

City of Kalamazoo
PLANNING COMMISSION
Special Meeting Minutes
February 6, 2025
FINAL

Members Present: Mitchell Curtiss; Ian Smith; Wendell Tolber; Christine Dascenzo; Brian Pittelko;
*Shardae Chambers

Members Excused: Gregory Milliken, Chair; Michelle Audette-Bauman; Jennifer Swan

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

A. CALL TO ORDER/ROLL CALL

Commissioner Pittelko 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

Commissioner Curtiss, seconded by Commissioner Dascenzo, moved approval of the February 6, 2025 Planning Commission agenda as presented. With a voice vote, the motion carried unanimously.

C. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Commissioner Curtiss, seconded by Commissioner Tolber, moved approval of the December 18, 2024 minutes as presented. With a voice vote, the motion carried unanimously.

D. COMMUNICATIONS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

Planner Durkee announced three upcoming Imagine Kalamazoo 2035 meetings. He also announced the Imagine Kalamazoo website through Kalamazoocity.org.

*Commissioner Chambers entered the meeting at this time.

E. PUBLIC HEARINGS

None.

F. DISCUSSION/ACTION ITEMS

None.

G. REPORTS:

1. City Planner's Report

Planner Durkee announced that the Imagine It phase of Imagine Kalamazoo 2035 had wrapped up and the Plan It phase of the process was beginning. He reported that the Happy City author event at the Civic Theater was well attended.

Planner Durkee shared that the Planning Division had made some changes to their development process. Staff are planning to present the process to the Committee of the Whole (COW) on February 17. He stated that the development process is divided into three parts: Pre-development, Site Plan Review, and Building Trades and Inspections. Community Planning and Economic Development's new Development Administrator will be the point person for developers. A webinar on the new process will be posted online. Planner Durkee stated that they hosted an in-person developer meeting to share the new process.

Planner Durkee reported that the Site Plan Review policy had been updated. He said the policy spelled out timelines, the applicant's responsibilities, and filled in other details. The pre-site plan meeting was changed to a checklist meeting. Planner Durkee indicated that the change helps the discussion to be more tailored to the requirements. He said a few Checklist meetings had been conducted, and it worked pretty well.

Planner Durkee thanked the Commissioners who volunteered to sit in interviews for new Planning Commissioners. He sent out the dates, and they will be interviewing four people.

2. Site Plan List

Planner Durkee referred to the 2024 and 2025 site plan lists included in the Planning Commissioners' packets. Commissioners reviewed the lists and had no questions.

3. 2024 Annual Report to the Planning Commission

Planner Durkee reviewed 2024 activities of the Planning Commission: rezoning requests, special use permits, street vacation requests, amendment to a PUD plan, CBTR site plan, 2025 Capital Improvement Plan (CIP), and the Westwood Neighborhood plan.

Planner Durkee also reviewed some of the 2024 activities of the City's Planning Division. He gave a summary of Public Participation Policy Activities; Site Plan Reviews; zoning administration; sustainability activities; Neighborhood Enterprise Zones (NEZ); and other neighborhood engagement activities.

Commissioner Pittelko noted there had been fewer public hearings in 2024 than in previous years. He wondered if that was due to less activity or more zoning compliance. Planner Durkee agreed there were fewer public hearings. He believed that some of it was because they've appropriately zoned certain areas, and people are less likely to need special use permits.

Commissioner Pittelko wondered if there were the same number of applications, but corrected zoning allowed it to go through at the staff level or if it was because there was less activity. Commissioner Pittelko expressed a desire for Planner Durkee to look into it, and Planner Durkee agreed.

H. PUBLIC COMMENTS:

Commissioner Pittelko shared the number for people to call in for public comment.

There were no in-person comments or call-in comments.

I. CITY COMMISSION LIAISON COMMENTS

Commissioner Praedel encouraged people to fill out the Survey for the City's Report Card by the deadline of February 13. He said the City Commission Retreat was coming up in March. Commissioner Praedel said the City Commission approved funding for advertising water affordability options. He also reported that the City had been working since 2003 on the first two phases of a biosolids waste mitigation plan. Commissioner Praedel explained that the City hauls about 200 tons of wet waste to landfills per day. The first phase was a request for proposals/information, and they received 30 submissions. Those submissions were whittled down to three strategies. In the second phase, they selected their top choice. That top choice won't be completed until 2030 or 2031 and will cost \$130-\$150 million. Commissioner Praedel shared that when he first came on the City Commission (~6 years ago), they were spending \$3-4 million each year for the waste to be removed. Right now, they are paying \$13-15 million for the sludge to be removed each year. The new process will reduce waste to 6 tons per year. That is a drastic reduction in weight which makes it cheaper. He said there are mitigation tools to remove PFAS from the materials, and there is technology to further reduce odors. Commissioner Praedel reported that the City would be able to pay for the technology over the course of 10 years. He said that other communities use this process, and they know it works. It will be a big project that Public Services will undertake in the next five to six years.

J. MISCELLANEOUS COMMENTS BY PLANNING COMMISSIONERS

None.

K. ADJOURNMENT

Commissioner Pittelko adjourned the meeting at 7:25 pm.