

City of Ann Arbor Planning Commission Retreat Notes

Jury Assembly Room, Justice Center – 301 E. Huron, Ann Arbor, MI 48104

March 30, 2017 • 2:00 – 6:00 p.m.



Commissioners Present:

Ken Clein, Chair; Sara Mills, Secretary; Zach Ackerman; Erica Briggs; Shannan Gibb-Randall; Scott Trudeau; Julie Weatherbee; Wendy Woods

Commissioners Absent:

Alex Milshteyn, Vice-Chair

Staff Present:

Jon Barrett; Chris Cheng; Alexis DiLeo; Mia Gale; Jeff Kahan; Matt Kowalski; Brett Lenart; Jill Thacher; Julie Tschirhart

Overview of Committee Structure/Appointees

The Planning Commission has several subcommittees and appointments that have evolved over time. The purpose of this discussion was to ensure that the Planning Commission has adequately identified representatives for needed roles. Based on a demanding Planning Commission schedule, the discussion also considered whether the current committee structure should be maintained or adjusted.

Lenart provided an overview of existing committees and Commissioners discussed representation to each:

Affordable Housing Subcommittee - This committee is comprised of two members each from the Planning Commission and Housing and Human Services Advisory Board, and typically a City Council representative that shares appointments to both boards. The purpose of this committee is to seek opportunities and options to achieve the City's affordable housing goals through investments and regulations. This group has met periodically over the past few years, but does not have an adopted meeting schedule.

The Commission discussed maintenance of this committee as important given the prioritization of affordable housing by the City.

Commissioners Ackerman, Briggs, and Trudeau expressed interest in serving on this committee.

Capital Improvements Committee - This subcommittee of the Planning Commission is traditionally comprised of three or four Commissioners and provides feedback to City staff on development of the annual Capital Improvements Plan, and provides advice to the full Planning Commission toward consideration of the developed document. This group meets over a multi-month period in summer/fall leading up to Planning Commission consideration late each year. Records indicate that the last meeting of this subcommittee was in 2014.

Lenart summarized that in the past, this subcommittee had a substantial role in drafting the capital improvements plan. Staff now performs this work on behalf of the commission, and a prioritization process that has evolved over time. Additionally, the full Planning Commission often discusses and has detailed questions about the Capital Improvements Plan. Based on this discussion, the Planning Commission concluded that this committee will be eliminated.

Citizen Outreach Committee - This committee had performed some work on establishment of the Citizen Participation Ordinance (CPO), as well as some evaluation of the CPO after adoption. The group has not met for a few years, and most recently considered changes to the CPO around mailing requirements, recommended meeting structure, and reductions to mailing requirements.

The Planning Commission discussed this committee and reflected that any future changes the citizen participation ordinance could likely occur through the Ordinance Revisions Committee, or a dedicated committee for a shorter duration of time or topic area. The Planning Commission concluded that this standing committee will be eliminated.

Master Plan Review Committee - The Master Plan Review Committee is a subcommittee of the Planning Commission that provides strategic direction and advice on the City's Master Plan. This committee has historically been comprised of 3-5 commissioners. This work can include advising staff and the full Planning Commission on work scope, prioritization, and other guidance toward development and maintenance of the City's Master Plan. Records indicate that the last meeting of this subcommittee was in 2014.

Commissioners Clein, Gibb-Randall, Mills, and Weatherbee expressed interest in serving on this committee.

Ordinance Revisions Committee - This Subcommittee of the Planning Commission has been comprised of 3-5 commissioners in the past. While committee meetings are held open to the public, it is advisable that committees be smaller than a quorum of the full Commission. This Committee typically meets on the 4th Tuesday of each month at 7:00 p.m. This committee reviews proposed ordinance changes or new ordinances and provides analysis and feedback to staff prior to consideration of ordinance amendments by the full Planning Commission.

Commissioners Ackerman, Briggs, Clein, Mills, and Woods expressed interest in serving on this committee.

Planning Commission Appointments

There are numerous other Boards, Commissions, and project committees that include a representative of the Planning Commission. Currently these are:

Allen Creek Greenway - The Allen Creek Greenway Plan being led by the City includes a Citizen's Advisory Committee, which is comprised of numerous stakeholders to advise the progression of the Study. This group meets on a periodic basis and provides input and guidance to City staff on advancing plans for a greenway through the City. Commissioner Mills continues in this role.

DDA Partnerships Committee - This group provides updates on projects that are relevant to the DDA district from partners' lenses. Other participants with the DDA include AAATA, City Council, Washtenaw Community College, and Washtenaw County. The partnership provides an opportunity to learn about

shared project impacts and to discuss potential coordination. The DDA Partnerships Committee is a committee. The DDA Partnerships Committee meets on the 2nd Wednesday of every other month at 9:00 a.m. Commissioner Gibb-Randall serves in this role.

Environmental Commission - Established in 2000, the Environmental Commission advises and makes recommendations to the City Council and City Administrator on environmental policy, environmental issues and environmental implications of all City programs and proposals on the air, water, land and public health. To help coordinate an integrated environmental approach, the Planning Commission appoints one member to this group. The Environmental Commission meets on the 4th Thursday of each month at 7:00 p.m. Previously, Commissioner Woods served in this role, but is unable to continue due to conflicts. No Commissioner volunteered for this role.

