

City of Kalamazoo  
PLANNING COMMISSION  
Meeting Minutes  
April 8, 2026  
*FINAL*

Members Present: Michelle Audette-Bauman; Thomas Kostrzewa; Zack Wilson; Drew Duncan; Roland Bissonnette; Diego Sandoval; Mitchell Curtiss; Sakhi Vyas

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 Curtiss called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

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

Commissioner Curtiss congratulated and welcomed the new Planning Commissioners.

**B. ADOPTION OF FORMAL AGENDA**

A motion was not taken.

**C. APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

**Commissioner Kostrzewa, seconded by Commissioner Bissonnette, moved approval of the March 25, 2026 minutes as presented. With a voice vote, the motion carried unanimously.**

**D. COMMUNICATIONS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS**

1. Election of Officers: Chair, Vice Chair, Secretary

Planner Durkee reviewed the role of each office.

Chair

**Commissioner Kostrzewa, seconded by Commissioner Wilson, nominated Commissioner Curtiss for Chair.**

There was discussion about voting for an entire panel of officers or voting for them one at a time. It was decided to vote for each office individually.

**A voice vote was taken, and the nomination passed unanimously.**

Vice Chair

**Commissioner Bissonnette nominated himself for Vice Chair; seconded by Commissioner Audette-Bauman.**

**A voice vote was taken and the nomination passed unanimously.**

Secretary

**Commissioner Bissonnette, seconded by Commissioner Vyas, nominated Commissioner Audette-Bauman for Secretary.**

**A voice vote was taken, and the nomination passed unanimously.**

Planner Durkee announced that he and Planner Anderson were attending the National Planning Conference in Detroit.

### **E. PUBLIC HEARINGS**

1. A Special Use Permit request to operate transitional residences at the dwellings in the duplex at 915 Washington Avenue.

Planner Durkee shared that the applicant was Ms. Gwendolyn Hooker, HOPE Thru Navigation. He reported that 915 Washington has a valid rental certificate. The request is for each unit in the duplex to be used as a transitional residence. HOPE Thru Navigation hopes to get houseless individuals into housing quickly in the coldest weather. They want to have homelike dwelling units for people in need. Planner Durkee stated that this use closely aligns with the definition of a transitional residence in the zoning code.

Planner Durkee showed pictures and zoning/land use maps of the area.

Planner Durkee read the decision criteria. He noted the following items.

1. The proposed location has a mix of uses and varied residential housing types.
2. There are no use standards for a transitional residence.
3. The property has established landscaping, fencing, and improvements which minimizes adverse effects on the surrounding properties.
4. This property will have no environmental impacts outside of being a residential home.
5. With sidewalks, on-street parking, and a speed hump, the road will have adequate capacity to handle the transitional housing use.
6. There is a driveway, a sidewalk network, and parking spot which ensures safe ingress and egress for traffic and pedestrians.
7. There is adequate water, wastewater, solid waste, park, police, fire/EMS facilities to serve this special use.
8. Fire, Police, and EMS services will have adequate access to the property for emergencies.
9. There are no development standards for this use.
10. This use complies with all standards imposed by all other practical provisions of this Ordinance.

Planner Durkee stated that staff recommend approval of the Special Use Permit (SUP) at 915 Washington Avenue.

Ms. Gwendolyn Hooker shared that the Kalamazoo County Commission requested for them to establish shelters for families in inclement weather. She requested this permit in January, which was one of the roughest winters recently. Ms. Hooker indicated she has a staff to operate the residences daily. She gave an example of a success story from the home and read the resident's statement. The resident and her two children were able to move to the home, find a job, and look for long-term housing. The resident was thankful that the program provided hygiene products, meals, help with laundry, and help with rides to appointments. Ms. Hooker said the resident was able to get a housing choice voucher, obtain a job at Ministry with Community, and transition to temporary housing. This resident was a motivated single Mom checking all the boxes to get to her next stage.

Commissioner Kostrzewa asked what short-term means in this context and if there was an enforceable time limit. Planner Durkee clarified that short-term housing is 30 days or less. He said that transitional housing anticipates people in need of interim housing arrangements and would allow any amount of time for the transition. Ms. Hooker said they operate a re-entry transitional home. People currently there can stay for up to 12 months then additional time is decided on an individual basis. The whole goal is to transition families into permanent housing. She emphasized that it was important to differentiate that this is not a shelter. Commissioner Kostrzewa and Ms. Hooker agreed that it was plausible that families could stay in the houses for years.

Commissioner Curtiss asked if there were any responses from neighbors or local community members. Planner Durkee said he received one call from a nearby property who was opposed to both Washington Avenue SUP requests. He reported that outreach was not required, but the applicant door knocked and reached out to the Neighborhood Association.

