

Birmingham City Commission-Planning Board Minutes

June 10, 2024

Baldwin Public Library – Rotary Room

300 W. Merrill

7:30 p.m.

Vimeo Link: <https://vimeo.com/967258500>

I. CALL TO ORDER AND PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Mayor Elaine McLain called the meeting to order at 7:30 p.m.

II. ROLL CALL

Commission

ROLL CALL:

Present:

Mayor McLain

Mayor Pro Tem Schafer

Commissioner Baller

Commissioner Haig

Commissioner Host

Commissioner Long

Commissioner Longe

Absent:

None

Planning Board

ROLL CALL:

Present:

Chair Scott Clein

Robin Boyle

Bert Koseck

Daniel Share

Janelle Whipple-Boyce

Bryan Williams

Jason Emerine, alternate

Absent:

Stuart Jeffares

Nasseem Ramin, alternate

Staff: City Manager Ecker; City Clerk Bingham, Senior Planner Cowan, Planning Director Dupuis, City Attorney Kucharek

III. PUBLIC COMMENT

The City of Birmingham welcomes public comment limited at the Mayor's discretion to allow for an efficient meeting. The Commission will not participate in a question and answer session and will take no action on any item not appearing on the posted agenda. The public can also speak to agenda items as they occur when the presiding officer opens the floor to the public. When recognized by the presiding officer, state your name for the record, and direct all comments or questions to the presiding officer.

IV. DISCUSSION TOPICS

A. The Birmingham Plan 2040 - Prioritization of Key Actions

PD Dupuis presented the item and answered informational questions.

Commissioner and Planning Board member discussion of the item was as follows:

- This document represents the Planning Board's efforts to begin implementation of the 2040 Plan. The Planning Board views its role as an operational point for the process. The Planning Board aims to meet with other boards and committees in order to encourage collaboration between boards and to support the 2040 Plan's implementation.
- Some of the items on the list will require further study in order to determine whether their implementation will be appropriate. The process of implementing the 2040 Plan will occur over an extended period.
- Changes to the zoning ordinance are a priority. All zoning ordinance changes recommended by the Planning Board will first undergo study.
- Parking appeared on the Commission's priority list and not the Planning Board's because the overall direction of parking policy is within the Commission's purview.

The Commission could, however, direct the Planning Board to explore potential changes to the City's parking.

- On-street and off-street parking policies should likely be Commission-driven.
- Issues regarding Woodward remain a significant priority for many residents.
- The Planning Board would be seeking guidance from the Commission on a number of items on the list, with an emphasis on the policy-driven items. Some of those items could also be resolved by the Commission directly if preferred.
- In order to guide some of these planning decisions, the Commission will need education regarding the relevant topics.
- The Planning Board and the City administration may be able to provide the Commission with some of the requisite education.
- The Planning Board's process of organizing and prioritizing the action items evolved organically, since this is how governing bodies usually begin the implementation of master and strategic plans.
- The prioritization list was well done and would serve as a very helpful guide for future discussion and review.
- The pie chart in the staff presentation indicated that Woodward and parking were addressed more often in the 2040 Plan than street improvements. The Commission has been focusing heavily on street improvements as of late. The difference between the priorities of the 2040 Plan and the Commission's efforts was of note.
- It would be helpful to designate which items on each list could be easier or more quick to resolve.
- All items on multiple boards' priority lists were ranked in the same order of priority. This was done to ensure that those topics would be addressed by all relevant boards in concert and contemporaneously. Each board should receive information on how working on shared items would work.
- The Commission should encourage the other boards to undertake the work on their priority lists.
- The Planning Board's work on this list deserved commendation, and the idea of collaborating with other boards on a number of items was excellent.
- Any topics relating to the public parking system should likely receive review from the Advisory Parking Committee.
- It could be helpful for the Advisory Parking Committee to perform a review of the present on-street parking restrictions and to provide their recommendations for simplifying those restrictions. It might be appropriate for a consultant to be involved in that process.

There was a consensus by the Commission that the Planning Board had appropriately organized and prioritized the key actions included in the 2040 Plan, and that the Commission should create a future agenda item in order to direct the related boards and Commissions to commence work on the associated key actions.

