

City of Kalamazoo
PLANNING COMMISSION
Meeting Minutes
February 4, 2021
DRAFT

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 January 13, 2021.

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

Members Excused: James Pitts**

City Staff: Christina Anderson, City Planner; Pete Eldridge, Assistant City Planner; Clyde Robinson, City Attorney; Beth Cheeseman, Executive Administrative Assistant; Amanda Cockcroft, Marketing and Communication Specialist; Jack Urban, City Commission Liaison; Katie Reilly, Neighborhood Activator

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 Vyas, supported by Commissioner Wissner, moved approval of the February 4, 2021 Planning Commission agenda as presented. With a voice vote, the motion carried unanimously.

D. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Commissioner Pittelko, supported by Commissioner Chambers, moved approval of the January 7, 2021 minutes as presented. With a voice vote, the motion carried unanimously.

Commissioner Wissner, supported by Commissioner Vyas, moved approval of the January 11, 2021 Special Meeting minutes as presented. With a voice vote, the motion carried unanimously.

*Commissioner Greenman Wright entered the meeting during the second motion for minutes.

E. COMMUNICATIONS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

None.

F. NEW BUSINESS

None.

G. PUBLIC HEARINGS

None.

H. OTHER BUSINESS

Commissioner Milliken reviewed the process for the public to comment at Citizen Comment time listed on the agenda.

1. Neighborhood Planner Report

Ms. Katie Reilly, Neighborhood Activator, gave the presentation. She shared that there have been seven Neighborhood plans completed with five more neighborhoods working on planning by either creating a neighborhood association or making their neighborhood plan.

Ms. Reilly explained the process of how a resident can create a neighborhood.

First Step:

- Resident will have a reason the new neighborhood should be created.
- Resident will identify the boundaries of the new neighborhood they want to create.
- Resident will contact the Planning Department.
 - Planning staff will help identify existing organizations or associations that would be impacted by the proposal.
 - Planning staff will provide or direct the person to the Public Participation Plan.
 - Planning staff can help the resident understand if the proposed neighborhood would be eligible to create a Neighborhood Plan that can become a subarea plan of the Master Plan.

Second Step:

- Resident will engage the residents and the organizations impacted by the proposal.
- Resident will use the Public Participation Plan that is on ImagineKalamazoo.com to come up with an engagement strategy.
 - Planning staff can help implement that strategy.
- If impacting a Neighborhood Association, resident will need to engage that board and come to an agreement for the proposed boundary changes.
 - Once an agreement is in place, Planning staff will work on changing the neighborhood map.

Ms. Reilly added that people may want to consider having a subarea group within a neighborhood, such as a block club, condo association or an association around a specific feature. Those can be active groups, but don't need a map change to have an official group.

Ms. Reilly gave examples of how Neighborhood Plans have been used once they are completed. New bike racks, sidewalks, wayfinding signs, recipe cards at food bank pickups, public art, workforce training, pedestrian islands, educational efforts, RFP launches, façade programs, NFP Phase 2 map, zoning updates, Sustainability Strategy, Safe Routes to School grant program, pilot programs, Memorial Beach design project and Historic home workshops all relied to some degree on Neighborhood Plans.

**James Pitts joined the meeting during Ms. Reilly's presentation.

Commissioner Milliken thanked Ms. Reilly for her presentation. He said they see the work the staff and the neighborhood puts into the plan and it is great to see what happens after the plan is approved.

Commissioner Greenman Wright said they appreciate her work and take it seriously.

2. Discussion of PC Interviews Held Last Week (Jan. 20th and 21st)

Commissioner Milliken shared that they had four vacancies to fill. Commissioner Espinosa left and Commissioner Phipps will be relocating from the community. He also shared that Commissioners Greenman Wright and Wissner will be leaving due to term limits. Commissioner Milliken thanked them all for their service. He said this was by far the most qualified pool of applicants he has experienced. It made the committee's job challenging, even with four vacancies to fill. Commissioner Milliken reviewed the criteria they look for in Planning Commissioners: 1) Demographics to ensure the Planning Commission represents the general makeup of the community; 2) Experience; 3) Bias – Planning Commissioners' decisions are guided by the standards of the ordinance and are limited by that framework. There is no room to forward any specific interests; 4) Engagement – determining if the person will come prepared, ask questions, be ok with disagreements and challenging decisions. Commissioner Milliken said they will soon have 7-9 members with a year or less on the Commission. He announced they will be doing training. Commissioner Milliken encouraged them to submit any topics they would like incorporated into the training to himself or City staff.

