Birmingham City Commission Minutes
September 15, 2025
Municipal Building, 151 Martin
7:30 p.m.
Vimeo Link: https://vimeo.com/1118863989

I. CALL TO ORDER AND PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Therese Longe, Mayor, opened the meeting with the Pledge of Allegiance.

II. ROLL CALL

City Clerk Bingham called the roll.

Present: Mayor Longe
MPT Baller
Commissioner Emerine
Commissioner Long
Commissioner Haig
Commissioner Host
Commissioner Schafer

Absent: None

Staff: City Manager Ecker; City Clerk Bingham, Human Resources Manager Cilluffo, Planning Director Dupuis, Assistant City Manager Fairbairn, Police Chief Grewe, City Attorney Kucharek

III. PROCLAMATIONS, CONGRATULATORY RESOLUTIONS, AWARDS, APPOINTMENTS, RESIGNATIONS AND CONFIRMATIONS, ADMINISTRATION OF OATHS, INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

Announcements
Appointments

09-268-25 Design Review Board

Natalia Dukas was interviewed for the appointment.

MOTION: Motion by Host:
To appoint Natalia Dukas as a regular member to the Design Review Board to serve a three-year term to expire September 25, 2028.

VOICE VOTE
Ayes: Emerine, Schafer, Baller, Haig, Host, Longe, Long
Nays: None

09-269-25 Historic District Commission

Natalia Dukas was interviewed for the appointment.

MOTION: Motion by Long:
To appoint Natalia Dukas as a regular member to the Historic District Commission to serve a three-year term to expire September 25, 2028.

VOICE VOTE
Ayes: Emerine, Schafer, Baller, Haig, Host, Longe, Long
Nays: None

09-270-25 Historic District Commission

Steven Lemberg was interviewed for the appointment.

MOTION: Motion by Baller:
To appoint Steven Lemberg as an alternate member to the Historic District Commission to serve a three-year term to expire September 25, 2028.

VOICE VOTE
Ayes: Emerine, Schafer, Baller, Haig, Host, Longe, Long
Nays: None

09-271-25 Historic District Commission

Mary Jaye was interviewed for the appointment.

MOTION: Motion by Host:
To appoint Mary Jaye as an alternate member to the Historic District Commission to serve a three-year term to expire September 25, 2028.

VOICE VOTE
Ayes: Emerine, Schafer, Baller, Haig, Host, Longe, Long
Nays: None

CC Bingham swore in the present appointees.

Introduction Of Staff
Human Resources – Tyresse Ferguson

IV. OPEN TO THE PUBLIC FOR MATTERS NOT ON THE AGENDA

Danny Seidman supported making Poppleton Park an all-ages, all-abilities, neighborhood-first space and supported limitations on any new parking along Oxford.

Andy McMechan commented regarding an upcoming event at Greenwood Cemetery.

Kristy Barrett commented regarding next steps for the YMCA, Next, and 400 E. Lincoln.

V. CONSENT AGENDA

09-272-25 Consent Agenda

MOTION: Motion by Baller, seconded by Host:
To move Items B and C.

ROLL CALL VOTE
Ayes: Emerine, Schafer, Baller, Haig, Host, Longe, Long
Nays: None

B. Resolution to claim an exemption from the Publicly Funded Health Insurance Contribution Act 2011 PA 152. Further, to direct the City Engineer and Finance Director to sign the Annual Certification for Employee-related condition for the year 2025 and submit the required form to the Michigan Department of Transportation as required by Public Act 51.

C. Resolution to claim an exemption from the Publicly Funded Health Insurance Contribution Act 2011 PA 152. Further, to direct the City Engineer and Finance Director to sign the Annual Certification for Employee-related condition for the year 2025 and submit the required form to the Michigan Department of Transportation as required by Public Act 51.

09-273-25 Resolution to approve the warrant list, including Automated Clearing House payments, dated September 10, 2025 in the amount of $40,762,011.22

The Mayor pulled Item A to highlight how tax dollars paid to the City are spent.

She also noted that residents could find more information on tax dollar allocations halfway down the page on the City's webpage for property tax information.

MOTION: Motion by Long, seconded by Host:
To approve the warrant list, including Automated Clearing House payments, dated September 10, 2025 in the amount of $40,762,011.22.

ROLL CALL VOTE
Ayes: Emerine, Schafer, Baller, Haig, Host, Longe, Long
Nays: None

09-274-25 Thanking Bert Koseck, Mary-Claire Petcoff, and Aditya Oberoi for their Board Service

Commissioner Haig pulled Items D, E, and F to thank Burt Koseck, Mary-Claire Petcoff, and Aditya Oberoi for their service on City boards, and recommended that listeners read Bert Koseck's letter, which can be found in Item 5D of the agenda packet.

MOTION: Motion by Haig, seconded by Long:
To approve Items D, E, and F on the consent agenda.

