



City Commission Long Range Planning Minutes
Saturday, January 24, 2026 - 8:30 AM
151 Martin Street, Birmingham, MI
Commission Room 205
Vimeo Link: <https://vimeo.com/1153811961>

1. CALL TO ORDER AND PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Clinton Baller, Mayor, opened the meeting with the Pledge of Allegiance.

2. ROLL CALL

City Clerk Bingham called the roll.

Present: Mayor Clinton Baller
Mayor Pro Tem Anthony Long
Commissioner Andrew Haig
Commissioner Brad Host
Commissioner Kevin Kozlowski
Commissioner William Kolb
Commissioner Therese Longe

Absent: None

Staff: City Manager Ecker; Fire Chief Bartalino, Information Technology Director Brunk, Finance Director Chavez, Assistant City Manager Clemence, Library Director Craft, Planning Director Dupuis, Assistant City Manager Fairbairn, City Attorney Gaudenzi, Public Services Manager Markus, Forestry and Environment Foreman McGaughey, Human Resources Manager Woods, Department of Public Services
Director Zielinski

3. PUBLIC COMMENT

4. DISCUSSION ITEMS

CM Ecker provided introductory remarks.

A. Finance

1. Five-Year Forecast

FD Chavez introduced the items. Timothy St. Andrew of Plante & Moran and staff presented and answered questions.

Commissioners discussed the following regarding the item:

- Residents would benefit from understanding that the City retains only 27 cents of each tax dollar collected.
- The City is within about a million dollars of the Headlee maximum.
- The Commission allocates the portion of the major and local street funds that come from the General Fund. The Commission is able to increase or decrease that amount.
- The City should provide an audited or reconciled actual version of the General Fund Projected Unassigned Fund Balance Compared to Target Levels chart moving forward.
- The City often maintains the General Fund balance close to 40% of operating expenditures. In certain years, it is also appropriate to allow the General Fund balance to be reduced relative to operating expenditures in order to invest more in high priority projects.
- There is not presently an enforcement mechanism for keeping the General Fund balance within 17-40% of operating expenditures. The usefulness of this specific range has not been validated with data.
- Keeping the General Fund balance as close to 40% of the City's expenditures allows the City to have reserves for unanticipated occurrences.

- It might be worth considering whether the General Fund range should be based on revenue as opposed to expenditures.
- It would be worth studying whether the present structure of the General Fund range is appropriate moving forward. It would also be helpful to understand whether the General Fund range indicates whether there are additional funds available to put towards high priority projects, or whether other metrics might be better indicators.
- The infrastructure spending does not increase steadily every year because of the particular projects scheduled.
- The City would be able to provide a report on staff charges to enterprise funds for staff labor hours.
- The staff charges to enterprise funds must take a significant amount of time if they are done through journal entries.
- The figure on page 116 regarding the Derby Bridge Reconstruction Phase One needs to be corrected to \$550,000 from \$500,000.
- It would be helpful to have FD Chavez clarify the subledger numbers.
- It would also be helpful to have details on 400 E. Lincoln as a specific budgetary item.

Public Comment

David Bloom commented regarding the parking enterprise fund and the audit process.

B. Public Services

1. The State of the Urban Forest
2. Liquid Solutions

DPSD Zielinski and FEF McGaughey presented and answered questions.

Commissioners discussed the following regarding the item:

- This is an interesting presentation. Some residents have been concerned about trees in the community, and there have been suggestions to create a tree advisory board.
- The City has a healthy City-managed urban forest with a well-qualified staff managing that forest.
- This presentation covers City-owned and managed trees, not trees on private property. The City has seven certified arborists on staff.
- The City tracks more than half of the City-owned trees within an internal database.
- These slides could be expanded a bit more and turned into a standalone report that could be made available to residents on the City website.
- The internal database would be useful to any future discussions of the state of a particular tree within the City.
- There may be a program that offers carbon credits for City forests. It would be worth exploring whether Birmingham could get involved and receive carbon credits. It might be difficult to participate in, and it might have ceased with the passing of recent federal legislation.
- The Department of Public Services (DPS) does an excellent job managing the City's trees.
- When door hangers are used to provide notice regarding City tree removal, it might be appropriate for DPS to photograph the door hangers to prove that notice was provided.
- It is appropriate that residents have the opportunity to voice their concerns to DPS about the removal of specific trees.
- Staff should inform residents about issues with the boxwood tree moth.
- DPS planted more than 500 new street trees in 2025, as noted in the report.
- While DPS' transition to liquid solutions for ice and snow treatment on the roads, the budget would not represent a direct cost savings, it would be expected to reduce infrastructure damage.
- Sidewalks that are expected to be cleared of snow by private residences or businesses are not always adequately cleared.
- Residents will want to understand what chemicals will be used in the liquid solutions for snow and ice treatment on the roads.
- Sustainability will matter in this process. Pets and animals will also likely benefit from these changes.
- It was good to know that the City tried using beet juice to treat winter roads in the past.
- Staff should determine whether the cameras that would be integrated into this new winter road treatment process could also provide benefit to the Police Department.

