & 920 West North Street and 715 Woodward Avenue from RM-15 (Residential – Multi Dwelling District) to LW-1 (Live-Work 1 District). [**Recommendation: Recommend approval of rezoning to City Commission**]

Commissioner Milliken announced the process for leaving public comments.

Planner Anderson presented the staff report indicating this was a City-led action in partnership with the parcel owners. She gave an overview of the area, noting the parcels proximity to the Stuart, Northside, and Douglass neighborhoods. In June there was a fire that destroyed all four of the structures on these lots. The City assisted with demolition and will assist with the clean-up efforts. Planner Anderson presented pictures and maps showing the area as a mix between commercial, residential and some manufacturing. She mentioned that the Historic Preservation Coordinator wrote a short message sharing information about the buildings that were destroyed. City staff are proposing a rezoning to a mixed-use district. LW-1 allows single-family homes, buildings with multiple units and mixed-use. Planner Anderson reviewed the types of structures in the area showing that LW-1 is in line with what exists there currently. She shared that the property owner of 902 North Street is considering a three-story building - commercial and an apartment on the ground floor and residential above.

Planner Anderson explained how they consider certain questions when considering a rezoning. She said this request is consistent with the Master Plan and Strategic Vision. There are multiple strategic goals that support a rezoning. Those goals include Complete Neighborhoods, Economic Vitality, Inviting Public Places, and Shared Prosperity. The rezoning would help support the owners to rebuild and serve their neighborhoods. Due to the fire, there was a significant change in conditions for this area. There is also a community need for housing. LW-1 zoning is compatible with the surrounding neighborhood uses. Planner Anderson explained that LW-1 zoning will result in a logical and orderly development. It will not require new roads or subdividing a block. She noted that the zoning is designed to work with the scale of the area.

Planner Anderson shared that there are three property owners between the four lots. The property owners are working together for possible shared parking to serve the units in their buildings. That will help cut down on curb cuts and driveways. Planner Anderson introduced Ms. Twala Lockett-Jones and Mr. Robert Washington as the property owners present at the meeting. Ms. Sherri Duncanson joined the meeting at a later time.

Ms. Twala Lockett-Jones said her mixed-use project was planned for 902 W. North Street. They are hoping to have a community tea house, a Girls Build Kalamazoo program to teach skilled trades to girls in middle and high school, and an ADA accessible unit on the ground floor. She said there will be nine housing units total in the building. Ms. Lockett-Jones said there will be one additional commercial space that can be leased.

Commissioner Pitts asked how long the clean-up will take or when it will happen. Planner Anderson believed the bid was accepted at the last City Commission meeting. It should be under way shortly. Commissioner Pitts asked what the shared parking would look like. Planner Anderson said the design is

still to be determined. The City is trying to support property owners to have those conversations and work on some of those design elements. She said the middle property allows a large area for shared parking between the different uses. Planner Anderson noted that the zoning code allows shared parking areas.

Commissioner Chambers asked if there will be space for single-family homes if desired by the property owners. Planner Anderson confirmed that all the projects include housing options. The buildings destroyed had multiple units. If property owners wanted to build single-family homes, they are allowed to do that in the LW zone. Planner Anderson also confirmed that the project for 902 fits solely on the 902 parcel.

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

There were no public comments.

Commissioner Milliken asked if City staff had received written comments. Planner Anderson said they had not received written items outside of the property owners themselves. Ms. Lockett-Jones spoke with people from the Stuart Neighborhood and City staff talked with the President of the NACD. Neither group brought forward any comments on the rezoning.

**Commissioner Milliken closed the public comment portion of the public hearing.**

**Commissioner Pitts, seconded by Commissioner Wissner, moved to recommend approval of rezoning of 902, 912, 920 W. North Street and 715 Woodward Avenue from RM-15 to LW-1 to the City Commission.**

Commissioner Pitts said he was excited about the request. He remembered when he would walk to North Street and see thriving businesses in the area. He thinks it's a great idea to rezone these parcels.

Commissioner Milliken stated agreement with the staff report and its findings. He said the request is consistent with the ordinance requirements for a rezoning request. Commissioner Milliken noted that it is a change of the Future Land Use Plan and the Neighborhood Plan. He thought this was acceptable because of the significant change that occurred to the property. Commissioner Milliken requested that City staff remember that this will need to be amended in the Master Plan and the Neighborhood Plan to correct what will be an inconsistency. Commissioner Milliken also advocated to rezone whole blocks in future rezoning work instead of leaving a few parcels of the block unchanged.

**A roll call vote was taken. The motion passed unanimously.**

Planner Anderson let the property owners know the next step is for the request to go to the City Commission. She will be in contact with property owners to give them more details.

**H. OTHER BUSINESS**

1. P.C. #2020.19: Presentation on 3-Year Master Plan 2025 Update

Rebekah Kik, Director of Community Planning and Economic Development, Christina Anderson, City Planner; Kevin Ford, Shared Prosperity Coordinator; Sean Fletcher, Director of Parks & Recreation; James

Baker, Director of Public Services; and Steve Brown, Foundation for Excellence Manager gave an update on Master Plan accomplishments related to their respective areas.