Commissioner Wilson asked if the home was to be used throughout the year or just in the winter. Ms. Hooker explained about their original plans for the units and how that changed. She said the homes will be used year-round, but they originally started transitional residences in winter.

Commissioner Curtiss opened the public hearing.

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

**Commissioner Bissonnette, seconded by Commissioner Wilson, moved to approve a Special Use Permit request to operate transitional residences at the dwellings in the duplex at 915 Washington Avenue.**

Commissioner Bissonnette thought the project was important and valuable. He thanked the applicant and stated his approval of the SUP.

Commissioner Duncan encouraged neighbors of the property to find a way to support Ms. Hooker's work.

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

2. A Special Use Permit request to operate a transitional residence in the dwelling at 921 Washington Avenue.

Commissioner Curtiss suggested Planner Durkee highlight any differences between the request at 915 Washington Avenue and this request at 921 Washington Avenue.

Planner Durkee stated that this residence is a single-family dwelling next door to 915 Washington Avenue. He reviewed zoning maps, land use, and pictures of the property. Planner Durkee said this property also has a valid rental certification.

Planner Durkee stated that the decision criteria findings were very similar to 915 Washington. He noted the following things.

- The house is located centrally on the lot and there is no garage on this property.
- There are two curb cuts.
- There is plenty of road capacity along Race and Washington with sidewalks, and curb and gutter on those streets.
- There are two driveway access points with a paved and gravel driveway.
- There are on-street parking spaces
- Reed Street Park is nearby.
- There is a new fire hydrant in front of the house.

Planner Durkee reported that staff recommend approval for the special use of the dwelling at 921 Washington Avenue.

Ms. Gwendolyn Hooker shared the experience of a family who came to them in the winter. A man, an autistic child, and a woman who was 8.5 months pregnant with multiple complications. They had been living in a vehicle. Ms. Hooker said they were able to help the woman get to multiple appointments, give her a baby shower, and connect them with a modular home project. Ultimately, the baby was born healthy, in a dignified fashion and the mother had a place to recover. Ms. Hooker read an email from the father explaining the positive impact that the program had on their family.

Commissioner Curtiss asked if there was any additional neighbor feedback on the request. Planner Durkee confirmed that there was just the one person objecting to this request.

Commissioner Curtiss opened the public hearing

Ms. Hooker informed Commissioners that prior to the SUP request, they did knock on doors in a five-block radius of the home. They also held an open house so the neighbors could walk through and see the houses. She said one person called and had an issue, but after so many weeks, they called back and said they were

in favor of the project. Ms. Hooker said she knows they won't be able to satisfy everyone, but she learned to do engagement early in the process.

Ms. Hooker provided copies of the residents' email statements to the Planning Commissioners.

**Commissioner Bissonnette, seconded by Commissioner Audette-Bauman, moved to approve a Special Use Permit request to operate a transitional residence in the dwelling at 921 Washington Avenue.**

Commissioner Bissonnette thanked them for doing this work and outreach.

Commissioner Vyas thanked Ms. Hooker for putting the program together and providing dignity to the residents.

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

3. A Special Use Permit request to develop a gas station with a convenience store at 3810 E Cork Street.

Planner Durkee shared that this parcel is in the CC zone district. He showed photos of the site and reviewed the zoning and land use maps. Planner Durkee said that the existing approaches will remain, and the access on the west is a private road. He reported that the project received a variance to have 49 parking spaces on the site. Even with the variance, this will result in a decrease in existing impervious coverage on the site. Planner Durkee stated that the building has been vacant.

Planner Durkee read the Special Use Permit (SUP) criteria:

1. This site is adjacent to a large capacity freeway interchange. The parcel and all adjacent parcels are auto-service businesses in use and scale. The applicant provided a traffic study. The proposal reflects the modernization and reinvestment of existing auto-oriented uses in this interchange.
2. This request complies with use standards of the zoning Ordinance. Gas stations require a SUP; they are not permitted in LW-2; there is a half-mile separation requirement between gas stations that sell packaged liquor.
3. The landscaping plan can provide necessary screening for road frontage, aesthetic, and coverage. There are no property screening requirements. The dumpster has adequate screening, and the layout is orderly with adequate lanes.
4. Environmental impacts will be verified through the site plan review process and the building permit process. The applicant has provided a sustainability report.
5. This use will utilize existing private easements. There are no proposed changes to the approaches to East Cork Street. There is a traffic impact analysis. The Site Plan Review Committee can coordinate with MDOT to ensure the agency's alignment is in place before construction starts.

