

City of Kalamazoo
PLANNING COMMISSION
Meeting Minutes
January 7, 2021
FINAL

This meeting will be conducted electronically in order for members, staff, and the public to comply with the ***Emergency Order under MCL 333.2253 – Gatherings and Face Mask Order*** issued by Robert Gordon, Director of the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services, on December 18, 2020.

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

Members Excused:

City Staff: Christina Anderson, City Planner; Pete Eldridge, Assistant City Planner; Clyde Robinson, City Attorney; Beth Cheeseman, Executive Administrative Assistant; Don Hepler, Senior Systems Analyst; Amanda Cockcroft, Marketing and Communication Specialist

Public Panelists: Ms. Pat Taylor, Kalamazoo Eastside Neighborhood Association Chair; Ms. Kelly Clarke, Kalamazoo Land Bank; Mr. Andrew Schipper, AVB; Mr. Steve Hassevoort, InForm Architecture

A. CALL TO ORDER

Commissioner Milliken called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

B. ROLL CALL

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

C. ADOPTION OF FORMAL AGENDA

Commissioner Phipps, supported by Commissioner Greenman Wright, moved approval of the January 7, 2021 Planning Commission agenda as presented. With a voice vote, the motion carried unanimously.

D. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Commissioner Wissner, supported by Commissioner Pitts, moved approval of the December 3, 2020 Planning Commission minutes as presented. 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. #2021.01: 1701, 1709 and 1711 Fraternity Village Drive. Request for a special use permit to construct a fraternity house in Residential Multiple Family (RM15).
[Recommendation: Approve Special Use Permit]

Planner Eldridge presented the staff report and reviewed pictures and maps of the area. The property is vacant and consists of three lots with a combined total of 1.83 acres. Previously, the parcels had three separate structures on them with four apartments in each. They were demolished in 2012. The newly proposed fraternity house will be seven, four-bedroom apartments in one building with a common gathering space and study room. Planner Eldridge stated that this project will require site plan review. There are adequate utilities to the site and the road capacity is sufficient to handle the additional traffic. He reported there is a traffic light at Fraternity Village Drive and W. Michigan Avenue. Planner Eldridge reviewed the current and future zoning and land use for the area. Fraternity Village Drive is comprised of seven fraternity houses, six sorority houses, three apartment complexes and some smaller student rental units. Planner Eldridge shared that the Planning Department sent notices to property owners within 300'. The applicant sent letters to adjacent properties. The Planning Department hasn't received any correspondence related to this request. Planner Eldridge reported that a fraternity house aligns with the density and vision for this area. He shared staff's rationale for recommendation: fraternities are allowed in this zone with approval; previously there were three apartment buildings on the site; the area already has high number of apartments, fraternity houses, and sorority houses; the Master Plan 2025 Future Land Use map identifies this area as high density residential which aligns with this use.

Mr. Andrew Schipper from AVB shared that they want to take the three parcels and split them into two parcels with two phases of building. They plan to have one building on each parcel. Mr. Schipper said the owner of this property also owns two fraternity houses to the west. He was approached by a fraternity looking for a home and an agreement was made. Mr. Schipper said the timing for the first phase, pending approvals, is to start in February and have the house ready for students in Fall 2021.

Commissioner Milliken opened the public comment portion of the hearing.

No public comments.

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

Commissioner Greenman Wright, supported by Commissioner Wissner, made the motion to approve a special use permit to construct a fraternity house in Residential Multiple Family (RM15).

Commissioner Greenman Wright said the request makes sense given that it fits into the current land use and is in line with future land use goals outlined in the Master Plan.

Commissioner Milliken noted that the motion was worded as fraternity house in the singular. He wondered if they would come back to the Planning Commission for another special use permit for the second phase of building. Mr. Schipper confirmed that since special use permits are only good for a year, their second phase of building wouldn't happen within that timeframe. They will need to come back to the Planning Commission for the second phase. Commissioner Milliken thanked them for the clarification. He said the request is consistent with the Master Plan, the zoning ordinance, and standards in the ordinance for Special Use permits. Commissioner Milliken noted that he agrees with the staff report.

