

City of Kalamazoo  
PLANNING COMMISSION  
Minutes  
December 5, 2019  
*FINAL*

Second Floor, City Hall  
Commission Chambers  
241 W. South Street, Kalamazoo, MI 49007

Members Present: Gregory Milliken, Chair; Emily Greenman Wright, Vice Chair; Alfonso Espinosa; Sakhi Vyas; Shardae Chambers; Derek Wissner; Coreen Ellis; James Pitts

Members Excused:

City Staff: Christina Anderson, City Planner; Clyde Robinson, City Attorney; Pete Eldridge, Assistant City Planner; Beth Cheeseman, Code Administration Clerk/Cashier

**A. CALL TO ORDER**

Commissioner Milliken called the meeting to order at 7:01 p.m.

**B. ROLL CALL**

Planner Anderson proceeded with roll call and determined that the aforementioned members were present.

Commissioners Espinosa and Pitts arrived after roll call.

**C. ADOPTION OF FORMAL AGENDA**

**Commissioner Greenman Wright, supported by Commissioner Vyas, moved approval of the revised December 5, 2019 Planning Commission agenda as presented. With a voice vote, the motion carried unanimously.**

**D. APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

**Commissioner Wissner, supported by Commissioner Ellis, moved approval of the November 7, 2019 Planning Commission minutes. With a voice vote, the motion carried unanimously.**

**E. COMMUNICATIONS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS**

None

**F. NEW BUSINESS**

**P.C. #2019.10: 2020 Capital Improvement Program. Request from Community Planning & Economic Development Department to review 2020 C.I.P. [Recommendation: recommend to the City Commission to approve the C.I.P.]**

Mr. Jeff Chamberlain, Assistant City Manager, came forward to present the draft of the Capital Improvement Program (CIP) per state law requirement. He said the full draft of the City budget is on the website with the CIP as one chapter of it. Mr. Chamberlain said it is a \$53 million capital program which will outline work specifically for roads, water and sewer. He highlighted some of the main projects included in the CIP. It is replacing network systems that are aging out. Parks and Recreation will be reconstructing the Farmers Market and an extension of the Kalamazoo Valley River Trail. They are also building a new splash pad on the Northside and making improvements to Verburg Park. Mr. Chamberlain stated they are working with the community on the removal of Milham Park dam. He shared that as they've been working on Portage Creek, they've been removing some of the dams as they go through. He said they plan to have more public discussions as they go forward. Other projects include: ongoing repairs to Kik pool; groundbreaking for Station #2 on Bryant street; radio replacements. Mr. Chamberlain reported they plan to reactivate Station #1, on Cedar street, as a Public Safety station. He spoke of adding segments to the Kalamazoo River Valley trail. Mr. Chamberlain said the trail will continue north from Upjohn park through Bronson Hospital's parking lot up to Portage Street. In addition, it will go south of Upjohn Park through the Farmer's Market and head down Stockbridge and hopefully to Reed and Alcott. Major street, water and sewer projects will be on Oakland Drive between Parkview and Howard. Another huge project will be on Cork Street between Portage and Sprinkle. There will also be projects on scattered smaller streets. They plan to upgrade processes and equipment at the Wastewater Treatment Plant. A new phosphate handler to make sure chemicals and lead doesn't leach in from the pipes is in the plan. They are planning to build another water tank in Texas Township as well as improving the booster station on east side of city to improve water pressure. Lead line replacements will continue. Mr. Chamberlain said they are phasing in smart meters, so people don't physically have to go to the properties.

Commissioners Espinosa and Wissner asked where funding comes from for repairs reported, such as potholes and other road problems. They didn't see repairs like that noted in the CIP. Mr. Chamberlain stated there is an ongoing operations and repair budget for spot patching and maintenance. He reported that staff repair potholes throughout the year as they come across them. Mr. Chamberlain said they drive the streets in the City every couple of years to analyze their condition and give them a rating. They prioritize the roads based on condition and coordinate it with water and sewer work being done.

Commissioner Espinosa asked if it is effective for people to call and report problems with the roads. Mr. Chamberlain said if people call in to report, staff will try to fix the problems. They try to stretch the life span of the roads by maintaining them. Mr. Chamberlain also confirmed the CIP is public and a part of the City's overall draft budget.