6. Staff are supportive of the use of the easement roadway on the west side of property instead of direct access to Cork Street or Sprinkle Road.
7. There is adequate water, wastewater, and Public Safety staff for this use.
8. There is adequate access for emergency personnel.
9. The design standards for this use comply with development standards.
10. This use complies with all standards imposed by this ordinance. Quik Trip has provided a sustainability report to highlight its efforts in support of the applicant.

Planner Durkee commented about the possibility of changing the orientation of the building. He said that doesn't throw off the development standards and can be determined by the Site Plan Review Committee.

The applicant, Gabriel Longoria, gave some background and a few facts about Quik Trip. He shared some of their employee programs and benefits. Mr. Longoria mentioned the average amount of taxes locations generate, and how much of their profits they contribute to the local community. He talked about customer convenience, store and parking lot security, and food offerings.

Mr. Longoria said they were bringing the impervious coverage of the site into compliance - going from 219 to 49 parking spaces. During his presentation, he showed site plans, renderings, and a landscaping plan. Mr. Longoria said the previous use had a signed easement with Arby's and Baymont Inn. He believed they had already signed off on the pole sign.

Commissioner Kostrzewa commented they were in competition for the cleanest and most well-maintained bathrooms. He thought that was impressive.

Commissioner Wilson asked if there was only an entrance on Cork Street. The applicant stated there would be two full access on the private easement, not on Cork Street or Sprinkle Road. It will result in safer ingress and egress on the site.

Commissioner Duncan asked why they decided not to have truck or trailer parking on the site. Mr. Longoria said the site is not large enough to have that without compromising the design standards of Quik Trip and the City of Kalamazoo.

Commissioner Curtiss asked if staff received any public feedback on this request. Planner Durkee stated that he didn't receive any public feedback on this case.

Commissioner Curtiss spoke about the access agreements and wondered if it was set or if it would need to be reworked in the future. Planner Durkee stated it was a very solid easement tied to the properties adjacent to it. He said it was very well locked in with excellent title.

Commissioner Vyas stated that their responsibility was to decide whether the gas station was an appropriate use of this land. She asked staff for thoughts about the density or redundancy of gas stations in this area. Planner Durkee agreed that there are a series of gas stations in the area. There is not a separation in the zoning ordinance regarding gas stations. The only separation is if the gas station sells beer/liquor. Planner Durkee thought it was reasonable to expect gas stations in this auto-oriented corridor.

Mr. Longoria stated that they will be focusing on in-store sales as well as gas sales.

Commissioner Curtiss opened the public hearing.

Mr. Logan Herber came forward to speak in favor of the Quik Trip. He said it is more than a gas station – it is a nice place to take a break, hang out, and get some good food. Mr. Herber said his only worry was about the left turn onto Cork Street from the roundabout. Other than that, he thought it would be great for that area.

No call-in comments.

Commissioner Curtiss closed the public hearing.

**Commissioner Audette-Bauman, seconded by Commissioner Kostrzewa, moved to approve a Special Use Permit request to develop a gas station with a convenience store at 3810 E Cork Street.**

Commissioner Audette-Bauman thanked the applicant for a thorough presentation. She appreciated the information he gave about the company.

Commissioner Curtiss mentioned that it was helpful to have the traffic study in front of them.

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

#### **F. DISCUSSION/ACTION ITEMS**

None.

#### **G. REPORTS:**

1. City Planner's Report

None.

2. Site Plan List

No questions/concerns.

**H. PUBLIC COMMENTS:**

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

**I. CITY COMMISSION LIAISON COMMENTS**

Commissioner Praedel congratulated the new officers and new Planning Commissioners. He stated he would like to get pictures of the new Commissioners. Commissioner Praedel said he will continue to report back on City Commission actions related to Planning Commission recommendations. He said the Design It! Meetings were fantastic. Commissioner Praedel encouraged people to visit the website and take the survey.

**J. MISCELLANEOUS COMMENTS BY PLANNING COMMISSIONERS**

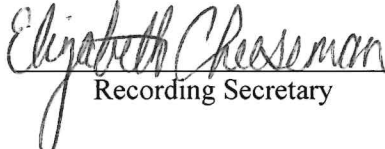
Commissioner Bissonnette said he had a local business owner ask him about the IK meetings. He knew there were IK Downtown meetings at the end of month, but he couldn't find the location online. Planner Durkee said he would get back with him with information. Commissioner Bissonnette congratulated and welcomed the new Planning Commissioners. He looked forward to serving with them.

Commissioner Wilson congratulated the new officers and welcomed the new Planning Commissioners.

**K. ADJOURNMENT**

Commissioner Curtiss adjourned the meeting at 8:25 pm.

 5/7/26  
Board Secretary Date

 5/7/26  
Recording Secretary Date