



Sheldon Neeley
Mayor

CITY OF FLINT

FLINT PLANNING COMMISSION

Meeting Minutes
November 28th, 2023

Commissioners Present

Robert Wesley, Chair
Carol-Anne Blower, Vice-Chair
Lynn Sorenson, Secretary
Robert Jewell
Mona Munroe-Younis
Jeffrey Curtis Horton

Staff Present

Bennet Bush, Assistant City Attorney
Max Lester, Int. Zoning Coordinator
Brian Acheff, Zoning Coordinator
Dalton Castle, Planner I
Tyler Bailey, Deputy Director of Business Services
Montel Meniffee, Cannabis Facilities Licensing Coordinator

Absent:

Joshua Brown
Leora Campbell
April Cook-Hawkins

ROLL CALL:

Chairperson Wesley called the meeting to order at 5:41 p.m. Roll was taken, and a quorum was present.

The meeting was held both in-person in the Council Chambers and via Zoom and phone conferencing as approved.

Roll Call:

Commissioner Brown: absent	Commissioner Sorenson: present
Commissioner Campbell: absent	Commissioner Munroe-Younis: present
Commissioner Blower: present	Commissioner Horton: present
Commissioner Jewell: present	Chairperson Wesley: present
Commissioner Cook-Hawkins: absent	

ADDITIONS/CHANGES TO THE AGENDA:

Commissioner Jewell added an update on the Equity in Zoning policy Guide to the reports section of the agenda.

ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA:

Commissioner Wesley asked for a motion to approve the agenda with amendment. Commissioner Blower motioned to accept the agenda as amended. Commissioner Sorenson seconded the motion.

M/S – Blower/Sorenson

Unanimously carried by voice vote



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MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETINGS:

The minutes for the meetings of September 26th, October 10th, and October 24th are prepared for review.

September 26th, 2023:

Commissioners Jewell and Munroe-Younis corrected a few grammatical and spelling issues. Commissioner Munroe-Younis asked for certain portions of the minutes to clarify what is being spoken about.

Commissioner Jewell made a motion to approve the minutes of September 26th, 2023 as corrected. Commissioner Blower supported this motion.

Roll Call:

Commissioner Brown: absent
Commissioner Campbell: absent
Commissioner Blower: yes
Commissioner Jewell: yes
Commissioner Cook-Hawkins: absent

Commissioner Sorenson: abstain
Commissioner Munroe-Younis: yes
Commissioner Horton: yes
Chairperson Wesley: yes

M/S – Jewell/Blower

5 yes – 0 no – 1 abstain

The motion carried.

October 10th, 2023:

Commissioner Sorenson corrected a spelling mistake. Commissioner Blower asked for the section on recommendations to City Council to make direct reference to the proposed map and text amendments and distinguish the W. Fifth Ave rezonings.

Commissioner Sorenson made a motion to approve the minutes of October 10th, 2023 as corrected. Commissioner Blower supported this motion.

Roll Call:

Commissioner Brown: absent
Commissioner Campbell: absent
Commissioner Blower: yes
Commissioner Jewell: yes
Commissioner Cook-Hawkins: absent

Commissioner Sorenson: yes
Commissioner Munroe-Younis: yes
Commissioner Horton: yes
Chairperson Wesley: yes

M/S – Jewell/Blower

6 yes – 0 no – 0 abstain

Unanimously carried by voice vote



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October 24th, 2023:

Commissioner Jewell clarified that Joshua Brown was appointed to the Planning Commission, which the minutes did not reflect. He then asked for the line referring to potential miscommunication to be deleted.

Commissioner Jewell made a motion to approve the minutes of October 24th, 2023 as corrected. Commissioner Sorenson supported this motion.

Roll Call:

Commissioner Brown: absent

Commissioner Sorenson: yes

Commissioner Campbell: absent

Commissioner Munroe-Younis: abstain

Commissioner Blower: yes

Commissioner Horton: yes

Commissioner Jewell: yes

Chairperson Wesley: yes

Commissioner Cook-Hawkins: absent

M/S – Jewell/Blower

5 yes – 0 no – 1 abstain

The motion carried.

PUBLIC FORUM:

Chairman Wesley opened the floor for public forum. No one spoke.

PUBLIC HEARINGS:

There were no public hearings.

SITE PLAN REVIEW:

SPR 23-005: Communities First, LLC – AMAG, LLC request a Site Plan Review for a mixed-use building at 529 ML King Ave. (PID # 40-12-479-001) and surrounding parcels to be combined.

Max presented the staff report. Staff recommendation is to conditionally approve the site plan pending departmental reviews if they believe the requirements on the site plan checklist have been met.

Commissioner Jewell asked about the demand for housing in the area where the site plan is proposed. Additionally, he asked about the current occupancy status of the buildings that are to be replaced. Max said they are unaware of that information. Commissioner Jewell reiterated the question about occupancy. Chairman Wesley stated that question would be better asked of the applicants.

Michael Wright, Ray Embach, and Joel Arnold are representing the applicant. Mr. Embach explained the proposed project.



