

City of Kalamazoo
PLANNING COMMISSION
Meeting Minutes
June 6, 2024
FINAL

Members Present: Mitchell Curtiss; Sharda Chambers; Jennifer Swan; Gregory Milliken, Chair; Christine Dascenzo; Ian Smith, Wendell Tolber

Members Excused: Brian Pittelko; Michelle Audette-Bauman

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

A. CALL TO ORDER/ROLL CALL

Commissioner Milliken called the meeting to order at 7:01 p.m.

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

B. ADOPTION OF FORMAL AGENDA

Planner Durkee announced that there was one change to the agenda. Attorney Bear planned to give a presentation on Robert's Rules of Order under the City Planner's Report.

Commissioner Swan, seconded by Commissioner Curtiss, moved approval of the June 6, 2024 Planning Commission agenda as amended. With a voice vote, the motion carried unanimously.

C. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Commissioner Swan, seconded by Commissioner Chambers, moved approval of the May 2, 2024 minutes as presented. With a voice vote, the motion carried unanimously.

D. COMMUNICATIONS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

Planner Durkee shared that an overview of potential changes to Chapter 8 would be presented at the July Planning Commission meeting with the public hearing scheduled for August.

E. PUBLIC HEARINGS

Commissioner Milliken explained the process of public comment for in-person and call-in comments.

1. Recommendation to the City Commission for approval of a sub-plan to the 2025 Master Plan for the Imagine Westwood 2024 Neighborhood Plan.

Neighborhood Activator, Ms. Jae Slaby, explained that the Imagine Westwood 2024 Plan is the City's ninth neighborhood plan. The Imagine Westwood planning process explored how a neighborhood

functions and what its identity is when it crosses borders and encompasses both the City and Township. The Neighborhood Plan includes five goals: 1) Increasing connectivity for all users, 2) Enhancing the public realm, 3) Championing community building, 4) Promoting a safe community, and 5) Fostering a sustainable and resilient neighborhood. City staff have started standardizing these goals, but each Neighborhood has unique strategies to meet each goal. Ms. Slaby shared that Fray's park plays a key focal point in the identity of the Westwood Neighborhood. It bridges the City and Township together. Westwood hosted most of their engagement events throughout the year at Fray's Park. She stated that Westwood had the second highest attendance for National Night Out for the last two years. The Neighborhood Association used the event to gather feedback for the Plan with the majority attending being from the Township. Ms. Slaby said it was very important to collaborate with the Township Planner and the Oshtemo Planner as they explored economic development tools to make the W. Main Street corridor thrive for business and residents. She explained that Fray's Park played a role in all five goals. Ms. Slaby stated that now is a great time to start building a strong relationship with the Township. This Neighborhood Plan allows them to open that conversation.

Mr. Ron Huster, Township resident and Chair of the Westwood Neighborhood Association, came forward to speak to the Neighborhood Plan. He emphasized the need for everyone to work together to make a big difference for their neighborhood. Mr. Huster shared the example of working together with Chick Fil-A for traffic management, and also the process of getting speed humps on Picadilly. He shared that they collected a lot of data for the Neighborhood Plan through engagement. When people are out relaxed, having fun, they will tell you things they won't tell you on a survey. Mr. Huster felt that the Neighborhood Plan was about getting everyone involved in a team to make it work.

Public Comments

Ms. Denise Hartsough, Kalamazoo Township Planning Commissioner, came forward to give an official statement from the Kalamazoo Township Planning Commission. She said they had voted on the following statement.

While the effort expended by the City of Kalamazoo on the Imagine Westwood Neighborhood Plan 2024 is appreciated, the Planning Commission of Kalamazoo Township reminds the authors and City of Kalamazoo Planning Commission that while there are ideas worth considering in their document, planning for that large majority of the Westwood Neighborhood that is in the township is done by the township and is guided by the township's Master Plan.