C. Engineering

1. Improved Roads Construction Order
2. Capital Improvement Program

CE Coatta, ACM Fairbairn, and CM Ecker presented the items and answered questions.

Commissioners discussed the following regarding the item:

- Organizing the process of upgrading City infrastructure, and then upgrading the City infrastructure, are both significant tasks. It would likely be appropriate for the City to hire a consultant to help develop an infrastructure master plan.
- There are a number of streets with poor road surfaces that are not presently scheduled for repairs or improvements.
- Areas where the subsurface does not need to be redone should be prioritized, because it is likely beneficial to focus on some areas where less investment still results in high benefit.
- The City has been making a shift from funding some of the water and sewer infrastructure improvements with the General Fund to funding it entirely with water and sewer rates.
- Birmingham water and sewer rates are already higher than some peer municipalities in the area.
- The City's ability to carry out planned projects is affected by changes in economic policies at the federal level. If costs increase by 20-30%, it is unlikely that the City would be able to carry out all of the presently planned projects.
- It might be possible to work with other local municipalities to compare costs for certain aspects of projects or certain types of projects.
- It would be appropriate to have a traffic evaluation of the impact on S. Eton from the new Sheetz development in Royal Oak and from diverting some taller trucks from Maple.
- It would be valuable to determine whether Birmingham can modify its processes to receive a higher return on investment for its infrastructure work.
- If some cost increases occur because of resident communication with City contractors, there may be a way for the City to help manage some of those communications and thereby reduce costs.

Public Comment

Mr. Bloom commented that staff demonstrated both care and knowledge about the City's infrastructure improvement process.

D. Planning

1. 2025 Trend Report
2. Birmingham Master Planning

PD Dupuis presented the items and staff answered questions.

Commissioners discussed the following regarding the item:

- The majority of the Commission did not support delivery drones within the City. Making a comment to the FAA regarding delivery drones on behalf of the City would likely be appropriate.
- MDOT is currently undergoing a comprehensive review of the Woodward corridor, and sublimated Birmingham's individual request for a road diet at least temporarily to the overall review that is occurring.
- There will be a new owner at the former Hunter House property. It remains to be determined what kind of updated documentation the City may require of the new owners, given the number of extensions that have previously been granted for the property. It might be beneficial to explore whether that site could be used to develop more public parking in exchange for greater building height through a public private partnership in the future. The City also owns a small portion of this site, and it may choose whether to lease that portion of the property to the new owners.
- The nine story building across from the former Hunter House property has insufficient parking for its use. This will be reviewed by City boards and the Commission at a future date.
- The City may be able to regulate the subject matter allowed on blimps and drones transiting the City's airspace.

Public Comment

Mr. Bloom commented regarding potentially licensing certain drone operators in the City as a revenue source, parking for the users of the former Hunter House site and the former Ethan Allen site, and conducting a review of how parking should be addressed within the former Parking Assessment District area.

E. Birmingham Shopping District

1. Business Recruitment/Retention
2. Willits Alley Enhancements
3. Marketing/Social Media
4. Event Management

BSDD Bassett presented the item and staff answered questions.

Commissioners discussed the following regarding the item:

- There is interest in learning more about whether Birmingham's tourism might qualify it for opportunities municipalities with less tourism might not have access to. While Detroit has been

exploring implementing an entertainment tax, it would likely require changes to state law to implement that.

- Residents liked when lights were strung across Merrill and there would be interest in recreating that.
- Some alleyways in Detroit, such as the ones near Shinola or Hudson's Tower, could be used as inspiration for some of Birmingham's vias and alleys.
- Determining whether there is a way for Birmingham to convert social media views into revenue could be useful.
- Understanding the number of net new businesses would be of interest.

F. Fire Department

1. Fire Apparatus Replacement Plan Update

FC Bartalino presented the item and staff answered questions.

G. Police Department

1. Police Department Security, Building Redesign & Expansion

PC Grewe presented the item and staff answered questions.

