

City of Kalamazoo
PLANNING COMMISSION
Meeting Minutes
May 2, 2024
FINAL

Members Present: Mitchell Curtiss; Shardae Chambers; Brian Pittelko; Jennifer Swan; Gregory Milliken, Chair

Members Excused: Christine Dascenzo

City Staff: Christina Anderson, City Planner; Bobby Durkee, Assistant City Planner; Beth Cheeseman, Executive Administrative Assistant; Charlie Bear, Assistant City Attorney

A. CALL TO ORDER/ROLL CALL

Commissioner Milliken called the meeting to order at 7:02 p.m.

Planner Durkee proceeded with roll call and determined there was a quorum.

B. ADOPTION OF FORMAL AGENDA

Commissioner Pittelko, seconded by Commissioner Curtiss, moved approval of the May 2, 2024 Planning Commission agenda as presented. With a voice vote, the motion carried unanimously.

C. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Commissioner Curtiss, seconded by Commissioner Swan, moved approval of the March 7, 2024 minutes as presented. With a voice vote, the motion carried unanimously.

D. COMMUNICATIONS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

None.

E. PUBLIC HEARINGS

None.

F. DISCUSSION/ACTION ITEMS

1. Planning Commission Training
 - a. Form Based Code Districts in the City of Kalamazoo

Planner Durkee explained that form-based code is different from standard Euclidian zoning. He said it may have more steps, but it is not more complicated. Form-based standards are focused on the form of the structure as it relates to public space.

Planner Durkee read the AICP definition of form-based code from the Planners Dictionary. He noted that the definition allows for flexibility of use by the building owners. Planner Durkee encouraged people to have the City Street Design Manual available. It takes every street in the City and puts it in different classifications. It may indicate a necessity for wider sidewalks and street trees.

Traditional standards include setbacks, height, and impervious/pervious coverage. Form-based zoning talks about building form. Planner Durkee showed zoning maps and mentioned that N-Node, D1, D2, D3, LW-1, and LW-2 are form-based code districts.

Planner Durkee explained that a commercial building could remain non-conforming (grandfathered) under the current zoning code unless a developer increased intensity of use by increasing occupancy or the footprint of the building by 50%. If that was the case, the developer would need to bring all zoning standards into compliance with the zoning code. He gave a residential development example and indicated that traditional zoning standards still apply.

Planner Durkee walked through the process to determine zoning standards for a commercial and residential development. Initial questions to answer include the following.

- 1) What is the zoning district of the property?
- 2) On what street type is your property located?
- 3) Is your desired use permitted in this location? The developer will be directed to a Use Table. The table will tell you if the use is permitted or has extra design standards.
- 4) What are the requirements for developing or rehabbing a building in this location? The developer will be directed to a table of permitted lot types by district. Select the lot type for the specific project and develop based on those standards.

Planner Durkee reviewed the lot types of Commercial, Flex, Cottage Commercial, Civic, Warehouse, Yard-Attached, Yard-Detached, Outdoor Market. He also reviewed building siting (street frontage, lot area, lot coverage, parking, loading, and site access), height, uses, and street facing facades. Planner Durkee explained occupied space, entrance types, transparency, and roof types.

Planner Durkee shared that if a development project is going into a non-form-based district, the developer should go to the Dimension Standards by District table. Planner Durkee reviewed this table.

Planner Durkee referenced the Imagine Kalamazoo 2025 Action Plan items that brought about the implementation of form-based codes. He indicated that form-based code was a good solution for many communities.

