

City of Kalamazoo
PLANNING COMMISSION
Meeting Minutes
September 1, 2022
FINAL

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

Members Excused: Sakhi Vyas, Vice Chair; Mariah Phelps; Michael Harrison; James Pitts

City Staff: Pete Eldridge, Assistant City Planner; Beth Cheeseman, Executive Administrative Assistant; Chris Praedel, City Commissioner; Charlie Bear, Assistant City Attorney; Zach DuMont, AmeriCorps Service Member

A. CALL TO ORDER/ROLL CALL

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

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

B. ADOPTION OF FORMAL AGENDA

Commissioner Swan, seconded by Commissioner Chambers, moved approval of the September 1, 2022, Planning Commission agenda as presented. With a voice vote, the motion carried unanimously.

C. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Commissioner Burgess brought forward a needed change in the wording of a motion in the August 4, 2022 minutes. He noted that the motion for removing the Wellhead Protection Overlay from the Zoning ordinance did not say it was a recommendation to the City Commission. He requested the wording of the motion be changed to reflect that.

Commissioner Burgess, seconded by Commissioner Swan, moved approval of the August 4, 2022, minutes as amended. With a voice vote, the motion carried unanimously.

D. COMMUNICATIONS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

None.

E. PUBLIC HEARINGS

Commissioner Milliken shared how to call in for public comment.

1. PC #2022.09: Kalamazoo College is requesting to Amend Ordinance Section 50-1.2, Zoning District Map and approval of an updated Institutional Campus Master Plan Agreement

Planner Eldridge shared some background about Kalamazoo College as an Institutional Campus (IC). He said the IC category is listed as a special zone district in Chapter 2 of Appendix A of the zoning ordinance. Planner Eldridge stated that the purpose of IC is to accommodate large institutional uses in a campus setting, college, school, hospital, or religious assembly use. It was defined with the intention to promote development and allow for expansion of institutional use while minimizing adverse impacts to surrounding areas. He said they are often near and adjacent to neighborhoods. The IC zone area is similar to a Planned Unit Development (PUD) area. Planner Eldridge stated that the IC zone requires a Campus Master Plan. This plan includes how the campus will develop and grow, development standards, uses for the campus, an agreement between the City and the institution. The plan is required to be updated every 10 years. Approval process for the IC Master Plan is to go through Planning Commission and then to City Commission.

Planner Eldridge noted that Kalamazoo College became an Institutional Campus in 2012. Now in 2022, Kalamazoo College is seeking adoption of the renewal of their Campus Master Plan. He stated that the plan meets requirements within the IC zoning district, and it aligns with Imagine Kalamazoo 2025. Kalamazoo College has coordinated with the City for their street projects. Planner Eldridge noted that since 2012 Kalamazoo College has added 106 Thompson Street to the IC Zone. That property is used as their Admissions office.

Planner Eldridge shared that the City Attorney recommended an ordinance amendment/update to the Chapter 50 Zoning Code Map. They would like to move the ordinance and map from Appendix A to Chapter 50.

Commissioner Milliken clarified, and Planner Eldridge agreed, that the amendment of the zoning map and the renewal of the Institutional Master Plan both needed to be approved at the City Commission. He asked Planner Eldridge to speak to the conditions attached to the request.

The conditions are as follows:

- A. Stadium lighting is a permitted use on athletic fields for Kalamazoo College.
- B. Stadium light usage will adhere to provisions set forth in the Campus Plan.
- C. All lighting on the athletic field will be shielded.
- D. No outdoor storage of athletic equipment, accessories or maintenance equipment is permitted unless those items are in use.

Commissioner Milliken asked if the conditions were new or if they were present in 2012. Planner Eldridge stated that the condition of no outdoor storage of athletic equipment was new. There was already a limitation of stadium light usage, but now that standard was moving into the IC Master Plan. Planner Eldridge clarified for the Commissioners that they were updating the ordinance that ties to the Institutional Campus zoning and looking to accept the renewal of the campus Master Plan.

Commissioner Pittelko asked about other zoning code regulations for the usage of stadium lights. Planner Eldridge said there were no stadium lighting ordinances in place. Sites that have lighting are grandfathered in so they can continue to use the lighting. He said there was an effort made in 2011 to create a stadium lighting ordinance, but it didn't work out. That was why they shifted to create limitations in the IC ordinance.

Commissioner Burgess asked if shielding the stadium lights was the same illumination requirement as other things like parking lots and businesses. Planner Eldridge said it was, but it becomes more technical when the lights are elevated.