Commissioner Ellis asked about the water tank that is proposed and what it means to residents in the area. Mr. Chamberlain explained that the water pipes are all interconnected. They can pump water here and send it to Oshtemo Township and vice versa. As a region grows, they need more water sources and tanks. This new tank will help with water pressure and provide water storage in case there is a fire.

Commissioner Pitts asked how the budget is set up and who decides what projects will be funded in neighborhoods. Mr. Chamberlain said the vast majority of the CIP is roads, water and sewer. He said that

projects are funded based on engineering studies, need, demand, conditions of roads, and on how much funding is available. They do go through a process with departments to look at their plans, the Master Plan and Neighborhood Plans. Projects are then put into the plan and get budgeted.

Commissioner Milliken asked about the southern boundary for the Portage Creek Trail Phase III project. Mr. Chamberlain said it will be coming to Stockbridge from the Farmers market to Reed Street. If they get to Reed, then there is a gravel path that goes through what used to be the Bryant Papermill. He said they are working with engineers to get a cost estimate to see if they can put asphalt there to get it connected, ideally, all the way to Alcott. Commissioner Milliken expressed hope for it to be extended all the way to Kilgore. Mr. Chamberlain said they met with the county this week, but to get from Alcott to Burdick is challenging. He said they have the Allied landfill site, private development properties, and the Blanche Hull Nature Preserve with wetlands and a creek. Mr. Chamberlain said they are trying to put together a realistic schedule to get to Kilgore.

Commissioner Greenman Wright said she was excited to see so many things the community identified through Imagine Kalamazoo being put into effect. She was especially excited about Upjohn park, the Kik pool, and the splash pad.

**Commissioner Ellis, supported by Commissioner Chambers, moved to recommend to the City Commission to approve P.C. #2019.10: 2020 Capital Improvement Program.**

**Roll call vote was taken and the motion passed unanimously.**

## **G. PUBLIC HEARINGS**

**P.C. #2019.09: 5374 Andrus Court. The Kalamazoo Youth for Christ is requesting a special use permit to allow a community service center at this location. [Recommendation: Approve the special use permit request for the community service center]**

Planner Eldridge came forward to give the staff report. Kalamazoo Youth for Christ has requested a special use permit for a community service center in Colonial Acres mobile home community. He pointed out the community is bordered by the Kalamazoo Airport to the west, with other segments bordered by the City of Portage. The portion of the park in Kalamazoo is 38 acres and the portion of the park in Portage is 65 acres. The park is zoned R-3, high density residential. It was given a commercial designation on existing land use because of the way the pad sites are leased. Planner Eldridge reviewed pictures and maps of the site. A double-wide mobile home will serve as the community center. There are no other mobile homes on Andrus Court. There is an open field area south of the community center location for outdoor recreation. Planner Eldridge stated that Youth for Christ has worked with teens in park for 18 months now. The building will have wheelchair ramps and an ADA compliant bathroom, an outdoor patio area and a recreational space south of the site. The property owner of Colonial Acres wrote an email of support. Planner Eldridge spoke with the onsite manager who is excited about what is taking place. There were no responses from the mailings sent out. He shared that the criteria for a special use permit talks about how it complies with the standards of the zoning ordinance. Planner Eldridge pointed out that it will be the same

kind of structure as others in the park, so it is just the use of the structure that needs a special use permit. The park does not plan to put any other mobile homes on Andrus court, so that will create a natural separation. Planner Eldridge reviewed the rationale for approving the special use permit. Community Service Centers are an allowed special use; use will comply with zoning requirements; Youth for Christ selected the park because of its challenges, and they've already been working in the park for 18 months; facility will be staffed and monitored by Youth for Christ.

Commissioner Greenman Wright asked if Andrus Court is a private road or City owned. Planner Eldridge responded that it is a private road, and they've done a lot of work to improve those roads. Commissioner Greenman Wright inquired if mobile home communities fall into a different category as far as special use requests. Planner Eldridge said they would need to go through the same process. It is the use, not the type of building it is going in. He had pointed out the type of building in this case because it will blend with the neighborhood.

Commissioner Espinosa asked about the difference for criteria for a community center rather than a religious assembly place. He asked if they will they congregate and open the Bible there or just do community engagement. Planner Eldridge said it is labeled a community service center because of the types of services they are making available to those in the community. They won't be offering Sunday services.

