

Birmingham City Commission Special Meeting Minutes - Workshop

August 11, 2025

Municipal Building, 151 Martin

6:00 p.m.

Vimeo Link: vimeo.com/1109156456

This will be considered a workshop session of the City Commission. No formal actions will be taken. The purpose of this workshop is to discuss the 400 East Lincoln property.

I. Call to Order

Therese Longe, Mayor

II. Roll Call

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

Absent: None

Staff: City Manager Ecker; City Clerk Bingham, Planning Director Dupuis, Assistant City Manager Fairbairn, Information Technology Assistant Hilla, City Attorney Kucharek

III. Presentation and Commission Discussion

A. Potential Options

The Mayor introduced the item and CM Ecker presented the item. Staff answered informational questions from the Commission.

B. City Commission Discussion and Comment

Commissioners made the following comments during discussion:

- Before costs rose substantially, there was a fair amount of support for this project. It would be positive for Next to have a more fitting location than an elementary school. Birmingham should do better by its seniors. The YMCA has operated within the City to residents' benefit for decades.
- Once the costs for the project returned with an over 20% increase, it became clear that the costs were prohibitive. The Commission is charged with making decisions that benefit residents both fiscally and otherwise.
- The current economic and construction circumstances are not conducive to moving forward with this project presently. The City has a number of competing infrastructure priorities that also require funding.
- Option number two is not likely to yield appropriate benefits proportionate to the investment. The building would likely have prohibitive operational costs. There were reasons the YMCA previously elected not to pursue rehabilitation of this building. The third option would have significant operational and repair costs as well.
- The City was considering a mutually-beneficial collaboration with the YMCA in order to keep more affordable recreational opportunities available for residents. It is not accurate to say that the City was going to be 'bailing out' the YMCA. The City would have to expend significant resources to approximate the kinds of recreational opportunities available to residents via YMCA membership.
- It was disappointing that the City would not likely be able to move forward at this time.
- During his second period with the City, former City Manager Markus worked diligently to try and find appropriate locations for Next. Other City officials have called on other community resources to attempt to find suitable locations. No one has been able to locate another appropriate option at this time.
- If the City proceeded with honoring the MOU, it would not have to be a permanent solution. This could be a temporary location for Next, with the understanding that the City would not want to continue owning the building in its present condition in perpetuity.
- The Commission was facing a significant challenge in weighing the available options. The community, staff, and Commission all want to do the right thing by residents.

IV. Public Comment

Sheila Bryce commented appreciation for the City's accessibility and transparency efforts, appreciation for all the work on this project, and support for option three.

Susan Randall supported a staged improvement of the building, supported the YMCA largely vacating the building per the original proposal, supported a senior-specific facility, and commented regarding costs, future utilization of the building, and that Next seemed to mostly need more space during special events.

Jenny Cohen supported updating the facility for Next's use, possibly allowing residents to pay a fee for pool use, and option three with staged improvements in the future.

Thomas Brady supported continuing offering a pool for community benefit.

Mike Clift supported the provision of expanded recreational facilities for Birmingham residents, supported the co-location of Next and a recreational facility, commented regarding the YMCA's offer to cover operational costs for the facility, and commented regarding the possible challenges of Next trying to cover the operational costs of the present building alone.

Susie Vestivich commented her appreciation of Rochester's OPC and Social Activity Center (the OPC), commented regarding the cost per person for this project, supported an operational pool, supported accessible space for seniors within the facility, supported residents of other communities paying to use the facility, and supported creating an elegant space for seniors and the community.

Mary Simms supported increasing resident access to the community's extant pools in the interim in order to serve residents.

Dave Underdown commented his concurrence with Ms. Bryce, supported finding donors for the project, and commented his appreciation for the Commission's work.

Judy Martin commented regarding the supportive community at Next, commented regarding the differences between the OPC and Next, and commented appreciation for the Commission's comments.

Parrish Underwood, President and CEO of the YMCA of Metropolitan Detroit, commented regarding the process and the YMCA's goals of serving the community.

Dan Share supported determining what cost would seem appropriate to the Commission, and searching for ways to create a new facility within that cost constraint that would better serve the community into the future.

Bert Koseck opposed Option C, commented that construction costs only tend to increase, and supported building a center for the community and Next while preserving a space where another non-profit might join in the future if appropriate.

Kristy Barrett supported exploring alternative options for supporting the community, seniors, and Next.

Rackeline Hoff supported Option C, commenting that a phased approach to improving the facility seemed appropriate.

George Dilgard supported the present project, and commented that if the present project is not pursued, Option C could be implemented as a very temporary measure while another plan for Next and the seniors is developed and pursued.

Donald Brundirks commented that Next maintains a strong financial position.

Cris Braun, Director of Next, commented that all participating communities help fund Next's operating costs, that the work of all involved in this process was appreciated, and that Next would be comfortable with Option C and a further phased improvement process.

Marcia Wilkinson commented support for the City implementing the terms of the Memorandum of Understanding, that the Next Board supported this as well, and that a further phased improvement would be appropriate.

Linda Barclay supported implementing Option C with a further phased improvement, supported accessibility for

people who use canes, and noted that supporting Next supports the City’s aging-in-place goals.

Frederick Sims opposed Option C, and supported an indoor environmental air inspection.

Gordon Rinschler commented his thanks to all involved, supported Option C with further phased improvements, and supported developing additional recreation and fitness facilities through the City’s other planning processes.

Paul Reagan commented regarding the support the YMCA offered to this project, and commented regarding the YMCA’s value to Birmingham residents.

David Bloom supported a phased improvement approach, and supported increased financial support from the other participating communities.

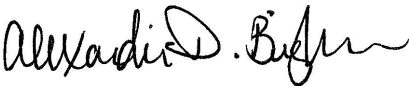
Commissioners raised the following points during discussion:

- Unique opportunities cannot necessarily be capitalized upon every time.
- Many people are invested in the outcome of this project.
- Mr. Underwood has been a remarkable collaborator throughout this process.
- Option C was always on the table and reflects the City’s commitment to Next and seniors in the community.

The Mayor thanked everyone present.

V. Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at 7:27 p.m.



Alexandria Bingham, City Clerk



Laura Eichenhorn, City Transcriptionist