Planner Anderson reviewed how the Strategic Vision and Master Plan were created. She said there were 136 actions and 8 strategic goals specified in the Master Plan and they had 8 years to complete them. At this point they are 1/3<sup>rd</sup> of the way through and are on track with a lot in progress. Planner Anderson reported that many of the easier projects are completed and going forward the projects will take multiple years, partners and dollars to accomplish.

Director Kik noted that 18% of goals are ongoing. These goals include core services (ex: tree planting, sidewalks) that are focused in specific places. Those will be chipped away at every single year.

Mr. Steve Brown said the FFE helps stabilize the City budget, lowers property taxes for all payers, and funds aspirational projects. He said FFE's particular focus and mission is to address generational poverty and invest in youth development and employment as well as infrastructure. Mr. Brown talked about some of the projects they've invested in are affordable housing, sidewalk repair, tree planting, park improvements, youth development plans, neighborhood plans, and Shared Prosperity of Kalamazoo. In response to Covid-19, they assisted with a disaster relief fund, small business support, digital access for all, and the creation of 14 learning hubs. He noted that information on projects would be touched on in their annual newsletter and those would be sent out soon.

Planner Anderson shared that there has been an approval through March for businesses to use their on-street parking and sidewalks to increase their capacity for gathering, sales, and dining. She reported that public engagement had to change in light of Covid. An engagement hotline was set up, virtual Townhalls were held, and door hangers were created. Some of these were used for adult use marihuana, Chapter 18, 18a, the NFP overlay, and Downtown zoning.

Complete Neighborhoods. Planner Anderson reported that downtown zoning updates were done to support housing options and economic vitality. Seven Neighborhood Plans were adopted and five are in progress now. Neighborhood Planner, Katie Reilly, will come before the Planning Commission in January or February to give a detailed presentation. An inventory of Kalamazoo structures will be resumed in the coming year. It focuses on structures designated as historic and those that are 50 years old or older. This survey is conducted lot by lot and will provide information about the structures and lots. SHPO provided a grant for the survey in the Edison Neighborhood. Volunteers are doing much of the legwork for the project.

Connected City. Director Baker reported that a Connected City includes motoring, bike riding, and walking. Several projects were funded with federal dollars through the local Kalamazoo Area Traffic Study (KATS) organization. He said they are using an asset management approach to look at whole road cross section. They want to dig once and do everything needed. Director Baker indicated that could include lane conversions, pedestrian and bike infrastructure, water mains, gas, storm and sanitary sewer. He said they have engaged with neighborhoods about how to best utilize public right of way space for transportation. Director Baker gave examples of work done on Oakland Drive and Cork Street. They will continue to take

downtown street design changes into consideration. Director Baker explained their community engagement events. They have several exercises asking for public input. They take the public input and develop a list of alternatives. Engineering evaluates the alternatives and determines any points of failures in terms of traffic operations. He said they take that information and talk about solutions to prevent the failures. There will be more engagement in 2021. City crews are doing a majority of the paving program. 4,097 linear feet of sidewalks have been repaired. Director Baker said they are working in partnership with Metro Transit to improve bus stops. Another project is the KRVT Extension. They want to see connectivity south to Kilgore road.

Environmental Responsibility. Planner Anderson said that Public Services works within the right-of-way to make sure tree canopy is healthy and increasing. By end of 2020, 150 street trees will have been planted. They received a grant to do a tree inventory. Planning has been working on a Sustainability Strategy. That report should be completed early this winter. A compost pilot project was done in the Vine neighborhood in late summer. They collected 104 gallons of food waste.

Director Fletcher spoke about their pilot project with Tending Tilth which brought sheep to Mayor's Riverfront Park and Spring Valley Park. The sheep eat invasive plant species. He reported that it was a very successful program and he is hoping to expand the program to future years.

Safe Community. Director Baker reviewed Traffic calming efforts in the Northside neighborhood. They recently installed five speed bumps in that neighborhood. They've also been employing speed radar indicators in various areas to collect traffic flow, volumes and average speed data. 545 lead service lines were replaced. The goal is to replace 500 annually. A team of people are working with Safe Routes to School to focus on increasing pedestrian safety. The City was awarded a competitive grant for pedestrian improvements.

Economic Vitality. Planner Anderson spoke about the 501 Launch which was a launch to raise interest for someone to take, renovate, and create a great asset out of 501 N. Westledge for the Northside neighborhood. She shared about how small business grants, technical support funds, strategic site acquisition funds, and storefront improvement grants were working toward Economic Vitality in City neighborhoods.

Youth Development. Director Fletcher said they were able to run a modified Super Rec Program this year. Summer Camps ran at 50% capacity with safety protocols in place for Covid-19. They were outside as much as possible. He said they are currently forming a Youth Council to inform programs, activities and events. They want the youth to run it and let Parks & Recreation know what is wanted.

