

City of Kalamazoo
PLANNING COMMISSION
Meeting Minutes
July 9, 2025
FINAL

Members Present: Ian Smith; Christine Dascenzo; Michelle Audette-Bauman; Jennifer Swan; Mitchell Curtiss; Brian Pittelko, Chair; Thomas Kostrzewa; Zack Wilson

Members Excused: Wendell Tolber

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 7:00 p.m.

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

B. ADOPTION OF FORMAL AGENDA

Commissioner Kostrzewa, seconded by Commissioner Curtiss, moved approval of the July 9, 2025 Planning Commission agenda as presented. With a voice vote, the motion carried unanimously.

C. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Commissioner Swan, seconded by Commissioner Dascenzo, moved approval of the May 1, 2025 minutes as presented. With a voice vote, the motion carried unanimously.

D. COMMUNICATIONS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

None.

E. PUBLIC HEARINGS

P.C. #2025.03 - A Special Use Permit Request for a Rooming House in the existing dwelling at 1303 Lake Street.

Planner Durkee shared that the dwelling is an 1850 square foot single-family home built in 1904. It is located in the RM-15 zone district. It became vacant in about 2020, and the current applicant purchased the property and finished renovations. The applicant went through the rental certification process as a single-family house. Housing inspectors, along with the Zoning Administrator, realized it was set up as a rooming house. Planner Durkee stated that the property has a rental certificate with the condition of obtaining Special Use Permit (SUP) approval to make the land use valid. He defined that a rooming house is when a person occupies a room, there is one shared kitchen, and a number of unrelated adults. This property is set up for six (6) unrelated adults.

Planner Durkee reviewed zoning maps and photos of the area. He commented that the house blends in with the zoning around it, and the land use is consistent. Planner Durkee clarified that the LW parcel is a railroad right-of-way. He noted that staff recommended a condition on the SUP approval. Planner Durkee commented that the City code, outside of the zoning code, gives a lot of leeway for existing driveways. They noticed that the southernmost drive was a configuration of gravel and cement pads. Staff recommended that the applicant solidify and put surfacing down to better define the driveway. It is hoped this will discourage people from parking on the grass. With six occupants, there will potentially be more cars/drivers. The applicant can do this with a simple paving permit and putting down gravel or asphalt. Planner Durkee said the property is well suited for the increased intensity of use in regard to utilities and emergency vehicles.

Planner Durkee clarified that rooming houses do not have extra standards in the RM-15 zone district. He shared the SUP criteria and said that the request meets those standards. Planner Durkee reviewed requested improvements to the driveway. This property has accessibility with a central location, sidewalks, and a bus stop nearby. There is a demand for rooming houses and multi-family units in the City. Staff recommends approval of the SUP with the condition to define the second driveway on the site.

Planner Durkee shared that the applicant, Mr. Maurice Golliday, was there for questions.

Commissioner Pittelko asked if the driveway recommendation was binding with the SUP or just a recommendation. Planner Durkee said it was a recommendation. He said he would put in an approval letter to get their permit within one year of the approval date. Planner Durkee said he did discuss the details of the condition with the applicant. Commissioner Curtiss clarified that the recommendation to Commissioners is to put a binding condition on their approval. Planner Durkee stated that they could approve it without any conditions. He explained that the Zoning Administrator follows up on vehicle parking complaints outside of driveways. This would be easily solved if the driveway was improved.

Commissioner Kostrzewa wondered about the intentionality of six people. He asked if the applicant would accept mothers with children, overnight guests, friends from out of town, or people staying for a week. He thought the rule of six individuals might be difficult to enforce. Planner Durkee didn't have the answer whether the rooming unit could be occupied only by one roomer or if it could be a legal family. He explained that the property has a rental certification and is City inspected. Planner Durkee felt the hypotheticals would be addressed through the inspection process. Planner Durkee also clarified that there could be enforcement triggered by inspections or neighbor complaints.

Mr. Maurice Golliday, owner of the property, stated that guests park on the street. He has rented the property as a rooming house for three years, and he hasn't rented it to a parent with a child. It is normally single working people. Half of the tenants don't have cars. They have averaged three cars in three years. He said they do have overnight rules for guests. Mr. Golliday assured Commissioners there haven't been any problems, no police reports. He said they average four calls a day for a room when availability is advertised.

