

City Of Birmingham
Regular Meeting Of The Planning Board
Wednesday, February 10, 2021
Held Remotely Via Zoom And Telephone Access

Minutes of the regular meeting of the City of Birmingham Planning Board held on February 10, 2021. Chair Scott Clein convened the meeting at 7:30 p.m.

A. Roll Call

Present: Chair Scott Clein; Board Members Robin Boyle, Stuart Jeffares, Bert Koseck, Daniel Share, Janelle Whipple-Boyce, Bryan Williams; Alternate Board Members Jason Emerine, Nasseem Ramin (all located in Birmingham, MI, except for Bryan Williams who was located in Commerce Charter Twp.)

Absent: None.

Administration: Jana Ecker, Planning Director ("PD")
Brooks Cowan, City Planner
Nick Dupuis, City Planner
Laura Eichenhorn, City Transcriptionist

Master Planning Team: Matt Lambert, DPZ
Sarah Traxler, McKenna

02-019-21

B. Approval Of The Minutes Of The Regular Planning Board Meeting of January 27, 2021

Mr. Share said on page two "confidence in" should be inserted between "Some residents lack" and "the validity". On page four, he said 'complemented' should be corrected to 'complimented'.

Motion by Mr. Williams

Seconded by Mr. Koseck to approve the minutes of the Regular Planning Board Meeting of January 27, 2021 as amended.

Motion carried, 7-0.

ROLL CALL VOTE

Yea: Williams, Koseck, Boyle, Share, Whipple-Boyce, Clein, Jeffares

Nay: None

02-020-21

C. Chair's Comments

Chair Clein welcomed everyone to the virtual meeting. He stated the meeting was being held under the auspices of state legislation. Chair Clein reviewed the meeting's procedures. He provided an update regarding the City's master planning process and an overview of what work remains to be done prior to the City's adoption of the Plan.

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D. Review Of The Agenda

There were no changes to the agenda.

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E. Study Session Item

1. Review of First Draft of 2040 Birmingham Plan • Neighborhood Elements & Plans (Section B. Neighborhoods)

Mr. Lambert conducted a presentation which was included in the agenda packet.

Seventeen members of the public spoke: Kristen Tait, Katie Pierce, Greg Weddell, Jeffrey Atto, Shahad Atiya, Andrew Haig, Corey Holter, Mark McDermott, David Bloom, Patty Blair, Robert Granata, Larry Bertolini, Jeremy Nichol, Ed Schulak, Mike Minelli, Paul Reagan, and Noel Nevshehir. Comments made one time each were the following:

- Brookside should not be connected to the bike path.
- The permanent pavilion for the Farmer's Market would be beneficial.
- All bicycle lanes should be protected for the safety of their users.
- The City should look into the age breakdown of who prefers in-person communication from the City and who prefers just having regular communication with the City more generally.
- The Plan found many residents like how the neighborhoods function currently, which begged the question of why the Plan would propose changing the organization of the neighborhoods.
- Some of the recommendations in the Plan draft seem more top-down, coming from the consultants, than ground-up, coming from the residents.
- While residents are being told that the Plan does not in and of itself rezone property, master plans are used to provide the rationale for future zoning decisions.
- There should be more opportunities for residents to weigh in on the other subtopics, outside of the seams and accessory dwelling units, included in Section A of the Neighborhoods part of the draft Plan.
- The Plan should emphasize increasing options for aging-in-place and for renovating homes instead of demolishing homes.
- The property of the Our Shepherd Church in the Torry area could be considered as a joint-venture park between the City and the owner of the Church.
- If the corner of Eton and Lincoln is developed as a park it should be done carefully since it is a busy intersection.

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- With many families facing difficulties due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the master planning process should be slowed down or paused. It is possible the City is not getting the kind of participation it otherwise would due to the extenuating circumstances.
- Commercial parking should be kept out of the residential neighborhoods.
- Facilitating the crossing of Woodward needs to be a bigger priority in the Plan.

Four different residents spoke to feeling that:

- Neighborhood associations should not be imposed by the Plan. Neighborhoods should be organized internally by the neighbors.
- There are too many neighborhoods proposed in the Plan. If the neighborhoods are being proposed to allow for more seamless communication between the residents and the City, there might be better ways to achieve that objective.

Mr. Lambert, Chair Clein, and Mr. Boyle recommended residents review the recently released Frequently Asked Questions document regarding the master plan.

Seeing no further public comment, Chair Clein returned the discussion to the Board.

Mr. Boyle commended Chair Clein on his facilitation, noting that the peak attendance of the present meeting was 177 attendees. He continued that the next iteration of the Plan should clarify what is meant by the Neighborhood Loop. He said it would also be beneficial for the Plan to mark out where additional footpaths in the City might be built.