Shared Prosperity. Mr. Ford spoke about projects supported by SPK. One project was the Patient Care Academy run from the NACD building. This was a pilot program was conceived through the development of the Northside Neighborhood Plan. Many partners assisted in launching this pilot program in order to improve access to in-demand career training. Six of the eight program graduates are employed in the field. Another program assisted by SPK was Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA). This was a free program to help low to moderate income folks access tax credits and tax refunds. This was supported through KRESA and expanded to sites in the Eastside, Edison, Northside Neighborhoods. 2021 projects will focus

on a 2Gen approach to serving families in order to fight child poverty. Their target neighborhoods are Eastside, Edison and Northside.

Inviting Public Places. Director Fletcher talked about improvements made to Reed Street Park, Bronson Park, and the Florence Street Splash Pad. He also noted that new murals along Davis Street Park are a nice enhancement. Director Fletcher said they are working on the Farmer's Market Renovation. The site will have an improved parking area, new vendor sheds, all new roofs, and a new restroom building. This renovation includes a realignment of Bank Street. The KVRT will run from the south end of Upjohn Park to Reed Street. He said that project is in site plan review now. They are hoping to get the project out to bid in January with construction starting in April.

Planner Anderson said that wayfinding signs to the Oakwood Neighborhood Center were a result of their Neighborhood plan. They used the quick win dollars unlocked by completing a neighborhood plan.

Strength Through Diversity. Director Kik said their goal is for an inclusive city where everyone feels at home. This goal will impact planning and engagement within the City government and in the community. She talked about efforts to pass a Fair Housing Ordinance (amendments to Chapter 18). They established a Civil Rights Board which has created new protected classes for the City. She invited Planning Commissioners to their next meeting on December 23<sup>rd</sup>. Director Kik talked about the Social Equity Policy for adult-use marihuana and how its increased benefits to Kalamazoo Residents for those who look at business opportunities within marihuana. Additional actions were an internal equity audit, ERAACE Training for leadership and staff, listening sessions held for leadership and staff, collecting data on City programs, and a Kalamazoo Equity Profile & Policy in partnership with the Kalamazoo Community Foundation and Truth, Racial Healing & Transformation (TRHT). The City is a member of Government Alliance for Race & Equity, National Association for Civilian Oversight of Law, and Cities for Action coalition.

2020/2021 Projects. KVRT Trail expansion, Farmer's Market, spray pad installation in a Northside neighborhood park, bike racks in the Vine commercial node, and implementing Safe Routes to School action plans.

Commissioner Milliken thanked the City staff and leadership for their commitment to the plan, vision and implementation of the Master Plan. He felt it was demonstrated with their participation in the meeting. It was a great demonstration of a shared commitment to a community-led plan.

2. P.C. #2020.18: 2021 Capital Improvement Plan. Request from Community Planning & Economic Development Department to review 2021 C.I.P. [**Recommendation: Recommend approval of C.I.P. to City Commission**]

Director Baker presented the Capital Improvement Plan. He said the plan was included in the City budget given to the City Commission on December 1st. Action from the City Commission is forthcoming. Director Baker reviewed costs covered through the general fund: Farmers Market redevelopment, facilities, radios, IT Equipment, Playground Equipment, Heavy Equipment and Fleet, and the Milham

Park Dam Removal. Director Baker also reviewed the 2021 major/local street projects, water and wastewater projects. He reviewed their lead replacement online map and information. Director Baker ended by acclimating Planning Commissioners to the line item sheets of the budget.

**Commissioner Greenman Wright, seconded by Commissioner Chambers, moved to recommend approval of the C.I.P. to the City Commission.**

**A roll call vote was taken. The motion passed unanimously.**

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

Ms. Tina McClinton left a message regarding the green space and flooding on Lake and Stockbridge.

#### **J. CITY COMMISSION LIAISON COMMENTS**

City Commissioner Jack Urban, expressed appreciation that the City is still working, engaging and asking for public participation in order to implement Master Plan goals. He mentioned that he will hear the same talk when it is given to the City Commission and he will enjoy hearing it again.

#### **K. CITY PLANNER'S REPORT**

Planner Anderson said she would like to have a detailed discussion about engagement and things coming forward. She said they could either do that at the January meeting or hold a special meeting.

Planner Anderson shared information about the Eastside zoning project that was restarting. She said there was a lot of activity in the Eastside neighborhood, and they need to bring that forward again. Before Thanksgiving they hung door hangers to alert everyone that this project was coming back and to let them know how to get information. She thought it would come before them in January or February.

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

Commissioner Phipps said she enjoyed the presentation and is happy to be a part of the work. She is looking forward to 2021 in the City of Kalamazoo.

Commissioner Greenman Wright thought the presentations were impressive. She said it was great to see all the different representation from City departments.

Commissioners Pittelko, Chambers, Phipps, and Pitts wished everyone happy holidays.

Commissioner Milliken thought the meeting regarding engagement was important and he looked forward to having that conversation. He encouraged having a special meeting if necessary, to cover that topic.

**M. ADJOURNMENT**

**Commissioner Milliken adjourned the meeting at 9:15 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