Planner Kostrzewa asked the applicant if he would rent to a mother and child. Mr. Golliday said he has only had individuals request to rent. He confirmed that he advertises the property as a rooming house for individuals. Mr. Golliday doesn't rent to couples because then there would be more than six people in the house. So far there have not been requests for mother/child or family.

Commissioner Audette-Bauman asked if Mr. Golliday had any concerns about the conditions proposed for the driveway. Mr. Golliday said he didn't have concerns about the condition proposed.

Commissioner Smith asked about the leases. Mr. Golliday said he rents by the week.

Commissioner Dascenzo wondered if the notice generated any comments to staff. Planner Durkee said he received one phone call. The person who called didn't voice an opinion, they just wanted to know what the notice was in reference to.

Commissioner Audette-Bauman, seconded by Commissioner Kostrzewa, moved to approve the Special Use Permit for the property at 1303 Lake Street.

Commissioner Dascenzo asked if they needed to include the condition in the amendment. Planner Durkee said it was not in the motion and the motion stands as seconded. Attorney Bear stated that if anyone wanted to add the condition, they could move to amend the motion and see if that is accepted.

Commissioner Dascenzo, seconded by Commissioner Curtiss, moved to amend the motion to include the condition to improve and define unimproved driveway areas with approved surface materials.

Attorney Bear walked the Commissioners through the process of amending the motion. Planner Durkee said the vote now was whether to amend the original motion.

Commissioner Pittelko and Commissioner Audette-Bauman agreed that the condition was not necessary unless the driveway was at parking capacity or the owner thought it was necessary. Commissioner Pittelko didn't think it should be a binding condition of the SUP.

Planner Durkee took a roll call vote for an amended motion.

Commissioners Audette-Bauman, Pittelko, Swan, and Wilson voted no. Commissioners Smith, Dascenzo, Curtiss, and Kostrzewa voted yes. The vote was a tie. Attorney Bear stated that a tie vote means the motion fails.

Planner Durkee took a roll call vote on the original motion, and the vote passed unanimously.

Commissioner Pittelko realized he did not ask for public comment on the Public Hearing item. Attorney Bear suggested they call for public comment and vote again. Planner Durkee reminded Commissioners that the phone system was not working, so phone comments were not available.

Commissioner Pittelko asked for public comments. No one came forward. Commissioner Pittelko closed the public hearing.

Commissioner Audette-Bauman, seconded by Commissioner Kostrzewa, moved to approve the Special Use Permit.

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

P.C. #2025.04 - A request for a Special Use Permit to construct a 150-foot tall monopole style wireless communications tower to replace the existing lattice tower at 1516 Rock Ledge Ct.

Planner Durkee clarified that wireless communication is what the zoning ordinance calls a cell tower. He shared that he may use the term cell antenna interchangeably with cell tower and wireless communication. Planner Durkee stated that the tower is in a unique location and has an interesting history. This cell tower is located on a residential street in a residential zone that has restrictions on current standards for cell antennas. This cell tower and the 4.2W Use Standards for wireless communication antenna is unique in the zoning code. Planner Durkee mentioned the unique elevation of this point and gave a brief history of the tower's origin.

Planner Durkee reviewed zoning maps and described the site. He said that Rock Ledge Court dead ends, and the 150' lattice tower is in the NE corner. The mechanical room for the cell tower equipment occupies half of the garage. Because of the age of the tower, it only has one carrier. Planner Durkee said the use standards specify that if the cell tower is determined to be an important location for communication, waivers should be considered. He also referenced necessary setbacks from public streets, and the requirement that the setback from property lines is the same distance as the height of the tower. Planner Durkee reviewed maps. If the SUP is approved, the cell tower will enter the site plan review process where final details are outlined. He showed a map of the existing tower location and the proposed new location. Planner Durkee pointed out the radius of fall zone – how far the tower would fall if there were a structural failure. He noted that if approved, the surfacing, the fencing, and the landscaping would have to be updated. Planner Durkee said he had consulted City staff to gain understanding of engineering and public safety aspects. He mentioned the apartment complex behind the tower location. Planner Durkee showed pictures before and after the tower placement. New towers need to hold a minimum of three communication facilities. The current tower can only hold one communication facility, so a new tower would be adding capacity.