Mr. Scott McCloughan, Executive Director at Kalamazoo Youth for Christ, came forward in support of the application. He said they have been in the area since 1944. They reach out to 11-19 year olds, and are involved in juvenile homes, detention centers, local schools, camps, mentoring, and tutoring. About six years ago, four churches recognized a need in the Colonial Acres neighborhood. The churches started helping with neighborhood beautification, clean up days, building ramps, and holding programs for younger kids and adults. The churches came to Youth for Christ a couple of years ago and asked if they would partner with them to help reach teens in this community. Mr. McCloughan said funds were raised, and they brought on a staff member to help fill this need. The problem was, there was no place to meet. One resident in the park offered her living room for teens and staff to congregate. This was intended to be a short-term solution. The churches bought a trailer that was already in the park as a long-term solution. This trailer needs a lot of TLC and will need to be moved to the proposed location. Mr. McCloughan said their organization wants to work with young people and help them grow in education, civic literacy, and understanding physical and safety needs. He said they also want them to grow relationally, and there is a spiritual component. Every program they offer is optional. Mr. McCloughan said they will offer tutoring, first aid, babysitting classes, movie nights, game nights, mentoring and Bible study, and it's all optional.

The applicant passed out an artist's rendering of the current site and the trailer they have purchased. He said people are stepping up to reroof, reside, build wheelchair ramps, and redo the inside. They want to create a basketball court on the property. Consumers Concrete has offered to donate the concrete. Lysters has offered to help with roofing and residing.

Commissioner Chambers asked if all teens are welcome regardless of sexual orientation or religion. She also asked if there is a cost to the parents. Mr. McCloughan said yes, all the teens are welcome. He said they want to love all the kids right where they are, and all their programs are free of charge.

Commissioner Wissner asked the applicant to touch on specific programs, hours of operation, and staffing. Mr. McCloughan said they are still working out some of the programing, pending a place to meet. It will be after school hours - which will change during summer. They will offer tutoring, City Life Club, and have opportunities for game nights. They want it to be a safe place for kids to belong.

Commissioner Ellis asked about the ages of the children and how they sign up. Mr. McCloughan said the ages are 11-19 years old. They try to maintain those ages and can redirect children outside of the age range to other programs. There is a parent-approval page that needs to be filled out to join.

Commissioner Greenman Wright asked if the building would be available for other things or only for Youth for Christ. Mr. McCloughan said it would primarily be for Youth for Christ. If there was the right organization and an understanding could be worked out, then they may possibly allow another organization to use the building. He said it will not be open for residents of the park because of liability issues.

**Commissioner Milliken opened the public hearing.**

Ms. Remi Harrington, co-founder of Zoo City Farm and Food Network, came forward. She was directed to speak during Citizen Comments on Non-agenda items.

No one came forward in response to the application.

**Commissioner Milliken closed the public comment portion of the hearing.**

Commissioner Milliken asked if the project would be required to go through site plan review. He wanted to know if the motion needed to be contingent on-site plan review approval. Planners Eldridge and Anderson said it did need to go through site plan review. Planner Anderson said the motion does not need to be contingent on-site plan approval.

**Commissioner Ellis, supported by Commissioner Pitts, moved to recommend approval of P.C. #2019.09: 5374 Andrus Court. A special use permit for the Kalamazoo Youth for Christ to have a community service center at this location.**

Commissioner Ellis said it was a great idea, and she likes the neighborhood that was chosen. She could see it thriving and being a place for that age group. She asked about operational costs or if there will be fundraising. Mr. McCloughan said the there will be operational costs that Youth for Christ and the four churches will pay. There will be no expense to the park or the residents. Commissioner Ellis asked the names of the four churches. They are The Bridge, Portage Free Methodist (recently changed name to the Renovation Church), First Baptist of Portage, and St. Michael Lutheran.

Commissioner Espinosa said he thinks it is great but was still thinking about the difference between a community service center and religious assembly. He reported that the website is very religious-oriented, and he wouldn't be surprised if some sort of assembly happens which is not supposed to happen for this special use. He inquired about zoning for mobile home communities. Planner Anderson said they do have a mobile home district, but this is not zoned that way. Commissioner Espinosa re-iterated that this is great, and he would love to see it operating.