VOICE VOTE
Ayes: Emerine, Schafer, Baller, Haig, Host, Longe, Long
Nays: None

VI. CITY MANAGER'S REPORT

CM Ecker presented the report.

VII. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

Ad Hoc Senior/Recreation Center Committee (SCC) - City Commission Direction

CM Ecker and CA Kucharek presented the item and answered informational questions from the Commission.

Commissioners raised the following points during discussion:

- Redefining the SCC's vision statement, goals, and objectives is appropriate, and having a joint meeting between the Commission and the SCC could be productive once some preliminary factors are clarified.
- Filling the vacancy on the SCC should be contingent on the future meeting schedule and potentially changed requirements.
- The community survey could be used to explore future options for 400 E. Lincoln.
- Further steps must be considered within the context of three extant commitments to Next, the YMCA, and Birmingham Public Schools.
- An $8 million federal grant, intended to be used towards this project and to offset taxpayer cost, did not ultimately materialize.
- The YMCA's participation in this process so far has been influenced by a number of financial and operational factors. There were reasons the YMCA chose to sell the property at 400 E. Lincoln.
- The YMCA is a valued member of this community, which is why the Commission worked towards its participation in this project.
- Birmingham resident membership for both Next and the YMCA are around 30%.
- There was hope the YMCA would continue offering scholarship and summer camp services within Birmingham moving forward.
- The present building would require a number of upgrades to remain operational. Investing money into the present building is likely inappropriate.
- It might be appropriate to consider alternate locations for Next, and alternate uses for 400 E. Lincoln.
- It is likely inappropriate to have parts of 400 E. Lincoln that would not be used while Next occupies the space, because maintenance and operational costs would still exist. It may also not be an appropriate option to co-locate City offices and Next at 400 E. Lincoln.
- It might be possible to locate Next somewhere else within the Birmingham School District.
- The Commission exists to serve Birmingham residents, including its seniors.
- The Commission should determine during the present discussion whether the YMCA will be included in any future planning for 400 E. Lincoln.

- It would be important to determine whether renovating the present building, plus the attendant operational costs, or building a new building with the attendant operational costs would be more cost effective.
- 400 E. Lincoln was a valuable purchase for the City.
- Creative solutions are worth further exploration. A smaller building could be built for Next on the property, a portion of the property could be left for future collaboration and development, a staged building process could be planned, or other options.
- 400 E. Lincoln is unlikely to have a pool in operation in the future.
- Since Next could occupy the present building at 400 E. Lincoln for a period of time, this process is not under the same time constraints as it previously was.
- The NORR data on the operational costs of the building had included the pool, and so does not necessarily reflect future operational costs.
- It should be clarified whether this project has a 'vision' statement or 'mission' statement. Whichever it is should be more specific about whether it is focused on Next, 400 E. Lincoln, and/or something else.
- Former City Manager Markus invested significant effort in trying to find a future home for Next.
- The present lease between the YMCA and the City included some provisions for cost sharing.

<u>Public Comment</u>
Mike Clift supported creating a community center at any optimal location with Next and a recreation and fitness center.

Christine Long commented regarding Next's need to move out of Midvale in Spring 2027.

Cris Braun, Executive Director of Next, commented regarding the process so far, Next's interest in occupying 400 E. Lincoln while improving it in phases, and Next's sufficient financial resources.

Paul Reagan supported pursuing more affordable options for Next and for additional City offices both separate from 400 E. Lincoln, and for seeing whether the YMCA could continue to operate at 400 E. Lincoln.

George Dilgard supported determining the updated renovation and operating costs if Next were to occupy the present building for three to four years and bonding in the future for a senior and community center.

Kristy Barrett commented regarding Next's presentations and the financing of this or related projects.

Staff answered an informational question from David Hohendorf.

09-275-25 Recess

MOTION: Motion by Baller, seconded by Long:
To take a five minute recess.

VOICE VOTE
Ayes: Baller, Emerine, Schafer, Haig, Host, Longe, Long
Nays: None

VIII. NEW BUSINESS

09-276-25 Community Survey

ACM Fairbairn presented the item. Staff answered informational questions from the Commission.

Commissioners raised the following points during discussion:
- The goal is to clarify the community's priorities.
- It was difficult to evaluate the response since the questions asked to the potential consultants were not provided to the Commission.
- This proposal seemed to propose insufficient collaboration with residents.
- The cost estimate seemed to be built off of a boilerplate survey.
- Space for comments in the responses will be important.

- It will be important to have a statistically significant sample of resident responses, and to know how it will be approached if a statistically significant example is not reached in the first round of surveying.
- These are experts in running surveys, and hopefully their work merits the Commission's trust.
- 27% of Birmingham residents voted in the last Presidential election. Residents tend to be very engaged when affected, and disengaged when they are not affected. It would be beneficial to engage the residents that do not vote.
- It would be beneficial for the Commission to weigh in on the proposed questions.
- Since the Commission is interested in learning what the residents think, it is likely appropriate for one to two Commissioners to be on the project team.