Commissioner Greenman Wright agreed that this was one of the best rounds of interviews in which she had participated. She reviewed information about applicants Mr. David Burgess and Ms. Jennifer Swan. Mr. Burgess lives in the Hillcrest neighborhood. He has served as a County Planning Commissioner and Township Trustee. He is an employee at Bronson. Ms. Swan has a strong technical background and is a Project Manager from Tower Pinkster. She lives in the Millwood neighborhood. Commissioner Greenman Wright commented that both were great choices.

Commissioner Wissner agreed that all of the applicants were qualified, they just didn't have enough open spots for them. He reviewed information about applicants, Mr. Michael Harrison, and Ms. Mariah Phelps. Mr. Harrison comes with quite a bit of experience with regards to public administration. He has worked with community gentrification projects and has a consulting service working with schools. Commissioner Wissner thought he lived in the Westledge Hill neighborhood. Ms. Phelps has an MA in international relations and has done a lot of work with political parties and economic development. Commissioner Wissner said she has been very involved in community service. Commissioner Greenman Wright added that Ms. Phelps lives in the Central Business District.

Commissioner Milliken said they needed to make a motion to approve a recommendation to the Mayor who appoints them, and it then goes to the City Commission.

Planner Anderson stated that staff's goal is to have them on the Planning Commission in April. Exiting Commissioners will be leaving at the end of March. Planner Anderson asked Attorney Robinson if they needed to make individual motions or one motion to move them all forward. Attorney Robinson shared the drawbacks of having them all in one motion but said they could do it either way. Planner Anderson said they could leave it to Chair Milliken's discretion.

Commissioner Milliken asked for a motion to move all four applications forward.

Commissioner Pittelko, supported by Commissioner Vyas, moved to recommend the four candidates to the Mayor for approval.

Commissioner Pittelko said he knows Ms. Phelps and she is a dedicated professional. He was happy to see her on the list. He thought the other three resumes looked very strong.

Commissioner Vyas thanked the committee for interviewing the applicants and City staff for making sure the board stays full.

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

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

Commissioners were informed of a public comment that came in after the Citizen's Comments period on the agenda. Attorney Robinson said the Commissioners could decide whether or not to listen to it. Consensus was to listen to the comment.

Ms. Tina McClinton called and expressed concern about flooding, storm drains and sanitary sewers backing up in homes and streets. She asked them to fix the infrastructure in Southtown Neighborhood.

J. CITY COMMISSION LIAISON COMMENTS

City Commissioner Jack Urban was happy to see they were able to fill the Planning Commission vacancies. He is looking forward to the Mayor approving those appointments.

K. CITY PLANNER'S REPORT

Planner Anderson presented the first touchpoint on projects coming to the Commission over the next few months. She said this is the Planning Commissioners opportunity to get background, understand the Public Participation Plan, and formulate questions.

Northside Rezoning, Phase 2:

This project is looking solely at a pocket of manufacturing zoning. The boundary is generally south of Paterson, west of Walbridge, mostly north of Frank, over to the railroad tracks by what was Scudder Court. The area contains about 75 parcels. There is currently a mix of residential (~24 lots), commercial, civic, and industrial uses. The Brownfield Redevelopment Authority owns approximately 20 lots.

Planner Anderson said that Mr. Jamauri Bogan will come individually to rezone 315 Frank for a mixed-use project. His project was moving faster than the rezoning. She said the Manufacturing district does not allow any new residential. Mr. Bogan is requesting to rezone the property to Live Work 1 because that fits with his project.

Planner Anderson said Manufacturing does not fit with what is there or the lot size and pattern (small residential lots and narrow local streets). She shared that this project fits two strategic goals of the Northside Neighborhood Plan. 1) Increase the number of resident-owned businesses, especially those by African American and low-income residents. 2) Preserve the existing housing and build new housing to accommodate all resident's needs.

She gave a tentative schedule for engagement activities and listed the engagement methods. Fliers (February); direct conversations by phone and Zoom (February & March); virtual presentation and Q&A (February & March); IK website up to date with maps, potential districts use table (ongoing); engagement hotline (ongoing). She estimated it would come to Planning Commission in April/May.