Planner Durkee reviewed that a new tower cannot be built in the R zone. It was granted a use variance by the ZBA on June 12, 2025 to allow a new tower to be rebuilt where it is not permitted. A tower in an R zone requires a SUP.

The City Planner Waiver (granted through review of the application) is permitted pursuant to 4.2W. If the SUP was approved, the City Planner will draft a letter clearly outlining what was approved in the minutes for the record.

Commissioner Pittelko asked about the fall zone because it seemed small. Planner Durkee shared that the tower is designed to fall in on itself. Engineering confirmed that and gave a letter, stamp, and analysis about what would happen in a structural failure. The fall zone is fully within the compound.

Commissioner Wilson asked if the footprint would be larger. Planner Durkee said the compound would be contained within the lease zone, but it would look different. Site Plan Review will determine if any trees need to be removed.

Planner Durkee explained that the City Planner Waiver criteria asks for analysis about what other sites exist, why the applicant could not find another site, and why this location is so important. The applicant provided an engineer report, letter, and structural plans. The construction team works closely with City staff if the site plan is approved. Planner Durkee read the waiver requests from the applicant's letter.

- The height of the replacement tower will be 150 feet instead of the permitted 75' in an RM zone.
- The setback from the east property line will be approximately 18 feet.
- The setback from the north property line will be approximately 28 feet.
- The setback from the driveway north of the Site will be approximately 35 feet.
- The setback from the west property line will be approximately 102 feet.
- The setback from the south property line will be approximately 144 feet.
- The setback from Fox Ridge Drive will be approximately 90 feet.
- The setback from the Rockledge Court Right-of-Way will be as shown on the submitted Site Plans.

Commissioner Dascenzo wondered if, given the elevation there, a 75' tower would work in this case. Planner Durkee didn't know what impact a shorter tower would have on communications.

Planner Durkee showed a sample of the engineering documentation and maps. He showed a map of the difference in signal with and without the tower.

Planner Durkee reviewed the ten SUP criteria. He noted that the setbacks are not compatible, which is evident by the requested waivers. However, while the setbacks are out of character, the cell tower is a known element in the neighborhood, and there have been no complaints. It has been a long-present non-conformity. Planner Durkee shared that they have shown an ability to build the compound to current standards, and they have a construction plan. He mentioned that the applicant will be required to provide a list of chemicals on the site and how they would contain those. Planner Durkee said that he spoke to the traffic team and there was an easement across the property. This tower has been serviced without problem. He noted that it is a small public road, but it does not generate a lot of traffic. The tower does not require water and sewer. There is a fire hydrant. Planner Durkee said the application demonstrates the ability to meet all the rules and requirements of the ordinance. This is supported by the waiver requests and the ZBA variance.

Commissioner Pittelko asked where cell towers are generally allowed in the City. Planner Durkee said they are allowed in commercial, industrial, and institutional campus sites. There are existing towers in residential areas.

Ms. Katie Harms, Diamond Infrastructure, shared that the cell tower is 53 years old. She said it doesn't have the foundation infrastructure needed to upgrade the equipment. Ms. Harms clarified that the AT&T equipment currently on the tower cannot be updated. She said the tower does not meet engineering standards. It doesn't meet the goal of the City to promote colocation of carriers. They would like to replace the existing cell tower with a monopole which is a single structure with antennas on the top. It would be the same height as the existing tower, but the monopole would allow additional carriers.

Ms. Harms said that they need power to the site. They will be using the exact same access drive and equipment room. She said they would need one service truck per month to get there and do any upgrades. Ms. Harms showed side by side elevation pictures. She shared a survey, setbacks, and a drawing of the fall zone. Ms. Harms clarified that the towers are built to crumble in on themselves to allow for a tight fall zone. She showed a letter from AT&T supporting the endeavor, a sealed engineer's letter discussing the fall zone, and a couple of photos showing location. Ms. Harms showed frequency maps and coverage maps. She confirmed that anywhere you move a tower or if you reduce the height of a tower, it will affect coverage.