Public Comment

Larry Lyng Ling¹ complimented the 2040 Plan in general and opposed potential future zoning changes to Bird Avenue.

B. Woodward Avenue

PD Dupuis presented the item and staff answered informational questions.

Commissioner and Planning Board member discussion of the item was as follows:

- Addressing Woodward Avenue would be an extensive process that will require consultants, lobbying, and other approaches.
- Better integrating Woodward into the City and mitigating some of its negative impacts is a priority.
- Technology and AI is helping improve the experience of Woodward.
- The reduction of noise and pedestrian crossings on Woodward are more critical items. The south Woodward gateway between Lincoln and 14 Mile will take a longer time to address because it involves private property.
- Implementing the recommended changes to the south Woodward gateway between Lincoln and 14 Mile could result in long-term improvements to that area.
- It would be helpful to hear whether the Commission is interested in addressing the Woodward-related action items in the list.

¹As amended at the July 8, 2024 meeting.

- Creative solutions to the issues facing Birmingham vis-a-vis Woodward would be welcome.
- Adding more frequent crosswalks along Woodward could be beneficial.
- Persuading MDOT to permit the reduction of speeds, a road diet, and improved crosswalk timing would significantly improve the Birmingham Woodward experience. This, and reducing the noise impact of Woodward, are top priorities.
- The impact of traffic volumes and potential bottlenecks in Birmingham would need to be considered.
- While Woodward must remain a high priority, it should be addressed at the same time as zoning since many of the potential changes to Woodward are within MDOT's discretion and not the City's.
- The Planning Board should recommend ways of improving the south end of Woodward.

Public Comment

Mr. Ling supported addressing noise and speeds on Woodward.

C. Public Project Review Process

PD Dupuis presented the item and staff answered informational questions.

Commissioner and Planning Board member discussion of the item was as follows:

- There has been Planning Board frustration that public projects are not reviewed similarly to private projects.
- The Commission's fiduciary responsibility and the City's desire for excellence in projects sometimes conflicts.
- The City could benefit from Planning Board feedback on public projects.
- It is odd that the City imposes a number of standards on private projects that it does not impose on public projects.
- It may be appropriate for the public project process to have a point early on where the Planning Board provides comment on the project, even if those comments are initially advisory in capacity. Those projects should also be brought to the Planning Board for review at the pre-application stage and at the final design stage.
- The zoning ordinance does not grant the Planning Board authority to conduct a site plan and design review on a public project. In addition, there are no development standards for a public project. It may be appropriate to add provisions for the Planning Board's review of public projects.
- The review process for public projects could also stand to be more robust and transparent.
- The review process for public process could cause more work for the Planning Board.
- The earlier in the process the Planning Board can be involved, the more likely there is to be a positive outcome. The Planning Board could even provide input on the RFP process.
- While the Commission must be cognizant of public finances, many public projects have required further revisions which increases the costs of projects as well. The Planning Board's early review could reduce the likelihood of that occurring.
- It would be most beneficial for the public project and the private project review processes to be the same. This would not likely have an outsized impact on the Planning Board's workload, since larger public projects occur relatively infrequently.
- The changes to the zoning ordinance that would allow for public review by the Planning Board could be implemented as part of the broader zoning ordinance process. It could also be written in such a way that the process would comply with the necessities of the RFP process.
- The City Attorney should be involved in the process of changing the public review process from the outset.
- Whenever working with a public-private partnership model, it would be helpful to have staff or consultants educated and equipped to provide guidance on how those partnerships work.
- It might be appropriate for the City to include all potential future capital improvement projects, including significant public projects, in its long range planning processes.

There was a consensus that the Commission wanted to require a formal, thorough site

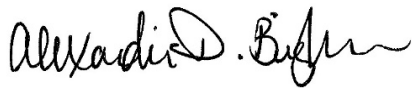
plan and design review for public development projects, that the Planning Board should be involved, and that the Commission wants to develop a guide based on the recommendations of the 2040 plan outlining a set of standards for the review of public projects.

It was noted that other boards and committees would sometimes be involved in the public review process as well.

V. COMMUNICATIONS

VI. ADJOURN

The Commission motioned to adjourn at 9:42 p.m.



Alexandria Bingham, City Clerk



Laura Eichenhorn, City Transcriptionist