Ms. Susan Lindeman, Associate Vice President for Facilities Management at Kalamazoo College, came forward to speak to the application. She let Planning Commissioners know there was a letter of support from the Westmain Neighborhood Association submitted with the plan. She said the process to update the 2012 plan started about a year ago. Ms. Lindeman spoke about engagement events in January and May. She said that toward the end of May they had the opportunity to show the preliminary plan and get feedback before taking it to the Board of Trustees. Ms. Lindeman said campus feedback showed a need to update residence halls. That will require demolition and rebuilding. Students want more indoor and outdoor gathering spaces, better connectivity to campus from neighborhoods and other parts of the City. Ms. Lindeman stated that the College would like to think about how to reduce the number of cars on campus and improve accessibility. Finally, she said it was important to remain authentically K. Ms. Lindeman said they talked to the surrounding neighborhoods. The neighborhoods wanted the college to consider the historic nature of the area. They want the new construction to match the Georgian style. They were concerned about the houses along Monroe and Lovell and that whatever the College does there will fit the campus. The neighborhood also wants to improve connectivity between neighborhoods, City, and campus. Ms. Lindeman said there was also the ever present concern about parking in the area. Neighborhoods expressed a desire to have a better relationship with the campus – have use of the facilities, feel more welcome, and blur the lines between campus and the neighborhoods. Ms. Lindeman gave highlights of what they learned during engagement events. People felt unsafe crossing roads at Westmain and Douglas, Academy and W. Michigan, and Stadium and Lovell. These are areas where it is hard to get across and it creates a barrier between the campus and community. Ms. Lindeman said they asked what would feel welcoming along edges of campus. The feedback they received was landscaping, architectural features, and lighting. Bike lanes, safer crossings, and increased use of borders to make a more welcoming space were ways they can dovetail into Imagine Kalamazoo 2025. She showed a rendering of what they felt was appropriate for the space where the housing is along Monroe and Lovell. People were excited about food options and stormwater management in the area at Academy and W. Michigan. Ms. Lindeman stated they had a meeting with neighbors closest to the stadium to ask about their concerns. The main concerns expressed were about parking in the neighborhood, music and yelling, traffic going the wrong way, litter, and storage of equipment. Neighbors also voiced a desire for a set of guidelines in writing from the College of the resolution of these issues. Ms. Lindeman said they have addressed many of the items. The City has added signage and pavement markings. They are keeping music and yelling to a minimum for practices. The College has a new contract with grounds management to handle trash. They have cleaned up outside of the storage barns. Ms. Lindeman noted that the neighborhoods are also close to the WMU stadium, so there is noise and traffic not associated with Kalamazoo College.

Ms. Lindeman said they have increased light days from 60 to 75 occurrences annually on their soccer fields with no use between 11:00 pm and 5:30am. For the football field, light days increased from 30 to 35 occurrences annually. The field won't have use between 9:00pm and 5:30am with the exception of five occurrences until 11:00pm. She said they met with the West Main Hill and Stuart Neighborhoods with this plan. They heard that neighbors were pleased to have more people on campus. They did express concerns about parents buying homes for students in their neighborhoods.

Ms. Lindeman shared that the goals of the plan are to address housing and accessibility, stormwater management, and how to dovetail into the Imagine Kalamazoo plan. She showed a campus map and stated that they don't intend to change the building footprint on campus. They want to make a better connection from the fields to the main campus. Ms. Lindeman explained three phases of change for the campus. Phase I would be related to connectivity. They would like to build a new L-shaped residence hall along Westmain. They imagine crosswalks, activated ground floor spaces, new lighting, and stormwater management. This would feel less like an edge of a campus and more like a neighborhood street. Phase II would add crosswalks, landscaping, and bike lanes to Lovell Street. The College would like to replace those old houses

with something that would work with the way students live today. They imagine an elevated walkway. Phase III involves W. Michigan Avenue. They imagine a mixed-use space that would be open to the public, bike lanes, and a crossing from the Vine neighborhood to campus. They have proposed re-angling the end of Academy Street. This will be safer for vehicles and pedestrians. Ms. Lindeman said they want a more contiguous space for a mixed-use development with housing for upper classman. This will include improving a bike way through that space and working on water features.

Commissioner Milliken asked the applicant to speak about what had been accomplished from the previous plan. Ms. Lindeman said the athletics fields existed at that time but didn't have lighting. They built a new field house. The soccer and football fields received artificial turf. They made improvements to the baseball, softball, and practice fields. She mentioned the Arcus Center for Social Justice, the fitness and wellness center, and the new natatorium. They also turned a bed and breakfast into their Admissions/Welcome Center for students.

Commissioner Milliken opened the public hearing.

