

City of Kalamazoo
PLANNING COMMISSION
Special Meeting Minutes
April 7, 2021
DRAFT

This meeting is being conducted electronically pursuant to the Open Meetings Act MCL 15.263 (2) and MCL 15.263a 1(b).

Members Present: Gregory Milliken, Chair; Shardae Chambers; Brian Pittelko; Sakhi Vyas; David Burgess, Mariah Phelps, Jennifer Swan

Members Excused: James Pitts; *Michael Harrison

City Staff: Christina Anderson, City Planner; Pete Eldridge, Assistant City Planner; Clyde Robinson, City Attorney; Beth Cheeseman, Executive Administrative Assistant; Tawaun Chestnut, Service Desk Analyst; Amanda Cockcroft, Marketing and Communication Specialist; *Jack Urban, City Commission Liaison

A. CALL TO ORDER

Commissioner Milliken called the meeting to order at 4:31 p.m.

B. ROLL CALL

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

C. ADOPTION OF FORMAL AGENDA

Chair Milliken talked about the timeframe allowed for that night's meeting. He said any training items not covered would be carried over to their meeting scheduled on April 21, 2021.

Commissioner Burgess, seconded by Commissioner Chambers, moved approval of the April 7, 2021 Planning Commission agenda as presented. With a voice vote, the motion carried unanimously.

D. COMMUNICATIONS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

*Planning Commissioner Michael Harrison and City Commissioner Jack Urban joined the meeting.

E. NEW BUSINESS

None.

F. PUBLIC HEARINGS

None.

G. OTHER BUSINESS

Commissioner Milliken explained how citizens can leave messages to be played during the Citizen Comments portion of the meeting.

1. Commissioner Introductions

Planner Eldridge called on Planning Commissioners to introduce themselves. New members and existing members shared what neighborhood they live in, why they wanted to serve on the Planning Commission or how long they have already served on the Planning Commission.

2. Robert's Rules Overview – Clyde Robinson
3. Participating in Public Meetings – Clyde Robinson

Attorney Robinson reviewed Robert's Rules of Order. He gave a brief background of Henry Robert and how he came to create the rules. He said the 11th Edition of Robert's Rules is most current. Attorney Robinson said the rules attempt to guard the rights of the minority. They attempt to make sure the majority has the will to do things. If someone is on the losing side, they have had the opportunity to participate. Once a decision is made, they will go along with and carry out the will of the board as dictated by the majority. Attorney Robinson reviewed the process for making motions, debate/discussion, amendments, voting or not voting, postponing action, reconsideration, recess and adjournment.

Commissioner Burgess asked for clarification on the correct time to declare a conflict of interest. Attorney Robinson said as soon as a Planning Commissioner is aware of the conflict, they should let the rest of the body, the Chair and the recording secretary know that there is a conflict of interest. He said it should be stated before any discussion takes place.

Commissioner Pittelko said that occasionally the body has directed staff to make clarifications or tweaks to something before it goes to City Commission. He wondered where that fit in as far as amendments. Attorney Robinson said that is called a friendly amendment, but it is not recognized by Robert's Rules. He said that would generally be ok if it is a matter of clarification and not a substantive issue. If it is a substantive issue, then the way to handle that would be with an amendment. Attorney Robinson did indicate, however, that there may be times in a small group when the informal approach is appropriate.

Commissioner Phelps said that at times it seems to vary as to whether board members state a motion outright or preface it with additional information. She asked about the preferred way to do that in Robert's Rules. Attorney Robinson stated that what they are trying to do is get the proposition before the body for discussion. Those points raised in support, or the reason for the motion, is considered discussion. The one

who makes the motion has the first opportunity to speak on it. He also explained that a motion should always be made in the affirmative.

4. Guiding Documents for Planning Commissioners - Christina Anderson

Planner Anderson shared that the work done by the board is guided by planning documents. She gave a brief history of the Imagine Kalamazoo process. They engaged the community on a variety of topics (transportation, land use, housing, environment) in order to create the Master Plan. The Master Plan, which typically focuses on land use and transportation, is something the Planning Commission recommends approval of to the City Commission. Planner Anderson explained the process of using community input to create the Strategic Vision which sets 10 goals for the whole City. She said each goal has a goal map with subgoals and there are ribbons that run through all of them, such as Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion. Planner Anderson said that the Master Plan is the most important document with which the Planning Commission will work. She said that when cases are brought forward, staff will always refer back to the Master Plan and Strategic Vision to make sure that what is reviewed and suggested is in alignment with those documents and goals. Planner Anderson said that once the Master Plan was approved, they started work on Neighborhood Plans. There are seven Neighborhood Plans completed: Northside, Eastside, Vine, Edison, Oakwood, Winchell, and Parkview Hills. Five other neighborhoods have started the neighborhood planning process. The Neighborhood Plans will come to the Planning Commission for review, public hearing, and recommendation to attach to the Master Plan as a subplan. Planner Anderson shared that Neighborhood Plan goals may be attained through neighborhood driven projects or through City driven tasks. She gave the examples of neighborhood art and bike racks vs rezonings. Planner Anderson reviewed how the guiding documents work together. The Strategic Vision is the overarching plan, then the Master Plan, followed by Neighborhood plans, Parks & Recreation Plans, the annual budget, and the Capital Improvement Plan.