Mr. Williams said multi-modal interventions recommended in the Plan, such as the Neighborhood Loop, must prioritize sidewalks and protected bike paths. He said it is dangerous for the Plan to promote footpaths or cycling routes throughout the City without the required infrastructure. He also said the Plan needed to make recommendations regarding horizontal development and side and rear setbacks to promote first-floor living and aging-in-place.

Mr. Koseck said it would be beneficial to create a pedestrian connection between Kenning Park and the neighborhood to the south. He said the City could consider a staff position to ensure more communication between the City and the residents. He posited that developing Haynes Square would make the east and west sides of the City feel more connected. He concluded by saying that adding trees along Woodward could create some of the traffic calming residents are seeking.

Mr. Koseck and Ms. Whipple-Boyce said a few of the locations for the proposed commercial destinations should be re-evaluated.

Mr. Share said the Plan should not opine on speed limits, that the Plan should use plain language to name and describe concepts, that any incentives offered in the Plan for aging-in-place would not be subsidies but changes to requirements for heights, setbacks, or similar zoning mechanisms, and that the Plan should not likely recommend City personnel positions. He said the Plan could say it is a goal to increase and maintain two-way communication between the residents and the City administration.

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Mr. Share and Chair Clein agreed that planning districts would likely be better than the Plan trying to re-create neighborhood associations **associations**.

Mr. Jeffares, Mr. Emerine, Mr. Koseck and Chair Clein concurred with Mr. Share that the Plan should not assign neighborhoods.

Mr. Jeffares said Nextdoor or similar platforms could be used to better communicate with residents.

Mr. Jeffares, Ms. Whipple-Boyce, and Mr. Emerine all said they were in favor of the proposal for cafes in some of the parks. Mr. Emerine said he lived across the street from a very small, 20 sq. ft. cafe in a park in another town, and that it was only a positive experience. They also concurred that it would be beneficial to use commercial areas in town that already exist for commercial destinations when possible.

Mr. Jeffares, Chair Clein and Mr. Emerine all agreed that the trail by the Rouge River should be made accessible. It was noted that the accessibility should be improved in a more environmentally-conscious manner than just paving the trail.

Ms. Whipple-Boyce, Mr. Emerine and Chair Clein said the Plan should emphasize the infrastructure improvements scheduled via the AHUSSC report which was submitted to the City Commission in January 2021. Chair Clein said the Plan should state that improving streets and other infrastructure will be one of the most critical things for the City to do over the next 20 years.

Ms. Whipple-Boyce said the process used to plan street improvements could also be used to plan sidewalk improvements. She spoke in favor of there being a staff person at City Hall to liaise with neighborhood associations. She said the Plan could benefit from making it more clear that the neighborhood associations proposed would not be very different from the ones that already exist. While she agreed that the City's parking regulations need fixing, she said it might be better to have a board or committee determine what the replacement regulations should be instead of the Plan making the recommendations.

Mr. Emerine recommended the Plan propose a way to connect Booth Trail and the S. River Trail.

Chair Clein thanked the master planning team. He said he thought the current parking regulations need to be fixed and that solutions should be studied and implemented instead of giving residents the choice, because doing the latter can pit neighbors against each other. He asked if the Neighborhood Loop might be focusing too heavily on cyclists, and said improving it more for pedestrians should be considered.

Chair Clein and Mr. Emerine said they were both in favor of the Plan recommending more options for green infrastructure.

PD Ecker noted that at their February 7, 2021 meeting the City Commission approved the purchase of a license for Bang the Table, a community engagement platform that will hopefully facilitate more communication between the residents and the City.

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F. Miscellaneous Business and Communications:

- a. Communications**
- b. Administrative Approval Correspondence**

The Board said a proposal to replace the previously-proposed brick screening wall in the rear of 2101 E. 14 Mile with concrete masonry units should not be administratively approved.

- c. Draft Agenda for the next Regular Planning Board Meeting (February 24, 2021)**
- d. Other Business**

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G. Planning Division Action Items

- a. Staff Report on Previous Requests**
- b. Additional Items from tonight's meeting**

Mr. Williams requested a quarterly report on which projects have been granted site plan approvals but have not moved forward. He said it could just be included in the appropriate agenda packet as supplementary material.

PD Ecker said she could likely implement the requested quarterly reports.

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H. Adjournment

No further business being evident, the Chair thanked PD Ecker, CP Cowan, CP Dupuis, and the Board. He adjourned the meeting at 9:55 p.m.

Jana L. Ecker

Planning Director