Vice Mayor Hess, Westwood resident, thanked Jae Slaby for her passion, persistence, and for continuing to work with the neighborhood and township. She stated that the dialogue was important. Vice Mayor Hess shared that she learned the history of Westwood through this process. Ms. Julie Mack, a writer for MLive, did an extensive history of the Westwood Neighborhood, and it has been an educational process for everyone. She emphasized the need for the City and Township to work together because neighborhood elementary schools and the high school reside in the Township. The kids who live in the City attend those schools and they feel that safe routes to school and traffic calmed in those locations are important. Working with the W. Main corridor is also important. Vice Mayor Hess said she looks forward to working with the Township, and she supports the Neighborhood Plan 100%. She also shared

that Ms. Marti Nuyen was the heart and soul of making sure the plan got to the Planning Commission. Vice Mayor Hess stated that they both affirm the plan.

There were no call-in comments.

Commissioner Dascenzo asked if they approve the plan, how would it be acted upon with the split jurisdiction. Ms. Slaby said the projects are done by the residents. At the end of the day, it is a City Plan in the City of Kalamazoo Master Plan, but they didn't want to leave out a majority of the neighborhood. She said they looked at how they could model the Westwood Wiggle in other areas of the neighborhood to allow students to travel safely to school within the neighborhood. At one of their meetings, a resident brought up a concern about promoting No Mow May without recognizing the education needed for residents in order to identify invasive species. Based on that comment, Ms. Slaby was able to eliminate the idea of promoting No Mow May. Instead, she spoke with area organizations to understand their capacity to do workshops with Westwood to provide education on native planting, pollinator habitats, and invasive species. Ms. Slaby shared that in terms of enforcement, they can only enforce within City limits. She spoke about encouraging continued partnerships with the County Planner, Kalamazoo County Road Commission, Metro, and MDOT to help achieve some things outside of the City limits.

Commissioner Milliken shared that his biggest question was the geography of this neighborhood. He noted that the Chair of Neighborhood Association is a Township resident, and that the majority of feedback came from Township residents. Commissioner Milliken believed the Association and Neighborhood Plan was representative of the multi-jurisdictional geography. He thought the Plan was wonderful, and he hoped the Township viewed it that way. Commissioner Milliken admitted he was a little disappointed by the Township's statement. He could see their perspective, big brother coming in and telling them what to do, however, he hoped they would view it as here is the neighborhood saying this is what we want to do. Ms. Slaby shared that when their planner did a survey for their Master Plan, a majority of responses were from Westwood residents. She was able to cross-reference those comments to see how they lined up with the Neighborhood Plan. Ms. Slaby shared that Ron Huster, Association Chair, is a township resident, and Marti Nuyen, Chair of the Steering Committee, is a City resident. Even in the Neighborhood Association, it was a cross-jurisdictional effort.

Commissioner Dascenzo, seconded by Commissioner Chambers, moved to recommend approval to the City Commission of the subplan to the 2025 MP for Imagine Westwood 2024.

Commissioner Dascenzo felt they did a good job of clarifying how well it aligns with the City Master Plan and a good enough job of how it aligns with the Township Master Plan. She stated her support since it was clearly supported by the neighborhood.

Commissioner Curtiss thought they gave a thorough report. He said he didn't want it to seem like an overstep of their jurisdiction, but he thinks it was about wanting to include all voices. If they looked at plans that only addressed City residents in the Westwood neighborhood and made improvements or policies that would only occur in City limits but affect everyone in the neighborhood, that would be unfair to township residents. Commissioner Curtiss reported feeling comfortable with the plan that was put forward.

Commissioner Milliken stated that the Plan was consistent with the Master Plan. He praised making the Neighborhood Plan format more consistent. He believed it would make implementation easier.

A roll call vote was taken, and the motion passed unanimously.

F. DISCUSSION/ACTION ITEMS

1. Vote on Commission Officers – Chair, Vice Chair, and Secretary

Planner Durkee reviewed the roles of the officers.

Chair

Commissioner Dascenzo, seconded by Commissioner Chambers, nominated Commissioner Milliken for the role of Chair.