Commissioner Milliken said the zoning for this park as RM-36 is unique, and if it does become a situation where it definitely falls into religious assembly, it is allowed in RM-36. That could be addressed and changed if needed.

**Roll call vote taken and the motion passed unanimously.**

## **H. OTHER BUSINESS**

### **Interview Team Recommendation for Commission Vacancy.**

Commissioner Milliken reported the interview team met with and interviewed several candidates. They had a recommendation to put forward.

Commissioner Greenman Wright shared their recommendation, Mr. Brian Pittelko, is a strong candidate. He works at the W.E. Upjohn Institute with the Kalamazoo Promise. He has a unique skillset, with a strength of analysis.

Commissioner Milliken said the candidate had done a lot of work on Imagine Kalamazoo and the Urban Growth Initiative. He said Mr. Pittelko is familiar with City trends, history, statistics and demographics. Commissioner Milliken shared that the candidate's statement, "I have no ideological ax to grind," resonated through his comments.

Commissioner Milliken explained the process of someone being appointed to the Commission. The Interview Team recommends one or two candidates to the Planning Commission. The Planning Commission recommends candidates to the Mayor, who then submits an appointment to the City Commission. The City Commission votes and appoints the member.

Commissioner Vyas added that Mr. Pittelko was not the only candidate they interviewed for the vacancy, but he outshone the rest. He brings an enthusiasm for the City, deep knowledge and unique skills.

**Commissioner Wissner, supported by Commissioner Vyas, made a motion to recommend Brian Pittelko to Mayor Anderson to fill the vacancy on the Planning Commission. A voice vote was taken and passed unanimously.**

**I. CITIZENS' COMMENTS (Regarding non-agenda items)**

Ms. Remi Harrington, co-founder of Zoo City Farm and Food Network, came forward to speak about their agenda. She indicated they would like to secure land that is zoned appropriately for urban agriculture. They are interested in using vacant, abandoned and blighted parcels of property in the City for this purpose. They would like to establish a stakeholder voice that supports urban agriculture. Ms. Harrington said they would like to participate in industry development and the advocacy of small minority and disadvantaged business so those businesses can participate in institutional buying. They would like to get multi-board approval to change ordinances for vacant parcels because their current zoning is residential, and agriculture is a prohibited use. Ms. Harrington said they will attempt to get their application in to present a request for the January meeting of the Planning Commission. She went on to say they have gone on a listening tour to talk to neighborhood associations about what this looks like. Ms. Harrington stated there are neighborhood-specific things people want to see as it relates to the parcels they hope to use for urban agriculture. She pointed out that urban agriculture aligns with the City of Kalamazoo 2025 goals. Ms. Harrington said there are a multitude of economic, ecological and social benefits of urban agriculture and they need more urban growers to fuel the local food industry. She stated that growing their own food in neighborhoods is important and empowering and it is a right and responsibility. She shared the organizations website with the Commissioners: [www.zoocityfood.com](http://www.zoocityfood.com)

Mr. Jeff Messer also came forward. He pointed out that the Planning Commission and Zoning Board of Appeals packets were not available on the website before the meeting. He said this occurs about twice per year. He asked Planning Commissioners to urge City staff to do better.

**J. CITY COMMISSION LIAISON COMMENTS**

None

**K. CITY PLANNER'S REPORT**

Planner Anderson stated there is an orientation for new board members for boards across the City. This orientation covers Imagine Kalamazoo, Master Plan, and City vision. She said it is critical that citizen boards see themselves working toward that collectively. The orientation is open to other board members if they want the refresher. It will be held Monday evening at 6:00pm.

Commissioner Milliken asked if there is a presentation power point that could be shared. Planner Anderson said there is, and it can be shared once or twice per year as they get new board members.

Planner Anderson said they are hoping in February to present comprehensive information to the Commission about transitional residences. They will have information about what ones have been approved and their location. That information will help them know if they need separation distances or any other zoning ordinance changes.