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

2. P.C. #2021.02: Request to rezone parcels in the Eastside Neighborhood from Community Commercial (CC), Manufacturing (M1), Residential Single Family (RS5), Residential Multiple Family (RM15), Residential Duplex (RD19), and Commercial Office (CO) to Live Work 1 (LW1), Live Work 2 (LW2), Residential Duplex (RD19), or Residential Single Family (RS5). **[Recommendation: Recommend approval of Rezoning to the City Commission**

Planner Anderson presented the staff report. She said they chose to update the zoning code incrementally with a focus on neighborhoods with plans, key corridors and centers, and areas with known barriers. It was noted that the E. Main and E. Michigan area has zoning barriers. The district as it is mapped doesn't match existing uses or desired uses. There are lots with more than one district mapped on them. Planner Anderson reviewed the existing zoning for the area (CC, M-1, CO, RM-15, RD-19, RS-5). She said the main guiding document for this request is Imagine Eastside which is the Eastside Neighborhood Plan. The Plan talks about façade improvements, number of stories, and mix of uses. Specific goals are outlined for housing, transportation and commercial. In the Master Plan, most of the area they were looking at was Neighborhood Edge or Urban Edge which allows for a mix of uses. There is an Historic Neighborhood Node that was noted in the neighborhood plan.

Planner Anderson shared that engagement efforts had recently been restarted after pausing for Covid. She explained the following outreach efforts. Fall 2019 – KLB Charrette; Winter 2020 – Community Meeting & Draft Map Presentation; October – Meeting with KENA's Business Committee; November – Door Hangers/Flyers, Email, Social Media, IK.com project page; December – Planning Commission notice (mailed 12/16), email, social media, IK.com. She said they received a number of questions such as, what does this mean for me or when is the hearing.

Planner Anderson explained the area designated on the Neighborhood Plan as an historic node. This area covers two blocks - Phelps, Southworth, Edwina and Trimble and E. Main. There is variation lot by lot and block by block on this corridor. Only one small area is present that has more than one commercial structure strung together - at Trimble and E. Main. Planner Anderson said they went back to the Master Plan for a definition of node. They felt a node district was too restrictive and didn't match the pattern for this area. However, they are making sure the streets are supporting the walkable urban area that is seen in a node. E. Main will be repaved in 2021 and they are planning to add better crossings, sidewalks, on-street parking, and have a balance of parking and bike lanes. Planner Anderson shared that the request is consistent with the Master Plan and Strategic Vision. The new level of activity in this area, new solidified vision, Land

Bank involvement and business owners coming together for façade renovations has resulted in a change of condition that requires the proposed amendment. The amendment addresses a demonstrated community need for more housing, street projects, and façade improvements – as documented in the Master Plan and Neighborhood Plan. The proposed zoning is compatible with surrounding zoning and the scale of the area. There are no new roads planned, but the scale and form of the proposed zoning will match what is currently there for a logical and orderly development pattern.

Planner Anderson introduced Ms. Pat Taylor, Kalamazoo Eastside Neighborhood Association Chair; Ms. Kelly Clarke, Kalamazoo Land Bank; and Mr. Steve Hassevoort, InForm Architecture.