Ms. Harms mentioned that to build a tower anywhere else, they would need a willing candidate. If they move out of this space all together, there would be a dead zone. She touched on the demand for wireless in the City of Kalamazoo and how important it is for emergency calls, medical devices, weather and school alerts.

Commissioner Curtiss asked if engineers had looked into the feasibility and infrastructure required in taking down the old tower and putting up a new one. Mr. Harms said they would go into detail about that on the site plan. They have to take the old tower down in pieces and the new tower will go up in sections.

Commissioner Swan asked if the Northside of Kalamazoo would have cell coverage without this tower. Planner Durkee said the tower impacts Northside, Douglas, Westwood, and the township.

Commissioner Kostrzewa asked who owned the land. Ms. Harms said it is a private landowner who is in support of their request. Planner Durkee agreed that they have the landowner's approval.

Commissioner Pittelko wondered if there was neighbor feedback. Ms. Harms and Planner Durkee agreed that they sent out notices and didn't receive any responses.

Commissioner Dascenzo noted the coverage map and clarified that with Ms. Harms.

Commissioner Curtiss asked what the Planning Commissioners' role was in evaluating and voting. Planner Durkee stated that they needed to evaluate whether the request met the 10 criteria for a SUP. He told them to use the City Planner Waiver in support of their decision. Planner Durkee reminded them that a SUP runs with the land regardless of ownership.

Commissioner Audette-Bauman said there was a recommendation for the condition of site plan approval on the SUP approval. She asked if the project goes through site plan review and requires approval even

without the condition. Planner Durkee agreed that by ordinance the cell tower has to come through the site plan process and that the condition was overkill.

Commissioner Pittelko opened the public hearing. He asked and Planner Durkee clarified that the phone system was not working. There were no in-person comments. Commissioner Pittelko closed the public hearing.

Commissioner Curtiss, seconded by Commissioner Swan, moved to approve the Special Use Permit to construct a 150-foot tall monopole style wireless communications tower to replace the existing lattice tower at 1516 Rock Ledge Ct.

Commissioner Curtiss thought it was well demonstrated that it is not an ideal location for a tower, but it is a necessary location.

Commissioner Pittelko agreed, saying that conditions for a waiver seemed tailor made for this situation. He noted that neighbors didn't seem to be concerned.

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

F. DISCUSSION/ACTION ITEMS

None.

G. REPORTS:

1. City Planner's Report

Planner Durkee announced that he had no new applications for the August meeting at this time. He announced that he had received a resignation from Commissioner Ian Smith, and this would be his last meeting. Planner Durkee said he will work with Communications staff to post a request for applications for a new Planning Commissioner. He thanked Commissioner Smith for his time and work.

2. Site Plan List

No questions.

H. PUBLIC COMMENTS:

Commissioner Pittelko called for public comments. No one came forward.

I. CITY COMMISSION LIAISON COMMENTS

Commissioner Praedel said the City Commission approved the rezoning for the Bogan project on Vine and Burdick. He encouraged everyone to watch the most recent COW meeting where Rebekah Kik presented the proposed design for the Arcadia festival site. Commissioner Praedel said a presentation was also given regarding the 322 Stockbridge site. They are targeting to create 170 units of mixed type housing on that property using pre-approved plans. He said the City Commission selected the City Manager search firm. The company selected will do a nationwide search. He is working on that subcommittee and would welcome any input on the process. Commissioner Praedel also spoke to them about the City Commission election.

J. MISCELLANEOUS COMMENTS BY PLANNING COMMISSIONERS

Commissioner Smith said he was moving to Minneapolis. It was a pleasure to serve alongside them, and he learned a ton. He thought it was inspiring to work with them. Commissioner Pittelko thanked him for his service.

K. ADJOURNMENT

Commissioner Pittelko adjourned the meeting at 8:17 pm.

Respectfully submitted,



Christina Anderson,
City Planner
Community Planning & Economic Development