MOTION: Motion by Long, seconded by Host:
To approve a six-month agreement with Cobalt Community Research for a community survey in the amount not to exceed $21,435.00. In addition, to authorize the Mayor and City Clerk to sign the agreement on behalf of the City; and further to appropriate and amend the 2025-2026 City Commission budget as follows:

General Fund		
<u>Revenues</u>		
Draw from Fund balance	101.0-000.000-400.0000	$21,435.00
<u>Expenditures</u>		
Other Contractual Services	101.0-101.000-811.0000	$21,435.00

Commissioners made the following comment on the motion:
- This group should be invited to speak with the Commission at a later date.
- It will be important for this group, the Commissioners, and staff to direct this survey since residents may not necessarily be fully aware of the options available to them without some guidance.
- This would not be a significant financial expenditure relative to other Commission expenditures.
- This process will be impactful, and wrong information being collected would be a concern.

<u>Public Comment</u>
Bill Kolb opposed signing this contract, opining that there were too many gaps in the present submission.

Andy McMechan also opposed signing this contract, noting a number of unanswered process questions.

ROLL CALL VOTE
Ayes: Emerine, Schafer, Baller, Haig, Host, Longe, Long
Nays: None

Public/Private Partnerships (P3)

CM Ecker and CA Kucharek presented the item. Staff answered informational questions from the Commission.

Commissioners raised the following points during discussion:
- Any representative hired for this process should represent the City's interests exclusively.
- Birmingham should make groups aware that it is interested in hearing P3 proposals.
- Said representative should assist in evaluating proposals brought to the Commission. They should not solicit offers to bring to the Commission.
- The Commission needs control of the work effort and the work product.
- This could be advantageous if the scope is limited.
- The representative should be bound by the City's ethics rules, and should accept no compensation from developers bringing proposals to the City.
- Commissioner Haig would submit some minor revision proposals to staff.
- CM Ecker received commendation for the presentation.

09-277-25 Closed Session Pursuant to MCL § 15.268 Sec. 8(1)(a) of the Open Meetings Act

The Mayor and CA Kucharek summarized the item.

MOTION: Motion by Longe, seconded by Long:
To meet in closed session at the request of the City Manager - MCL § 15.268 Sec. 8(1)(a) allows for a closed session of the City Commission for a periodic personnel evaluation of the City Manager only if the City Manager requests a closed hearing pursuant to a 2/3 vote of the City Commission. Pursuant to the City Manager's contract, an evaluation is to be conducted during the first year of employment as City Manager at the end of six (6) months, at the one-year anniversary and annually thereafter.

Commissioners raised the following points during discussion of the motion:

- It might be too late in the evening to be conducting an employee evaluation.
- CM Ecker should be allowed to state whether she was comfortable proceeding with the evaluation this evening.

ROLL CALL VOTE
Ayes: Emerine, Schafer, Haig, Host, Longe, Long
Nays: Baller

The Commission went into closed session at 11:24 p.m.

The Commission returned from closed session at 1:11 a.m.

09-278-25 Action Subsequent to Closed Session

MOTION: Motion by Emerine, seconded by Long:
The Commission has met in closed session to discuss City Manager Ecker's performance review, and to make a motion to increase her base compensation package by 7%.

ROLL CALL VOTE
Ayes: Baller, Emerine, Schafer, Haig, Longe, Long
Nays: Host

Commission Discussion On Items From A Prior Meeting
Commission Items for Future Discussion

IX. REMOVED FROM CONSENT AGENDA

X. COMMUNICATIONS

A. Community Survey

XI. REPORTS

A. Commissioner Reports
   1. Notice of Intention to Appoint to the Ad Hoc Senior/Recreation Center Committee
   2. Notice of Intention to Appoint to the Advisory Parking Committee
   3. Notice of Intention to Appoint to the Board of Review

B. Commissioner Comments

Commissioner Long expressed concern that upcoming construction-related road closures related to construction at 320 Martin were not adequately communicated to potentially affected parties.

The Mayor noted that the City would be exploring how it might further support businesses that could be impacted by the upcoming construction at 320 Martin, and whether certain aspects of noticing should be conducted differently in the future.

Commissioner Haig supported the City charging for any use of a parking space.

The Mayor suggested Commissioner Haig raise that topic as an Item for Future Discussion at the next meeting.

The Mayor brought attention to CE Coatta's September 8, 2025 Infrastructure Workshop Update.

C. Advisory Boards, Committees, Commissions' Reports and Agendas
D. Legislation
E. City Staff
    1. September 8, 2025 Infrastructure Workshop Update

INFORMATION ONLY

XII. ADJOURN

The Commission motioned to adjourn at 1:11 a.m.

Alexandria Bingham, City Clerk

Laura Eichenhorn, City Transcriptionist