Commissioner Milliken said it would be his last year on the Planning Commission.

A voice vote taken, and the motion passed unanimously.

Vice Chair

Commissioner Dascenzo, seconded by Commissioner Chambers, nominated Commissioner Pittelko for the role of Vice Chair.

A voice vote taken, and the motion passed unanimously.

Secretary

Commissioner Swan, seconded by Commissioner Dascenzo, volunteered for the role of Secretary.

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

G. REPORTS:

1. City Planner's Report

Assistant City Attorney, Charlie Bear, gave a presentation on Robert's Rules of Order. He gave background on the originator of the rules, Henry Martyn Robert. Attorney Bear reviewed motions, deliberation/discussion, making changes to motions, voting (or not), postponing action, reconsideration, and recess and adjournment.

Commissioner Curtiss asked about the conflicts of interest section. He was concerned that too many of the Commissioners would live within the 300' notice area (especially with large rezonings) and have to recuse themselves. Commissioner Milliken stated that chances are good that when they rezone residential, 70% of the City will be involved as well as many of their own parcels. He felt that because it was such a broad brush, it's still their obligation to perform their duty and vote. It's not like pinpointing certain parcels. Attorney Bear agreed with Commissioner Milliken. There would be some interest in a portion of a broad rezoning, but there is a duty to vote on matters as well. There would be a lot of areas with which they wouldn't be conflicted. Commissioner Curtiss had been wondering if they would have to break motions into pieces, but it made sense to him that a broad brush creates low stakes.

Commissioner Dascenzo asked if recusals affect quorum. Attorney Bear said they do not affect quorum.

Commissioner Chambers noted that the motion to postpone something is not the motion to table. She wondered when it is appropriate to table. Attorney Bear shared that doesn't come up often. It can be used if there is something that comes up that needs to be addressed right away - as an emergency. He shared that he has occasionally seen a need for a motion to suspend the rules. That motion basically lets you take things out of order. He gave an example of a couple in a meeting for a variance that needed to get home to their children. They were moved from the end of the agenda to the beginning of the agenda.

Attorney Bear gave information about resources for Robert's Rules of Order.

2. Site Plan List

No questions.

H. PUBLIC COMMENTS:

Mr. Ron Huster thanked the Planning Commission for approving the Neighborhood Plan. He noted that the City and Township affect each other. The Neighborhood has decided they are all Westwood, it doesn't matter if you live in the City or the Township. He felt this was a great step forward for the neighborhood, and a step forward with the Township. Everyone will benefit from the things coming from the City.

No phone comments.

I. CITY COMMISSION LIAISON COMMENTS

Commissioner Praedel welcomed the new Planning Commissioners. He felt it was impressive that there are available people with the expertise and passion to serve. He thanked the Westwood residents who have been a part of the neighborhood planning efforts. Commissioner Praedel reported a great Committee of the Whole meeting on June 3. It was an update from the Foundation for Excellence. At the last City Commission meeting, the City Manager presented the 2023 Annual Report on Planning Activities. It was full of all the great work that you've done. He said he is frequently asked about projects going on in the

community. For those interested, they can bookmark the webpage www.kalamazoo-city.org/community/projects to read about projects and anticipated timelines.

J. MISCELLANEOUS COMMENTS BY PLANNING COMMISSIONERS

Commissioner Chambers thanked City staff for their neighborhood planning efforts and bringing the two governments together. She also welcomed the two new Commissioners.

Commissioner Dascenzo expressed appreciation to people involved in getting kids through the year and into summer.

Commissioner Tolber thanked everyone for their warm welcome. He looked forward to partnering with them.

Commissioner Milliken confirmed that the July meeting would be on Monday, July 8. He also gave a welcome to the new Planning Commissioners. Commissioner Milliken thanked the Neighborhood Association and staff for their work. He announced that the Kik pool was open.

K. ADJOURNMENT

Commissioner Milliken adjourned the meeting at 8:21 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