Ms. Kelly Clarke spoke about the work the Land Bank has done recently in the Edison Neighborhood. She said they have also been working with KENA in the Eastside Neighborhood for 10 years with a focus on redevelopment the past few years. She said the board made a commitment to engage in that area for the next five years doing transformational efforts. Ms. Clarke outlined engagement efforts that were undertaken by KENA and the Land Bank for under-utilized parcels in Land Bank ownership. They hired OCBA and obtained input from residents in a similar manner of what they had done for the Eastside Gateway Project. The Gateway project resulted in small homes, a pocket park, and an intergenerational oral history project. Ms. Clarke noted that, initially, the community was hesitant to engage. They were concerned they would share ideas, but that the projects wouldn't happen. She believes that seeing the Eastside Gateway Project completed generated enthusiasm to participate for this more recent project. Ms. Clarke said they had six different meetings and over 200 residents participated. The residents were the driving force of aesthetics and use. The community vision was for a mixed-use commercial project with several phases. Commercial on first floor and affordable condominiums. There was a lot of interest for people to move from large homes or enter into home ownership for the first time. People wanted these units accessible and affordable. There will be a mixture of income opportunities for the project itself. Ms. Clarke emphasized that when the Kalamazoo Land Bank seeks to repurpose properties, they want the community to build the vision.

Mr. Steve Hassevoort, InForm Architecture, confirmed they had over 200 community members participate in their engagement efforts. They had several opportunities for people – day /evening, write in and in-person. Mr. Hassevoort said they asked for potential uses for these parcels, sizes, and configurations of buildings. They heard that community members wanted a mix of residential and small scale commercial in the area. They liked the walkable scale of neighborhood. Allowing residential in the area was critical because of the short supply of housing. Community members didn't think there was enough demand to fill a commercial corridor. They wanted shopping that was walkable, and they didn't want to overwhelm the existing residences in this area. Mr. Hassevoort said the proposed zoning modifications relate well to what they heard from the community. It supports the desires of the neighborhood and allows flexibility of uses.

Mr. Hassevoort said they are hoping to build and complete the pocket park plan (Edwin & E. Main) in early summer this year. He shared some information about starting design for two other buildings. One is proposed to be a retail and residential building with a small outdoor plaza. The other one will be a residential building. Those might start this fall or early spring next year.

Ms. Taylor said residents are leaning toward believing that things will happen when people come and want their opinion. The small homes and pocket park facilitated more people expressing interest and questions and moving forward. Ms. Taylor said they are very excited about what can happen and what will happen. She was thankful for her partners that worked together to get to this point. She requested the Planning Commissioners approve the zoning change.

Ms. Clarke spoke about the Land Bank's fundraising efforts, saying they have enough money to get the pocket plaza done this year. They want to signal to the community that their voices matter.

Commissioner Pitts asked about the proposed construction on the corner of E. Main and Edwin. Mr. Hassevoort said that was currently vacant and was where the plaza will be located. Ms. Clarke added that there is a food and beverage store there is privately owned and functional. Attached to that store is a vacant structure that will be demolished. The privately-owned store will remain.

Ms. Taylor told Planning Commissioners that the privately owned building is participating in the façade improvement program. She thought people may have concerns of a brand new building next to an older building.

Ms. Clarke stated that she and Ms. Taylor launched an affirmative marketing campaign last summer. They have a group of 15-17 folks meeting monthly. The goal of the group is to have a robust marketing campaign and connect people interested in home ownership to resources with the specific focus on people of color and neighborhood residents.

Commissioner Milliken asked Planner Anderson if all of the calls she received were technical in nature. She assured him that they were. She had several people call who didn't have internet access. Planner Anderson sent out pages of the code and highlighted so they can see and compare items.

Commissioner Milliken opened the public comment portion of the hearing.

Mr. Chris Pompey asked how LW-1 and LW-2 compare to CC zoning? He said they are a recovery home and have been permitted to open a house on Engleman. Mr. Pompey asked if they would have to go in front of a hearing because this has been rezoned?

Commissioner Milliken closed the public comment portion of the hearing.

Commissioner Milliken said that although that was a specific request, it can be generalized to any property that has an existing special use on it subject to a rezoning. Planner Anderson said they are specifically asking about a transitional residence. That is allowed in CC and is also allowed in LW-1 which is what property is proposed to be rezoned to. She said that variances and special uses run with the land and do not change with a zoning map change.