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Commissioner Blower asked what the parking situation will be, including bike racks and bus stops. Mr. Embach explained there is a bus stop across the street on MLK Ave. He detailed the bike racks that are available and said most car parking would be directed towards the lot across the street on Garland. Commissioner Blower asked how that parking would be sectioned off or assigned. Mr. Arnold said parking would be first come first serve. Mr. Wright then explained that they would have gates to separate residential and commercial parking. He further explained that another building across the street, the former Flint City Hard Cider, is also owned by Communities First and they have agreed to a shared parking arrangement with themselves.

Commissioner Blower asked about the intended use of the commercial space within the proposed site plan. Mr. Wright explained their preference would be for it to be used as a retail space as opposed to an office space. He also said there had been conversations with the existing General Optical to use the space.

Commissioner Jewell asked for a walkthrough on the landscaping and lighting on the site. Mr. Embach explained the proposed lighting and landscaping. Commissioner Jewell then reiterated his previous question regarding demand for housing in the area. Mr. Arnold explained Communities First's research into demand for housing in the downtown area. Their conclusion was that there is a demand, and they believe that the apartment will be full within a year of completion.

Commissioner Sorenson asked about the current occupancy of the proposed site. Mr. Arnold explained that Odyssey House is currently still operating out of the building but had been interested in relocation and now Communities First has been supporting them in doing so. Mr. Embach explained the apartments will be a mix between market rate and affordable housing. He then explained Communities First's philosophy on not sectioning off poverty.

Commissioner Blower made a motion to conditionally approve the site plan pending finalized reviews by the City Engineering, Fire, and Water departments and receipt of formal documentation of the parcel combination. Commissioner Jewell supported the motion.

Roll Call:

Commissioner Brown: absent
Commissioner Campbell: absent
Commissioner Blower: yes
Commissioner Jewell: yes
Commissioner Cook-Hawkins: absent

Commissioner Sorenson: yes
Commissioner Munroe-Younis: yes
Commissioner Horton: yes
Chairperson Wesley: yes

M/S – Blower/Jewell

6 yes, 0 no, 0 abstain

The motion carried.



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CASE REVIEW:

Green Skies Healing Tree, LLC – 3401 Corunna Rd. – Court Ruling

Attorney Bennet Bush will be taking the role of Attorney Joanne Gurley. Montel Meniffee explained they are still pending receipt of documentation from Green Skies Healing Tree. Commissioner Blower confirmed with staff that the dispensary is not currently open.

SPR 23-004: 200 E First St. Conditional Approval Status

The site plan received approval from the Fire Department and City Engineering. Staff will follow up with the applicant with an action notification letter, Chairman Wesley has signed the Site Plan in review with staff of completed materials.

1901 S Dort Hwy., Miconor Enterprises dba Planet 420 Sign Review

Max read the staff report. Staff recommendation was for the Commission to review the proposed LED modules and determine whether or not they meet the standards laid out in the Zoning Code, with a focus on whether their built-in shielding technology is adequate. Max acknowledged that this technology is not their area of expertise.

Commissioner Blower also acknowledged that she is not familiar with built in diffuser material in place of shielding. Commissioner Blower clarified with Max that the main focus of this case was whether or not there was built-in diffuser material in the LED modules that constituted shielding, Max confirmed.

Mr. Brown presented the application on behalf of Miconor Enterprises. They have provided pictures of the proposed LEDs as well as brought in a physical sample.

Commissioner Munroe-Younis asked the applicant if the LEDs were already affixed to the building. Mr. Brown said yes, they are. Commissioner Sorenson confirmed with her fellow commissioners that they had already approved temporary signage for this property.

Commissioner Blower made a motion to approve the illumination. Commissioner Munroe-Younis supported the motion.

Roll Call:

Commissioner Brown: absent
Commissioner Campbell: absent
Commissioner Blower: yes
Commissioner Jewell: yes
Commissioner Cook-Hawkins: absent

Commissioner Sorenson: yes
Commissioner Munroe-Younis: yes
Commissioner Horton: yes
Chairperson Wesley: yes



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M/S – Blower/Jewell

6 yes, 0 no, 0 abstain

The motion carried.

City Council Action on Planning Commission Recommendations

Mr. Bailey said the hearing for the second reading of the proposed map and text amendments will be held on December 11th, 2023.

Max said the West Fifth Avenue rezonings for the Genesee County Land Bank have not been heard at this time. They will follow up with the Clerk's Office to figure out when the hearing will be.

Zoning Board of Appeals

The November 21st meeting was cancelled due to no applications being submitted.

REPORTS:

Redevelopment Ready Communities (RRC)

No updates at this time. Max has distributed a list of roles and responsibilities for the Planning Commission provided by the Michigan Economic Development Corporation.

Planning Commission Expired Terms

No updates at this time.

Commissioner Jewell noted that the roster for the Planning Commission needs to be updated, including the contact information.

10-Year City of Flint Comprehensive Plan Review – Intent to plan

Max explained that the motion following review is the first step for to begin the Comprehensive Planning process. They reiterated that the goal is to determine if an update is needed, not what update(s) are needed. Max then listed the checklist conditions written by Michigan State University for a Five-Year Plan Review.