Commissioners discussed the following regarding the item:

- The carport could likely support solar panels, which could make the electricity for the carport self-generating.
- The garage space could be converted and used for meetings and/or storage.
- If the rear of City Hall will be losing parking spaces in order to install the sallyport and the carport, it might be appropriate to reserve a few parking spaces in the front of City Hall for public use.
- It might also be appropriate to close and cover parking in the rear of City Hall to the public for security reasons.

Public Comment

Mr. Bloom supported creating fitness facilities for the Police Department at 400 E. Lincoln.

H. Parking

1. Comprehensive Parking Structure Repair and Design Program
2. Peabody Parking Garage - Potential Vertical Expansion
3. Evening Monthly Parking Program

PSM Ford presented the items and staff answered informational questions from the Commission.

Commissioners discussed the following regarding the item:

- Chester and Peabody are the newest decks and the least likely to be redeveloped. North Old Woodward would likely most benefit from a public private partnership.
- In 2018, a survey indicated that users of Chester were dissatisfied with the experience. It could be beneficial to conduct a small survey to see whether users are now benefiting from the improvements at Chester.
- Expanding Peabody vertically would have positive externalities for the surrounding businesses.
- The evening monthly parking program could designate the top of decks for those users and discount it further.
- Given that the City charges less than Detroit for parking and faces high parking demand, it would likely be appropriate to consider adding more parking in the future and evaluate parking rate increases.
- The City could add more paid parking. Parking system funds can be used towards the parking system.
- It could be worth exploring whether parking funds could be used to maintain or improve portions of the road where paid parking occurs.
- The decks often still have parking spaces available. Some of the perception of increased parking demand stems from a desire to park very near one's destination.
- The City does not presently adjust parking rates based on inflation.
- Users of the parking system would likely prefer to keep rates lower if provided the option.

Public Comment

Mr. Bloom supported clarifying whether the parking fund can support possible future deck maintenance and/or construction.

J. IT

1. Infrastructure/Security & AI

ITD Brunk presented the item.

K. Clerk's Office

1. Elections and Voting
2. Software
3. Record Retention

CC Bingham presented the items and staff answered questions.

L. Building Department

1. Building Department
2. Facility Department

BO Zielke and BMS Galik presented the items and staff answered questions.

M. Library

LD Craft presented the items and staff answered questions.

Commissioners discussed the following regarding the item:

- The Baldwin Library is an essential part of the community.
- LD Craft was commended on her recognition as Michigan Librarian of the Year, and for increasing foot traffic and borrowing of materials.
- The Library's operation as a warming center sends a very positive message to the community.
- Bird glass might have to be reviewed vis-a-vis the City's window glazing requirements.
- Both of the City's firehouses function as warming centers in the event of a cold weather emergency as well.
- There was interest in understanding how many birds per year may presently be impacted by the lack of bird glass.

Public Comment

Mr. Bloom supported advancing funds to the Library so that it might be able to purchase a generator in the nearer term, and did not support the installation of bird glass.

N. Museum

1. Landscape Masterplan
2. America's 250th Anniversary Commemoration

MD Pielack presented the items.

O. Human Resources

1. 2026 LRP Workforce Challenges and Solutions

HRM Woods and CM Ecker presented the item and staff answered questions.

Commissioners discussed the following regarding the item:

- The City noted that it has been somewhat challenging to retain employees for the longer-term after their retirement benefits have vested at the five-year mark. The difficulty in retaining mid-level employees is faced in some private companies as well.
- It seems that the City is facing challenges in attracting and retaining employees in some contexts.
- Offering staff increased opportunities to work remotely would likely help attract and retain employees, and would also yield sustainability benefits.
- It is sometimes valuable to hire contractors and/or temporary positions for certain functions within the City.
- Better understanding the City's adoption of new technologies might impact requests for new staff positions could be helpful.

O. Manager's Office

1. Communications Overview - New & Coming Soon
2. Community Survey - Timeline & Next Steps

CD Gamboa and ACM Fairbairn presented the items and staff answered questions.

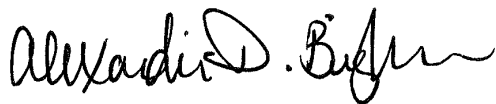
Commissioners discussed the following regarding the item:

- The City makes a good faith effort to communicate with residents.
- The City conducts an impressive amount of outreach.
- There are compliance and legality restrictions for how email addresses should be collected and how they may be used once collected.

The Mayor thanked all those who participated in the City’s long range planning process.

5. ADJOURN

No further business being evident, the Commission motioned to adjourn at 2:57 p.m.



Alexandria Bingham, City Clerk



Laura Eichenhorn, City Transcriptionist