Commissioner Milliken agreed that there seems to be more steps in form-based code than traditional zoning. However, he thought that form-based code was more objective, prescriptive, and clear. He asked if there had been feedback about this from developers. Planner Durkee said there are times he comes

across a developer who has never seen it. They have many questions the first time they go through the process, but he has not seen it create any barriers.

b. Master Plan Update

Planner Anderson came forward to speak about Imagine Kalamazoo 2035 (IK35). She explained that the Master Plan is required by the State because the City of Kalamazoo has a zoning code. The Master Plan sets the vision. The zoning code, as it relates to land use and transportation, helps establish that vision through implementation. The Master Plan is a 10-year document. Planner Anderson said they have been actively working through the document. She believes that over 75% of the action items have been completed or on their way to completion. For outstanding items, they will need to evaluate why they weren't done, and if they are still a community priority. Planner Anderson informed Commissioners that IK35 will kick-off in the summer/fall. She indicated that Imagine Kalamazoo 2025 (IK25) engagement took approximately 16 months, and they expect something similar for IK 2035. They will spend time doing outreach, using working groups, talking to businesses and boards - asking high-level questions. Planner Anderson said they will evaluate from there. The second phase will be taking what they heard from the community to make goals/values to guide City staff work. They will then move on to what this means in neighborhoods at the block level. The last phase will be taking it down to an actionable set of steps for staff. Planner Anderson said they hope to have the document in front of the Planning Commission in the first quarter of 2026. However, if they need more time for community conversations, they will take that time. It is technically due October 2027. Planner Anderson said she will let the Commissioners know as they firm up meeting dates, and plans for engagement. She emphasized the importance of the Planning Commissioners involvement in the process as they are charged with adopting the Master Plan.

2. Annual Vote to Delegate Site Plan Review to the Site Plan Review Committee

Planner Durkee said it is the task of the Planning Commission to perform site plan review. The zoning ordinance allows the Planning Commission to delegate that authority to the Site Plan Review Committee. He reviewed the makeup of the multi-disciplinary Committee: planners, zoning administrator, various Public Services engineers, Fire Marshall, and an Environmental Reviewer. No permit or construction approvals are given before site plan approval.

Commissioner Milliken stated that the annual delegation of site plan review was something they could do to encourage efficiency and give authority to those with the expertise to review technical details.

Commissioner Curtiss, seconded by Commissioner Chambers, moved to approve the delegation of site plan review to the Site Plan Review Committee.

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

3. Recommendation from Interview Committee of candidates to fill vacant Planning Commissioner positions.

Planner Durkee presented background information on the Planning Commission candidates. He said they interviewed four candidates. The three individuals selected were Wendell Tolber, Ian Smith, and Michelle Audette-Bauman.

Commissioner Curtiss stated that he would have been happy with any of the four candidates joining the board. He hoped the fourth candidate would apply for any future openings. With the candidates they selected, Commissioner Curtiss felt they have a good diversity of neighborhoods and ethnicities. He thinks the candidates will make great additions to the Planning Commission.

Commissioner Chambers said it was a hard decision to make, the candidates were all really good. She expressed excitement for them to begin.

Commissioner Milliken thanked the committee for their work and said he was excited to get a full dais.

Commissioner Curtiss, seconded by Commissioner Chambers, moved to recommend the three applicants brought forward by the interview committee to the Mayor to fill the vacant Planning Commissioner positions.

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

G. REPORTS:

1. City Planner's Report

Planner Anderson reported that May is bike month. She gave information about the Bicycle Show in Bronson Park on May 11. Planner Anderson also shared about the Kalamazoo Commuter Challenge running from May 17-30. The Commuter Challenge uses an online platform called Love to Ride. This app can be used year-round, and it will provide the City with transportation data. Planner Anderson indicated there would be a table at the bike show collecting input for downtown placemaking. They are looking at how to activate key areas downtown, such as the block in front of the State theater, north mall, and the pathways behind Michigan Avenue that lead down certain alleys.

Planner Anderson said she hopes in June to set the stage for discussion related to updating the residential zoning code. She explained that this update was much larger than the commercial zoning code update. Planner Anderson indicated that community engagement for this project will be starting this summer. She said they want to meet community housing needs, and they need to think about how they grant permission to do that work through the zoning code.

Commissioner Milliken asked if the July 4th meeting would be rescheduled. Planner Anderson shared that it was already rescheduled.