Commissioner Phipps, supported by Commissioner Vyas, made the motion to recommend approval to the City Commission to rezone parcels in the Eastside Neighborhood from Community

Commercial (CC), Manufacturing (M1), Residential Single Family (RS5), Residential Multiple Family (RM15), Residential Duplex (RD19), and Commercial Office (CO) to Live Work 1 (LW1), Live Work 2 (LW2), Residential Duplex (RD19), or Residential Single Family (RS5).

Commissioner Pitts said he talked to a couple residents on Eastside and they seem pretty excited about the new things coming. He was glad to hear that facades on older buildings are being addressed in light of the new construction coming up.

Commissioner Greenman Wright commended City Staff, Mr. Hassevoort, and Ms. Clarke on their engagement. She hoped they can capture what worked so well in this planning project and replicate it in other neighborhoods. The residents are engaged, and excited, for-profit businesses have been engaged, and there were strong partnerships on the small homes project. She felt the level of engagement was the reason they have been so successful. Commissioner Greenman Wright said she would be voting to recommend this.

Commissioner Chambers said she is newly living on the Eastside, so she is excited to see things happening and for the City to be better connected. She loves that the City of Kalamazoo considers what the residents want. Commissioner Chambers indicated that she wants to get involved and help make this happen.

Commissioner Milliken thought this was a perfect example of zoning evolution that fits the vision of the Master Plan and the Neighborhood. He indicated that the process taken for this significant change was ideal. Commissioner Milliken said the zoning in place clearly inhibited development. He said it is consistent with the Master Plan and Neighborhood Plan and the standards of the zoning ordinance.

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

H. OTHER BUSINESS

1. 2021 Planning Commission Meeting Schedule

Planner Anderson said they needed to get the schedule approved and posted and asked for any feedback or changes. Commissioner Milliken thought they should use the presented schedule and adjust as they go.

Commissioner Greenman Wright asked if they could participate in virtual meetings in a non-Kalamazoo location. Attorney Robinson said they would have to disclose their location. He said because of amendments to the OMA, they are permitted to meet virtually through March 30, 2021. After that, a new set of rules will come into play. Attorney Robinson thought it would depend on where they stand in the Covid-19 pandemic. Because of the requirements of hybrid meetings (social distancing, masks, disinfectant protocol), the City may determine to meet virtually as long as they can.

Commissioner Vyas, supported by Commissioner Phipps, moved to approve the 2021 meeting schedule of the Planning Commission.

A voice vote was taken, and the motion passed unanimously.

2. January 11th – Special Meeting – (4:00pm)

Planner Anderson announced that they will have 75 minutes of time for the special meeting. The agenda and notice have been posted. They should have received a meeting link from IT. The focus of the meeting will be on how staff bring large cases before the Planning Commission and a discussion on notice, pre-presentation prior to hearings and those type of details.

Commissioner Milliken reminded Planning Commissioners that it will be a public meeting with opportunity for public comment. He encouraged them to bring forward specific talking points or discussion items before the meeting on Monday.

Attorney Robinson cautioned Planning Commissioners that if they send discussion items to all members, they should not respond to that email. If they did, that would be engaging in deliberations.

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

A public comment came in late regarding the second public hearing.

Mr. Andre Williams called to ask how façade program works. He said he will also email Planner Anderson. Planner Anderson confirmed she received the email from Mr. Williams, so staff will be able to respond.

J. CITY COMMISSION LIAISON COMMENTS

None.

K. CITY PLANNER'S REPORT

Planner Anderson let them know the rezoning of North Street and Woodward properties was approved at the City Commission meeting.

L. MISCELLANEOUS COMMENTS BY PLANNING COMMISSIONERS

None.

M. ADJOURNMENT

Commissioner Milliken adjourned the meeting at 8:24 pm.

Planning Commission

January 7, 2021

Page 8 of 8

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Christina Anderson". The signature is written in a cursive style and is positioned above a solid blue horizontal line that extends to the right.

Christina Anderson,

City Planner

Community Planning & Economic Development