

City of Kalamazoo
PLANNING COMMISSION
Meeting Minutes
March 6, 2025
FINAL

Members Present: Ian Smith; Christine Dascenzo; Shardae Chambers; Gregory Milliken, Chair; Michelle Audette-Bauman; Jennifer Swan

Members Excused: Mitchell Curtiss; Wendell Tolber; Brian Pittelko

City Staff: 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 7:00 p.m.

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

B. ADOPTION OF FORMAL AGENDA

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

C. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Commissioner Smith, seconded by Commissioner Chambers, moved approval of the February 6, 2025 minutes as presented. With a voice vote, the motion carried unanimously.

D. COMMUNICATIONS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

Planner Durkee announced the upcoming Imagine Kalamazoo 2035 public meetings.

- Tuesday, March 11, Northside Association for Community Development
- Tuesday, March 18, Kalamazoo College Field House
- Thursday, March 27, Open House, Kalamazoo Institute of Arts

E. PUBLIC HEARINGS

None.

F. DISCUSSION/ACTION ITEMS

1. Recommendations from Interview Committee of candidates to fill vacant Planning Commissioner positions.

Planner Durkee announced that this was Commissioners Milliken and Chamber's final meeting. In January they put out a post for additional board members. They narrowed down the applicants to three and set up interviews. Commissioners Audette Bauman, Chambers, and Curtiss were on the interview committee. Planner Durkee mentioned that one candidate was located in the township. The interview team selected two candidates to recommend to the City Commission to fill the vacant Planning Commissioner positions: Zack Wilson and Dr. Thomas Kostrzewa (aka: Dr. K).

Commissioner Audette Bauman said she was excited about the candidates. Mr. Zack Wilson is a resident of the Vine neighborhood. He is a Business Analyst and has lived in Kalamazoo for a couple of years. Mr. Wilson is involved with Link Kalamazoo, which is a young professionals organization. He seems interested in and active in Kalamazoo - particularly in the Downtown area. Mr. Wilson is excited to serve the community and learn more about planning and development in the City. The second candidate, Dr. K., is in the audience tonight. He has lived in Kalamazoo for decades. Dr. K. is a resident of the Douglass neighborhood, a former board member of the neighborhood organization, and a Professor at Western. He has worked on other City boards, including the Dangerous Buildings Board, and he has worked on a number of projects in the community - including Bates Alley. Dr. K. has broad experience traveling internationally. Commissioner Audette Bauman thought that each candidate would bring a nice perspective to the Planning Commission.

Commissioner Chambers added that both candidates were very good. She noted that they did have another candidate that didn't live in the community. Commissioner Chambers thought the candidates would add a nice blend of old and new. Both will be good additions to the Commission.

Commissioner Milliken thought that both looked like excellent candidates. He thanked the interview team for their work, and he thanked the candidates for stepping forward to be on the Planning Commission.

Commissioner Audette Bauman, seconded by Commissioner Chambers, made a motion to recommend Mr. Wilson and Dr. Kostrzewa to the City Commission to fill the vacant Planning Commissioner positions.

A voice vote was taken and the motion passed unanimously.

G. REPORTS:

1. City Planner's Report
2. Site Plan List

H. PUBLIC COMMENTS:

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

I. CITY COMMISSION LIAISON COMMENTS

None.

J. MISCELLANEOUS COMMENTS BY PLANNING COMMISSIONERS

Commissioner Dascenzo thanked Commissioners Milliken and Chambers for serving. She thought that Commissioner Milliken ran smooth meetings. Commissioner Dascenzo said they represented their communities well, they respected the public, and they put a lot of thought into their comments. She appreciated serving with them.

Commissioner Smith noted that the City was trying to be better at clearing snow off the sidewalks. He appreciated that effort for those who rely on walking. He thanked the City of Kalamazoo for this improvement.

Commissioner Chambers stated that it was a pleasure to serve on the Planning Commission. She learned a lot by serving and working with City staff. Commissioner Chambers said she met amazing people on the board and in the community. She encouraged the other Commissioners to make sure they listen to residents, attend some community events, and protect natural features.

Commissioner Milliken said it was 2017 when he started on the Planning Commission. He served pre- and post-Covid and saw big and small meetings. Commissioner Milliken said it was fun to be a part of the decision making process. He will probably find his way to get involved someday again in the future. Commissioner Milliken said it was a pleasure to get to know various people he would never have known previously. He thanked staff for doing a great job.

Planner Durkee thanked both Commissioners for their service. He thought it was great that the Commissioners coming on were a mix of new and experienced. Planner Durkee stated that Commissioner Milliken is a professional planner, and it was a pleasure serving with him. He was a great Chair to support Planner Durkee as he transitioned into the liaison role. Planner Durkee mentioned the question from a previous meeting of why there were less items coming to the Planning Commission. He thought part of it was that their ordinance had changed to become a better fit for the City. That was one of the intents of IK 2025 - less variances. Planner Durkee said that it was great to watch Commissioner Chambers grow, and feels she is now a professional in planning. She has always been helpful to volunteer outside of the board and she has a good perspective. He agreed with her that they need to listen to the residents of Kalamazoo because it is made up of many people and many perspectives.

K. ADJOURNMENT

Commissioner Milliken adjourned the meeting at 7:15 pm.

Planning Commission

March 6, 2025

Page 4 of 4

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "C. Anderson". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first letter of the last name being a large, stylized 'A'.

Christina Anderson,

City Planner

Community Planning & Economic Development