2. Site Plan List

No questions.

3. 2023 Annual Report of Planning Activities

Planner Durkee briefly reviewed the Planning Commission activities listed in the Annual Report. He also gave a summary of Planning Department activities. Planner Durkee noted the Public Participation Policy (PPP) activity summary.

Commissioner Pittelko, seconded by Commissioner Swan, made a motion to accept the 2023 Annual Report.

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

H. PUBLIC COMMENTS:

Several people came forward to express concerns regarding the placement of a pod community at 2015 Lake Street.

Ms. Sandra Bloomfield came forward asking questions about protecting the health and safety of the public, contaminated ground, location as a high-density commercial district, high traffic area, flooding, and emergency evacuation plans. She also handed the secretary a four page list of concerns.

Mr. Rod Halcomb asked about costs associated with the pod community, monitoring of drug use, picking up trash, curfews, daily activities at the pod community, mental health services, snow removal, and monitoring for weapons. He wondered who would clean a pod if a tenant was removed and if there was a plan to shut the community down if it was not successful.

Mr. Doug Hamstra emphasized the need for City officials to review their questions and do the research themselves. He asked them to look at the pod community in Reno, NV and see what has gone wrong with that community and that neighborhood.

Mr. James Bloomfield reported that he and his wife went to Reno, NV to see what was coming to their area. Reno has the pods on 16 acres, and it has destroyed the community. He indicated that this decision could destroy the Edison Neighborhood.

Ms. Sabrina Pritchett-Evans encouraged Planning Commissioners to take a trip to Reno to see for themselves. She expressed concern about who would be attracted to the pod community and the safety of the children located nearby. Ms. Pritchett-Evans shared concerns about the highway being near the pod community and any accidents that might happen.

Ms. Amanda Palet shared that her neighborhood has a very diverse community and is lower income. She questioned the research done in selecting this site. Ms. Palet mentioned two sites were denied for suitability purposes, but instead are being developed for something else. She felt more research needed to be done before locking onto this site. Ms. Palet expressed concerns about sustainability, funding sources, and the need for more community engagement.

Phone comments:

Pastor Ruben Osorio-Sanders called in and requested to have someone from the City come and speak with him/his church. He said his church is on the corner of Ransom and Burdick and the building is inaccessible due to work being done. He mentioned filing a claim against the City. Pastor Osorio-Sanders spoke about contractors leaving walking hazards, destroying landscaping, and costing the church a considerable amount of money. He requested that the City work with them instead of just being a recipient of their complaints.

I. CITY COMMISSION LIAISON COMMENTS

Commissioner Praedel thanked the Planning Commissioners on the interview committee for their work. He verified that someone would reach out to the Pastor who called. Commissioner Praedel said he is proud of the work going on in reference to the Master Plan and the upcoming Imagine Kalamazoo work. He reported that Saturday, May 4 was the opening day of the Farmer's Market. They will have Thursday night markets June-September. Commissioner Praedel said he heard positive feedback regarding the City View publication. He also reported that the vacation of 17' of W. Water Street was passed by the City Commission on the Consent Agenda. City Commission meetings for May will be on the 13th and 20th.

J. MISCELLANEOUS COMMENTS BY PLANNING COMMISSIONERS

Commissioner Milliken apologized to those who made public comments. He clarified that the Planning Commission has nothing to do with any of the issues that were raised. Commissioner Milliken assured the public that the Planning Commission can provide a platform for those comments, make sure they are on the record, and share them with the City Commission and staff as is appropriate. He gave a reminder of the marathon that weekend and wished good luck to those participating.

It was decided that the July meeting date would be confirmed at the June meeting.

K. ADJOURNMENT

Commissioner Milliken adjourned the meeting at 8:52 pm.

Planning Commission

May 2, 2024

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Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "CK Anderson", is positioned above a solid blue horizontal line.

Christina Anderson,

City Planner

Community Planning & Economic Development