Commissioner Jewell commended Max for compiling the information provided to the Planning Commission. He then reiterated his concern from the previous meeting that a review must occur prior to a motion being made. He read several sections aloud from the MSU Five-Year Plan Review checklist. He then suggested that they set aside a larger portion of one of their agendas for review of the Comprehensive Plan.

Chairman Wesley mentioned the importance of the water crisis as an event worth updating the plan to reflect. Commissioner Jewell said he wanted staff to prepare a presentation on what all has happened in the last five years to warrant updates.



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Commissioner Blower acknowledged Commissioner Jewell's concerns, but wanted to clarify the language that the motion is an intent to plan not an intent to revise. She asked if a review is part of the planning process to which Commissioner Jewell said it is not according to the provided material.

Max explained to the Commission that they are likely to have multiple public hearings and a site plan review at their next meeting, which may restrict the time allocated to doing the in-depth discussion on the review of the Comprehensive Plan as Commissioner Jewell suggested.

Mr. Bailey outlined the intended goals and methods of the Comprehensive Plan update. He said the Master Plan in its current state is not enforceable by the municipality.

Commissioner Jewell said he is confused. He said he has concern over jurisdiction of the Comprehensive Planning process, he believes it is the Planning Commission not staff.

Commissioner Munroe-Younis expressed how useful the presented checklist is and agreed with Mr. Bailey's statement on the overreaching of the current Master Plan. She then expressed that in the past decade since the Plan's inception so much has changed that the requested motion is just a necessary formality to make much-needed updates. She stressed the importance of being prepared and doing the update process correctly. She said she sees no reason not to pass a motion for the intent to plan.

Mr. Bailey spoke from his experience working in economic development. He explained that business owners, small and large, will reference the Comprehensive Plan to him and discuss the hinderances it creates. Additionally, he stated he has been asked many times why the Comprehensive Plan has not been updated post-water crisis.

Chairman Wesley summarized that recommendation is to make a motion of intent to plan then follow up in January regarding community outreach and review of what updates should be made.

Commissioner Jewell said a motion of intent to plan is not needed for the Planning Commission to do the review.

Commissioner Munroe-Younis asked if the motion for intent to plan is the standard way a review is initiated or if it can just begin.

Commissioner Jewell said from a Planning Commission perspective it is not needed. He then said that there is a series of events that happen after the motion of intent to plan is made that will be mostly staff action.

Commissioner Munroe-Younis then asked where the recommendation for a motion of intent to plan came from.



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Max read from the Planning Enabling Act. “At least every five years after adoption of a master plan a planning commission shall review the master plan and determine whether to commence the procedure to amend the master plan or adopt a new master plan. The review and its findings are to be recorded in the minutes of the relevant meeting or meetings of the Planning Commission.” Max said the goal of the recommendation is to review and determine if that process should be started.

Commissioner Jewell said that this section was read at the previous meeting. He said they are still debating what constitutes a review.

Commissioner Munroe-Younis asked when the recommended motion is supposed to happen, before or after a review.

Chairman Wesley and Commissioner Jewell discussed tabling the review for the next meeting.

Attorney Bush advised tabling the discussion. He stressed that based on what has been said by staff many processes cannot happen until the motion is made. He apologized for not having the chance to review the material more thoroughly. Based on what he has heard and reviewed, it seems that motion can be made off of a broad review then become more fleshed out based on input gathered at a public hearing for example.

Commissioner Jewell said the Planning Commission is an autonomous body and can hold a public hearing if they choose without the recommended motion. He reiterated the question on where the recommendation for a motion came from.

Max said from their perspective it would be stepping outside of staff responsibilities to start the process of receiving community input. They then explained that a public hearing is not required under the Planning Enabling Act, holding one is however required under the Public Participation Plan once the process has begun following a motion that changes are needed. However, they would like to ideally have more community involvement than the minimum outlined in the Public Participation Plan.

Commissioner Jewell reiterated that it is the Planning Commission’s job to do the review. Chairman Wesley said the Commission will table the discussion for the next meeting.

Commissioner Blower said that based on the provided MSU checklist the Planning Commission decides whether an update or no changes are needed. She said it seems to her they just need to have a discussion on the short form checklist then decide whether an update is needed.

Chairman Wesley stated they will revisit the matter at the January 9th, 2024 meeting.

Max noted that in 2024 the five-year period will have lapsed.

Commissioner Jewell said he supports the tabling of discussion but plans to express his concerns if anything related to reviewing outside the short checklist is discussed.



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Mr. Bailey asked the commission to forward staff their previous reviews to prepare for the next meeting.

Chairman Wesley said they did not do an update at the last 5-year review. Commissioner Blower said to check the minutes from five years ago.

Staffing Update

No updates at this time.

Equity in Zoning Policy Guide Update

No updates at this time.

RESOLUTIONS:

No resolutions at this time

OLD BUSINESS:

Status of PC-ZBA Liaison

No updates at this time.

NEW BUSINESS:

No new business at this time.

ADJOURNMENT:

M/S – Sorenson/Blower

Unanimously carried by voice vote.

Meeting adjourned at 7:50 PM.