Ms. Lisa Presley, Treasurer of the Westmain Hill Neighborhood Association, said the Board appreciated how hard the College has worked to reach out to neighbors and the Association. Ms. Lindeman comes to each monthly board meeting and gives a report. This time there was a much greater effort by the college to engage with neighbors. Ms. Presley noted there was more concern about noise than lighting. She informed Planning Commissioners that the College will be monitoring to see how they can tweak the frequencies and the location of speakers to minimize the sound. They've been in communication with the City to look at issues around parking and the one-way street. Ms. Presley has noticed how much the College has worked to try to improve look of the stadium. She felt they have been responsive to the needs of the neighbors. As a result, the Board voted in support of the Master Plan and their use of the athletic fields.

Ms. Lia Gaggino said she was excited about the plan – she loves what they want to do with the edges. The change to Academy is brilliant and a nod to safety. She was also happy about their plan to maintain the character of Kalamazoo College. Ms. Gaggino expressed concern about their rental properties. She said they are not well maintained. The houses are in disrepair. They had to meet with the College to get them mowed. She indicated that many of the people renting on her street are faculty and would like to buy the houses. If they are looking to beautify the campus, it's important to take care of these properties. Ms. Gaggino also asked if they were increasing the number of hours for stadium lighting.

Ms. Linda Leonard said they don't hear noise from Angell Field, but there is a lot of noise coming from Western. She stated she is glad that houses will be taken down, but she expressed concern about the beautiful trees in front of Trowbridge. Ms. Leonard wondered what would happen to the grove behind the homes.

There were no phone comments.

Commissioner Milliken closed the public hearing.

Commissioner Pittelko asked if the two-way street conversion would extend up the Kalamazoo College side of Lovell. Planner Eldridge confirmed that would include all of W. Lovell.

Commissioner Milliken noted that there were some specific elements of the lighting and adding days or extending hours. He asked if those items were covered if the plan was adopted as written. Planner Eldridge

agreed that they were written into the plan. The College changed to occurrences vs. night usage for flexibility.

There was some confusion regarding the motions and if they needed to include the conditions. Planner Eldridge clarified that the conditions were listed in the ordinance. He explained that they could do one motion to recommend approval of the amended ordinance section and updated Institutional Campus Master Plan Agreement. That would cover everything because the conditions are embedded in the ordinance language.

Commissioner Pittelko, with support by Commissioner Burgess, moved to recommend approval to the City Commission of the amended ordinance section 50-1.02 Zoning District Map and to approve the Institutional Master Plan Agreement.

Commissioner Pittelko stated that the Master Plan was a well-crafted document. He thought it was a nice mix of ambition, aspirational goals, and practical goals to meet the needs of the neighborhood. Commissioner Pittelko thought it was crafted for the benefit of the College, neighborhood, and the City. He also appreciated their efforts to mitigate issues involving noise and light at the stadium.

Commissioner Burgess agreed that it was a beautiful document. It managed to be both wide and specific. He seemed happy with their due diligence in outreach to get community input. He felt they made some compromises as well.

Commissioner Milliken said there were a lot of things in the Master Plan – particularly turning edges out and utilizing the great footage. He felt they challenged themselves to create the plan and now they had the challenge to implement the plan. Commissioner Milliken noted that the plan meets the requirements of the zoning ordinance for the IC district. They are also taking the procedural step of bringing the zoning map into Chapter 50 from Appendix A.

A roll call vote was taken and passed unanimously.

Commissioner Milliken commented that this would go on to City Commission.

F. DISCUSSION/ACTION ITEMS

None.

G. REPORTS:

1. City Planner's Report

No updates.

2. 2022 Site Plan Review Spreadsheet

H. PUBLIC COMMENTS:

No in-person comments. No phone comments.

I. CITY COMMISSION LIAISON COMMENTS

Commissioner Praedel spoke about the Notre Dame school of Architecture team who came and examined downtown and researched how to create a more vibrant downtown. The team included an artist who did renderings. They did a gallery event while they were in Kalamazoo. He said the team will put together a final report. Commissioner Praedel announcing some staffing changes. Ms. Laura Lam had become the Chief Operating Officer of the City. Ms. Rebekah Kik was now an Assistant City Manager. Mr. Antonio Mitchell became the Director of CPED. Ms. Tanya Hewitt-Smith became the Diversity Equity and Inclusion Director. He informed the Planning Commissioners that they now had a communications Manager for the City. Commissioner Praedel shared that City Hall was lit in purple for National Recovery Month. He shared that the City Commissioners had a special COW meeting to talk about rate increases for water and sewer. Commissioner Praedel touched on how inflation has affected the City.

J. MISCELLANEOUS COMMENTS BY PLANNING COMMISSIONERS

Commissioner Milliken encouraged everyone to check out the two-way conversion project and to enjoy the holiday weekend.

K. ADJOURNMENT

Commissioner Milliken adjourned the meeting at 8:07 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