

City of Kalamazoo
PLANNING COMMISSION
Meeting Minutes
May 7, 2026
FINAL

Members Present: Wendell Tolber; Thomas Kostrzewa; Roland Bissonnette; Diego Sandoval; Mitchell Curtiss

Members Excused: Michelle Audette-Bauman; Zack Wilson; Drew Duncan; Sakhi Vyas

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.

B. ADOPTION OF FORMAL AGENDA

Planner Durkee announced there was a minor update to the agenda. The site plan list was added after it was initially published.

Commissioner Bissonnette, seconded by Commissioner Kostrzewa, moved approval of the May 7, 2026 agenda as amended. With a voice vote, the motion carried unanimously.

C. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Commissioner Tolber, seconded by Commissioner Sandoval, moved approval of the April 8, 2026 minutes as presented. With a voice vote, the motion carried unanimously.

D. COMMUNICATIONS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

Planner Durkee shared that they are winding down on Imagine Kalamazoo 2035 (IK2035) events. He thanked Planning Commissioners for attending those events with the community.

E. PUBLIC HEARINGS

1. P.C. # 2026.04 — Special Use Permit request to redevelop the property with a new gas station and convenience store at 4710 Stadium Drive.

During the staff presentation, Planner Durkee showed photos, and zoning/aerial maps of the existing and/or proposed gas station and of the area. He explained that there is one approach off Stadium Drive and one approach off Drake Road. Those approaches will not be changed. Planner Durkee stated that those are Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT) and county right of ways. He said that part of the goal of redevelopment is to centralize vehicle movement on the site. The existing car wash will be removed and

not replaced. Planner Durkee shared that the existing use has a license to sell beer and wine but not liquor. That will continue with the new gas station. He mentioned that the building would be set back further on the site, but the canopy will remain in the same location.

Planner Durkee explained that it wasn't until approximately 10 years ago that a gas station required a Special Use Permit (SUP). Looking at the records, there is no SUP on file for this property. He went on to review how the request meets the SUP criteria. Some of the things Planner Durkee noted are as follows.

- The corner has been a gas station for decades and is along the frontage of a large shopping center. Both the gas station and shopping center are intensive use and appropriate for the area.
- The zone permits the use. The gas station complies with the alcohol separation requirement. There is no interest in obtaining an additional liquor license.
- The new use maintains the same open area along the canopy and faces toward the intersection. An existing hill and elevation screen the use from the north. There are no natural features on the site to preserve. The site plan review committee will do a final review of the plans.
- There is adequate road capacity to serve the use.
- Moving the building back opens maneuvering areas for traffic and customers and provides customer parking and access in a better arrangement than the existing site. There will be minimal impervious coverage increase.
- There are police, fire, and EMS facilities nearby. The proposed layout provides improved access for them.
- The use complies with standards for gas stations in the zoning ordinance.

Mr. Steve Witte, design engineer, came forward to speak to the request. He introduced property owner, Mr. Jason Berris.

Mr. Witte summarized that it will be a redevelopment of the site, and access points will remain the same. The location of the fuel canopy and the location and number of fuel islands will also remain the same. He said the building will be larger and pushed back on the site which will allow better traffic flow around the pumps. The car wash will be removed and not replaced.

Commissioner Kostrzewa asked about the traffic count at that intersection. Neither Planner Durkee nor Mr. Witte had that information.

Commissioner Sandoval asked if there would be access to the gas station from the parking lot behind. Mr. Witte said there was a large grade drop, so there would not be access from the parking lot behind. They will continue to use the existing driveways on Drake Road and Stadium Drive.

Commissioner Tolber asked if there was any community feedback on the request. Mr. Berris and Planner Durkee both said there was no feedback.

Commissioner Kostrzewa asked for an explanation about why it was considered a special use since it is a gas station going to a gas station. He also wondered if this came up again in 10 years if they would need

another SUP. Planner Durkee spoke about the intensive commercial zone district and that a gas station has a lot of traffic coming and going, illumination, and possible accessory uses. He shared that a SUP runs with the land. It would not have to come back to the Planning Commission unless there are changes exceeding the ordinance. Planner Durkee said that a SUP was not a requirement in CC zone district until approximately 10 years ago.

Commissioner Tolber asked how long construction would take and if traffic would be impeded. Mr. Berris said that a raze and rebuild will take about eight months. He said they will shut the whole place down, take it all out of service, and bring it back up when ready. Mr. Berris said that traffic should not be impeded during construction except for trucks coming in and out. They will try to keep everything as open and accessible as possible.