Commissioner Milliken asked if there were existing manufacturing uses in this area. Planner Anderson said there is a commercial laundry, a small molding company, and Graphics Packaging owns some parcels they use for parking.

Commissioner Milliken asked if they were thinking of going to Live Work for that area. Planner Anderson agreed that Live Work 1 and Live Work 2 were appropriate for the area. She said they are open to looking at the different areas and designations as they engage.

Natural Features Protection Phase 2:

Planner Anderson shared that Ms. McCarthy has been working with the NFP Board to get them to evaluate the changes, identify any deficits and determine what still works. She said it will be a map change and some text amendments. They are planning to increase notice period.

Planner Anderson gave a tentative time frame for this project. NFP Board review of map and text amendments (February); joint special meeting with the Planning Commission (Perhaps 03/23 NFP Meeting at 4:00pm); will present at existing neighborhood, community, and stakeholder mtgs, public comments encouraged at NFP board mtg (March); advertise in "View From the Curb," notice letters, office hours, presentation at NFP Meeting (April). Planner Anderson estimated that this would come before the Planning Commission in May/June.

Sign Code Update:

Planner Anderson said they are due to update the sign code. She said the code may include projecting signs for Neighborhoods (currently only allowed in Downtown). Planner Anderson shared that a few years ago there was a Supreme Court case that made sweeping changes of how temporary signs are viewed and regulated. She said the City needs to make sure the sign code is following that ruling. It will be a general reorganization, simplification, standard review, and more illustrations.

The estimated engagement and timeline for staff review and update of text mid-February; outreach in March/April; Neighborhood Associations and Business Organizations, Large commercial centers; IK webpage. Draft for review. Comment box and coming to the Planning Commission in April/May.

Commissioner Vyas asked where they could find the current sign code. Planner Anderson shared that it is in Appendix A – Section 7. She said she would send them a link to the current code.

Commercial Zoning Update:

Planner Anderson shared that the other big zoning project this year will be to finish the update for the Commercial zoning. The ZBA is constantly reviewing variances for ground floor residential. She reviewed the current commercial districts of Community Commercial, Commercial Office & Commercial Neighborhood Office, Commercial Neighborhood 1 & Commercial Neighborhood 2, Commercial Mixed Use/Residential Mixed Use. Planner Anderson said they've had to grant variances in recent years to allow projects that fit with the Master Plan and Neighborhood Plans.

Planner Anderson said the work will include reviewing to either edit or eliminate the 7 existing districts; better link district standards with streets and overall location; consideration of suburban sprawl repair; a text and map update. Outreach will include working with business organizations and commercial center owners; a mix of hand delivered and mailed information; multiple meetings in locations around the City; IK website with drafts of text and map for review. She believes it will come to the Planning Commission in Summer. She said that because it is a scattered site project, they will need to come up with a careful plan to reach those they need to reach.

Planner Anderson said the new Neighborhood Plans will probably come to them in the fall. The next six months or so will be the projects she described and individual citizen projects.

Commissioner Milliken said it was exciting. He encouraged her to bring them sections to review – even knowing they will change. Commissioner Milliken thought it would be a great education for new members of the Planning Commission and also begin to implant in everyone's mind what will be coming.

L. MISCELLANEOUS COMMENTS BY PLANNING COMMISSIONERS

Commissioner Chambers wanted to thank City Staff and Planning Commissioners for going through the resumes. She thought they did a really good job. She said it will be sad to see people go.

Commissioner Pitts said to the outgoing Commissioners that it was an honor to serve with them. He wished them the best in their endeavors.

Planner Anderson reminded outgoing Commissioners that they still had one more month of work.

Commissioner Milliken requested another date for the April Planning Commission meeting. Planner Anderson said they can find a new date. She reminded them that they will have business in addition to their Annual Meeting. Planner Eldridge was working on a special meeting for training. Planner Anderson said the virtual meeting act expires March 31st, so they might need to play it by ear or wait to figure it out.

M. ADJOURNMENT

Commissioner Milliken adjourned the meeting at 8:10 pm.

Planning Commission

February 4, 2021

Page 7 of 7

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Christina Anderson", is positioned above a solid blue horizontal line that extends to the right.

Christina Anderson,

City Planner

Community Planning & Economic Development