

City of Kalamazoo
PLANNING COMMISSION
Meeting Minutes
November 3, 2022
FINAL

Members Present: David Burgess; Shardae Chambers; Gregory Milliken, Chair; *Michael Harrison

Members Excused: Mariah Phelps; Jennifer Swan; Brian Pittelko; Sakhi Vyas, Vice Chair; James Pitts

City Staff: Pete Eldridge, Assistant City Planner; Beth Cheeseman, Executive Administrative Assistant; Chris Praedel, City Commissioner; Charlie Bear, Assistant City Attorney; Luis Pena, Historic Preservation Coordinator

A. CALL TO ORDER/ROLL CALL

Commissioner Milliken called the meeting to order at 7:03 p.m.

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

Commissioner Milliken noted there was no quorum, so the Planning Commission would be unable to adopt the formal agenda or approve the minutes. He said they would continue with the meeting and address the Historic Preservation Commission's designation of City Hall. Commissioner Milliken said they would provide comments and offer a time for the public to comment.

Planner Eldridge shared that the next meeting of the Planning Commission would be December 1st.

B. ADOPTION OF FORMAL AGENDA

No adoption of formal agenda.

C. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

No approval of minutes.

D. COMMUNICATIONS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

Planner Eldridge shared that two zoning applications and the annual review of the Capital Improvement Program (CIP) is on the agenda for December.

E. PUBLIC HEARINGS

None.

F. DISCUSSION/ACTION ITEMS

1. P.C. #2022.10: Kalamazoo City Hall, 241 W. South Street. Planning Commission review of the Historic Preservation Commission's proposed designation of Kalamazoo City Hall as a single resource local historic district.

Mr. Luis Pena, Historic Preservation Coordinator, gave a brief history of the establishment of the City of Kalamazoo. He noted that the current City Hall property was purchased in 1924. The new building was opened for business in 1931. Mr. Pena explained that City Hall is Art Deco architecture with symmetrical facades, fluted pilasters, and the repetition of geometric floral patterns. It was designed by Weary and Alford. Mr. Pena showed some historic photos.

Mr. Pena explained the outline of establishing a single resource local historic district.

1. Historic District Commission identifies a property/area deemed to be eligible to be designated a local historic district.
2. Study Committee begins the report.
3. Study Committee performs photographic inventory and research.
4. Study Committee evaluates resources using National Register of Historic Places criteria.
5. Study Committee prepares preliminary study report.
6. Public meeting is held for property owners within the area. Mr. Pena noted he had held a public meeting for the City Hall designation in September.
7. Study Committee officially transmits report to the Planning Commission, State Historic Preservation Office, Michigan Historical Commission, and State Historic Preservation Review Board.
8. They have 60 days after official transmittal to hold a public hearing.
9. Study Committee has up to one year after the public hearing to submit a final report including hearing minutes, comments from Planning Commission, State Historic entities to the City Commission.
10. City Commission has a first reading and then a public hearing regarding the proposal. They approve or reject the proposed historic district.

Mr. Pena explained that when a property is in a local historic district, they have to go before the HDC for any exterior changes. He also noted that City Hall will be under the Local Historic District protection as long as the designation stands.

*Commissioner Harrison came in after Mr. Pena had introduced himself.

Commissioner Burgess enjoyed reading the report. He thought he read that there was already an historic district that included this building. He wondered about the benefit of having an additional historic district for this building. Mr. Pena explained that the National Register designation is largely honorary and doesn't offer protection to buildings. They do offer an additional review step if federal funds will be used to alter a property. The National Register designation also allows access to federal tax credits. Mr. Pena said the local historic districts offer protection over a resource, so the property cannot be demolished or character

altering things can't be done on the property. Property owners can come before Historic District Commission and find out how to do projects in a way to respect the character. There is also a Michigan Historic Tax Credit program which allows people to get 25% tax credit for qualified expenses. Mr. Pena wasn't sure that would be applicable to this building because to qualify, it has to be revenue generating property.

Commissioner Burgess asked if there was protection for the interior of the building. Mr. Pena said it only applied to the exterior.

Commissioner Harrison said that Mr. Pena mentioned a Mr. Crane in his history of the building. He wondered if there was a correlation of Mr. Crane and Crane Park. Mr. Pena said that Mr. Crane was a planner from Chicago. He said he was not related to the Cranes in Kalamazoo or associated with the park.

Commissioner Milliken agreed that the historic photos were fun. He was impressed with the construction techniques they employed then and the underground parking. Commissioner Milliken wondered why this and why now. As far as the why, Mr. Pena thought this is a good example of showing they are trying to protect resources and properties they value in Kalamazoo. He believes it is a fine piece of architecture. As far as the why now, Mr. Pena said he inherited the project and the Study Committee finished up just as he was starting. He noted that this is a great building at the heart of the City. Commissioner Milliken thought that this proposal was in keeping with the goals of the Master Plan. He thought it was good to set this as an example.

G. REPORTS:

1. City Planner's Report
2. 2022 Site Plan Review Spreadsheet

H. PUBLIC COMMENTS:

None.

I. CITY COMMISSION LIAISON COMMENTS

Commissioner Praedel reminded everyone that election day was on Tuesday. He said the City of Kalamazoo had two locations for early voting opportunities: WMU Bernhard Center and City Hall. Commissioner Praedel shared that both sites are open to all City voters. He said it was incredibly important to vote. It is one of the few days in the world that the wealthy and poor have the same power.

J. MISCELLANEOUS COMMENTS BY PLANNING COMMISSIONERS

Commissioner Harrison shared how people can research candidates to see how to vote. Tuesday is an important day.

Commissioner Burgess shared that any registered voter in the City can go to the City Clerk's office, ask for an absentee ballot, and vote there.

Commissioner Phelps said if they get an absentee ballot, turn it in at the local Clerk's office. There is not time to put it in the mail.

Commissioner Milliken said you can use the drop boxes too. He also mentioned the temporary street furniture in Winchell. Commissioner Milliken thanked the City for notifying them about tests they were doing and completing the tests. There are two temporary roundabouts in a couple intersections and several bump outs. It is up for debate if they work, but that's why they run the test. The idea is to put in something that is cheap and evaluate if it works. Then they either try something else or put in permanent structures. Commissioner Milliken thought the roundabouts were exceptional and work well.

K. ADJOURNMENT

Commissioner Milliken adjourned the meeting at 7:35 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