**Discussion of Proposed Changes to the Public Participation Plan.**

Planner Anderson said they are in the process of updating the Public Participation Plan. They want to make it clear to developers or petitioners what is required for outreach. She said they let them know they need to do outreach, but the requirements and accountability are not spelled out. Planner Anderson stated

the draft will soon be on the Imagine Kalamazoo site. She said it lists outreach requirements in detail. They ask most petitioners to do the first piece of outreach: knock on doors within 300' of property, send a letter, or make phone calls. This tells what information should be shared. It also says if there should be specific engagement with a neighborhood association or contact. A second piece for some projects would be a meeting. A meeting to invite stakeholders, and any who could be impacted by a project, to ask questions. She said it is far more successful to have those discussions prior to the public hearing rather than at the public meeting. This table will say what activities will require what kind of outreach. Planner Anderson said they will reach out to the development community to have them review it. It will be presented next week to the neighborhood meeting, and she is hopeful the plan will go before the City Commission early next year. Planner Anderson said they wanted to get it to the Planning Commission after some issues presented at the last meeting. She said this will be an ordinance to be approved.

Commissioner Milliken verified this change was the change listed on the agenda. Planner Anderson said the table is the primary new addition and then streamlining the plan. She shared that Ann Arbor has a very extensive public participation requirement for projects.

Commissioner Greenman Wright thanked City staff for putting it together so quickly. She said there has been continued discussion around the issue of the special use permit on Axtell. Commissioner Greenman Wright said she was disappointed some residents left before end of the last meeting, because that public hearing really highlighted to us that it was time to make some changes.

Planner Anderson wanted to be clear that none of this negates the State mandated noticing.

#### **L. MISCELLANEOUS COMMENTS BY PLANNING COMMISSIONERS**

Commissioner Espinosa asked why the City of Kalamazoo doesn't have an app for communication, updating, and reporting.

Planner Anderson reported the City does have recycle coach that provides a decent amount of information on City programs. She was not sure you can report things on the app, but you can do that online and pick items to report such as trees, snow on sidewalks, signs, potholes. Going online is not as simple as an app for some, but City staff are responsive to online reporting. She also shared the City has a Twitter account.

Commissioner Espinosa said most people have a device. He believes that for communication purposes, something that specifically says City of Kalamazoo, will go a long way. Planner Anderson let him know she will pass his comments along to the Communication Department.

Commissioner Chambers said she spoke to one of the heads for Vine Neighborhood, and they would like an update to community engagement. The Neighborhood will have an open house in March to talk about transitional housing and other things that affect them. Commissioner Chambers said many don't understand what transitional housing is and how that will affect their neighborhood. Planner Anderson said they can reach out to the Association Director and/or have staff go to neighborhood meetings for specific and detailed conversations.

Commissioner Ellis shared she is still excited about training. She wished everyone happy holidays.

Commissioner Espinosa directed a question to Attorney Robinson about recreational marihuana laws coming into effect. He asked how the City is looking into implementing it or if they are still on hold.

Attorney Robinson came forward and shared they had a meeting last month with Millwood and answered questions. They hope to have several more meetings to gather input from residents and potential operators of businesses. He said they are also following developments at the State and trying to keep up on changes in rules. Attorney Robinson said they are collecting proposed or adopted ordinances of the communities opting in to recreational marihuana. He estimated there are approximately 1470 cities, villages and townships in Michigan and only 23 have said yes to recreational marihuana. He said most communities have opted out because they either don't want any part of it or they're waiting to see how it goes. Attorney Robinson said Kalamazoo is just getting the medical marihuana businesses operating in the community. He suggested they first evaluate the impact of those on the community and their locations.

Planner Anderson said she is working on revising all districts in the zoning code and having more time to get those in place will keep them from having to change things later.

Attorney Robinson said in addition to the six different types of licenses in the statute, the state of Michigan Regulatory Agency has adopted four more. He said very few of the 23 who have chosen to opt in have authorized the new regulatory types of uses that have been authorized. One type is an operation of a place to consume, but you can't sell there. Attorney Robinson observed that it is interesting how communities have reacted to the legalization of marihuana.

Commissioner Milliken said he is excited by the investment the City is making in the infrastructure. He wished everyone a happy holiday.

#### **M. ADJOURNMENT**

**Commissioner Milliken adjourned the meeting at 8:26 pm.**

Respectfully submitted,



Christina Anderson,  
City Planner

Community Planning & Development