Commissioner Bissonnette asked for a time estimate from demolition to opening. Mr. Berris said that would depend on approvals, fine tuning the design, and permits. He estimated a couple of months for demolition and removing tanks. Putting the building up should take about six months. Mr. Berris also stated that winter conditions could be a factor. If, for some reason, they couldn't start by November then the project would be pushed back to spring.

Commissioner Curtiss opened the public hearing. He gave the phone number for call-in comments.

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

Commissioner Curtiss closed the public hearing.

Commissioner Tolber, seconded by Commissioner Bissonnette, moved to approve a Special Use Permit to redevelop the property with a new gas station and convenience store at 4710 Stadium Drive.

Commissioner Tolber said he had no major concerns about the project. He liked the fact that they were getting rid of the car wash.

Commissioner Bissonnette noted that the car wash was being replaced by a tree. He thought most people would be happy with that swap.

Commissioner Curtiss agreed he had no issues with the project.

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

F. DISCUSSION/ACTION ITEMS

None.

G. REPORTS:

1. City Planner's Report

Planner Durkee mentioned again the winding down of IK2035 engagement events. Commissioner Kostrzewa applauded the outreach and number of the IK events. He felt there was a tremendous effort to get people there. Commissioner Bissonnette agreed.

2. Planning Commission Database Project.

Planner Durkee stated that intern, Charlie Kovacs, helped him develop the Planning Commission database. Although he found a few records from as far back as 1918, there wasn't anything substantive before 1954. Planner Durkee summarized the history of the Planning Commission in the City of Kalamazoo.

Mr. Charlie Kovacs stated that their goal was to create one comprehensive spot for all historical Planning Commission records. He entered over 1100 individual requests that the Planning Commission had taken from 1954 to present. The goal was to have this information searchable, filterable, and accessible to make looking for historical records easier. Mr. Kovacs reviewed the information fields in the database and explained the filters and search functions. He also included a link to Planning Commission minutes. Mr. Kovacs showed that database information can be generated as charts to help them get a better understanding of requests and why there are more/less requests for certain years.

Planner Durkee said the database is a living document and he can add new information immediately. He shared that he and other staff are already using it. Planner Durkee indicated that he would like to do the same sort of database with site plan files and possibly other boards. He said that they used a program called Microsoft Lists to build the database. Planner Durkee ended his presentation with a map showing how the City has grown since 1954.

Commissioner Kostrzewa thought the database was a great idea. He asked who the curator of the database would be. Planner Durkee answered that it would be the Assistant City Planner. He said that they send records to archives in the Clerk's office, but the Planning Department has ownership for the authentication of the data. Commissioner Kostrzewa asked if the database was live and if citizens at home would be able to use it. Planner Durkee said it is not live at this time. He didn't want to speak for the City of Kalamazoo if it would be available online.

Attorney Bear shared that while the database would be public record, there may not be direct access online. For any public record, a Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) can be used. Planner Durkee added that the database could cut down staff time for FOIA requests. Commissioner Kostrzewa clarified that the owner of the database is the City of Kalamazoo, not the people of Kalamazoo. Attorney Bear responded that they are public records.

3. Site Plan List

No questions/concerns.

H. PUBLIC COMMENTS:

Commissioner Curtiss shared the number for call-in comments.

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

I. CITY COMMISSION LIAISON COMMENTS

Commissioner Praedel said City Commission would have meetings for the next two Mondays because of the election schedule. He shared that the Farmer's Market opened. Commissioner Praedel said he went to three events related to housing in the past few weeks. He went to the Kalrecovery housing project groundbreaking and Governor Whitmer attended. They celebrated the opening of The Landing Place, and Kalamazoo Housing Advocates had a new office grand opening. Commissioner Praedel thanked Commissioner Slaby for joining them for that night's meeting.

J. MISCELLANEOUS COMMENTS BY PLANNING COMMISSIONERS

Commissioner Bissonnette thanked Planner Durkee and Mr. Kovacs for the database presentation. He thought it was fun seeing some of Kalamazoo's history. He congratulated Mr. Kovacs on his graduation. Commissioner Bissonnette was excited to see what more can be done with the database.

Commissioner Curtiss recommended the Farmer's Market. Commissioner Bissonnette gave a shout out for the Don Cooney Cultivation Center.

K. ADJOURNMENT

Commissioner Curtiss adjourned the meeting at 7:58 pm.



Board Secretary 6/4/26
Date



Recording Secretary 6/4/26
Date