Planner Anderson stated that the Commissioners will see a lot of zoning cases. She reviewed that zoning is a set of rules on how land can be used and developed. It talks about uses, building location on a lot including driveway and parking, building form which includes height, entrance location and windows. She said that zoning is a base layer for projects, and it is intended to support the Strategic Vision, Master Plan and Neighborhood Plans. Planner Anderson shared that they have been updating the zoning code in incremental changes. They've focused on neighborhoods with Plans, key nodes or commercial centers, key streets, and areas with known barriers. Appendix A contains the zoning code from 2005. When that code is reviewed, updated, and approved, it is shifted into Chapter 50. She said they are currently in the process of updating the sign code and Commercial districts.

Planner Anderson explained there are local designated historic districts and national historic districts in the City. She said that when a local district is created, the plan comes before the Planning Commission. While local districts are tied to the local set of standards, national designated districts are not tied to the City's local standards. Planner Anderson mentioned that local and national district buildings can apply for tax credits to help rehabilitate those properties. She also explained the Historic District Survey that is currently happening. It fulfills an obligation to the State as a Certified Local Government and obligations with State and Federal Historic Preservation offices.

5. Planning Commissioner Role & Responsibilities – Pete Eldridge

Planner Eldridge shared that the Planning Commission was created because of Public Act 33 of 2008 of the State of Michigan Planning Enabling Act. He said the Planning Commission is in place to make land use decisions which are consistent with the policies and plans formally adopted by the City Commission. They also help guide development of the Master Plan for the community. Planner Eldridge said the Planning Commission acts as an advisory board to the City Commission by making recommendations to them on planning and development issues. They make decisions for things such as special use permits, and they are responsible for oversight for site plan review

Planner Eldridge said it would be important for Planning Commissioners to become familiar with the policies and plans of the City of Kalamazoo. They need to attend meetings and training sessions, and review agenda packets in advance of the meetings. He said it might be helpful to conduct site visits if not familiar with the properties being discussed and they should ask questions.

Attorney Robinson cautioned that Planning Commissioners should not ask questions of an applicant at a site visit. He said decisions should be based on information presented at the meeting during a public hearing. Planner Eldridge clarified that he only meant for them to familiarize themselves with areas in the City to aid discussion. Attorney Robinson added that they do not have the right to go on private property to look in back yards or anything like that.

Planner Eldridge said that Planning Commissioners will have the support of the City attorney and planning staff. Documents including agenda packets, staff reports and meeting minutes will be prepared for the Commissioners. Staff will also provide updates on current planning issues and set-up trainings.

6. Decision Making – Pete Eldridge

Planner Eldridge said the Planning Commission may see the following types of land use decisions: rezonings, text amendments, special use permits, planned unit development, preliminary subdivision, right of way vacations, and review of land use/development related plans. He said the Planning Commissioners make a recommendation to the City Commission on all of these items, except for special use permits.

Planner Eldridge let Commissioners know they will have a lot of information to help them make decisions about cases and how they align with the guiding documents of the City of Kalamazoo. Applicants will supply information via an application form, review sheet, summary of request and neighborhood outreach. Planning Commissioners will also have access to the review criteria or standards established within the zoning ordinance for many of the applications reviewed by the Planning Commission. He said the ordinance is laid out succinctly with this review criteria and staff will refer to it in every staff report.

Commissioner Milliken thanked staff for the information.

7. Site Plan Review Oversight & Explanation of Site Plan Review Process – Pete Eldridge

Carried over to the April 21st meeting.

8. Closing Training Comments

Carried over to the April 21st meeting.

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

Ms. Tina McClinton, called to say she is worried about flooding on Lake Street. She has been trying to save the last green space between Lake and Stockbridge. She talked about the development project proposed for this space. She feels that will destroy the last natural water shed, last wetlands, the last green space. Ms. McClinton spoke about their flooding issues, saying they flood two to three times every year. She shared examples of wildlife which use this area, saying there is nowhere else for animals to go. Ms. McClinton said this green space helps keep her home from flooding. She believes if they go forward with the development proposed, it will drown their homes out.

I. CITY COMMISSION LIAISON COMMENTS

None.

J. CITY PLANNER'S REPORT

None.

K. MISCELLANEOUS COMMENTS BY PLANNING COMMISSIONERS

Commissioner Milliken welcomed the new Planning Commissioners and announced the next meeting on April 21st.

L. ADJOURNMENT

Commissioner Milliken adjourned the meeting at 5:59 pm.

Planning Commission

January 11, 2021

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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