Zoning Board of Appeals - One member of the Zoning Board of Appeals may be a member of the Planning Commission. Currently no Planning Commission members are appointed to the Zoning Board of Appeals. The Zoning Board of Appeals meets on the 4th Wednesday of the Month at 6:00 p.m. This appointment is made by the City Council.

Commissioner Weatherbee asked questions about this board and will follow up with staff to learn more about the appointment.

Activity

Commissioners Ackerman and Trudeau won the tower building competition, and bragging rights forever, for their superior playing-card structure skills.

Master Plan Approaches - There have been numerous discussion of master plan updates over the past few years. To facilitate a discussion of potential approaches to master plans, the Planning Commission organized into four groups. Each group took up a master plan scenario to consider and present to the group. Each group was to consider strengths and weaknesses of the approach, potential resource impacts in cost or time, and ultimately why the approach is the best way to advance land use policy in the City.

Scenario One – “Master Plan 2020” *The City of Ann Arbor will draft a new Land Use Element Master Plan. The effort will include significant community engagement, consider the community experience over the past decade, and craft a new master plan to meet the needs of the City for the next 20+ years. This effort will “start from scratch” and look at the City through a refreshed lens.*

This was approach was seen as likely the most time and resource consuming, potentially in the range of 2-3 years, and \$500,000-\$750,000 in cost.

Scenario Two - Implementation and Prioritization Master Planning *-With eight documents comprising the City’s “Master Plan” and 18 resource documents providing further direction, it’s time to focus less on adding to the canon of literature that guides land use policy in the City, but rather implementation of the existing goals and objectives. This effort will involve a significant effort to consolidate the goals and objectives from these documents to look for completed tasks and shared priorities of multiple planning documents to guide the most urgent future work.*

There was much discussion of this approach, and many commissioners found this to be the most compelling place to start. This approach resonates with commissioners, as it builds on the work completed in the past.

Scenario Three - Sub-Area Master Planning - While the consolidation of the four Area Plans circa 2009 was a great advancement to consolidate City Planning goals, there have been numerous changing conditions in distinct areas of the City. For this Master Plan approach, we will focus on a sub area of the City, potentially along corridors, where we will dive deep into the land use and regulatory framework in this portion of the City to update the master plan recommendations for this specific sub-geography of the City.

Scenario Four - Issue Master Planning - Through the Sustainability Framework and the Housing Affordability and Equity Analysis, the City has adopted two documents that often rise to a high level of consideration in the context of land use planning. This approach to evaluating our master plan documents will focus on the opportunities to make policy recommendations that broadly apply to numerous master planning goals to advance sustainability and housing affordability issues in our community. With perhaps a less geographic focus, this scenario will have us look at master plans with an eye toward operational or affordable housing recommendations that will advance community goals.

These two scenarios led to discussions over corridor planning, as an opportunity to meet many of the goals of the City, in potentially one effort. Sustainability, affordability, and new parking approaches, were all considered important components of corridor planning initiatives. Scenario two and corridor planning were considered to be the highest priority for master planning efforts.

Ordinance Prioritization

Similar to master plan discussion, numerous propose ordinance amendments have been considered over the past several years. This discussion intends to provide an overview of these changes, some sense of the origination of the idea, and an exercise to consider prioritization of these changes. For this Exercise, staff and Planning Commission categorized potential Ordinance Amendments into three Categories: Must undertake, Want to undertake, or Could undertake.

Based on this discussion, a series of ordinance amendments that have been considered or mentioned were discussed and categorized, as well as providing an opportunity for other ideas to be considered. Finally, the proposed ordinance changes were ranked through voting to further prioritize potential amendments (indicated by (#) of votes received). Several proposed changes (*) were the highest priority based on current progress and/or priorities. Here is a summary of this discussion:

Must	Want	Could
Sign Ordinance (Contract forthcoming) (*)	Development Review Thresholds (reconsider plan approval levels) (3)	Food Trucks (2)
ZORO (Long term project needs completion) (*)	Reevaluate Planned Project Requirements and Standards (3)	Access Management Standards (1)
Medical Marijuana Updates (State law change) (*)	R4C Zoning Amendments (3)	Reevaluate M1 & M2 Districts Intent and Permitted Uses (1)
Incentivizing Sustainability (11)	Home Occupations (2)	Averaging Front Setbacks

Transit Oriented Development (8)	Short Term Rentals (1)	Active Use Requirements for Ground Floor Downtown
Parking Standards in City (7)	Electric Vehicle Infrastructure (1)	
Building Frontage Design Standards (windows, transparency, etc.) (7)	Front Porch Encroachment in Front Setback (1)	
Conditional Zoning Standards (3)	Fraternity/Sorority Affiliation Requirement	
Parking Standards Downtown (5)	Retail Sales in M Districts greater than 10% of floor area/Manufacturing in Commercial Districts	
Further Incentivize ADUs (1)	Solar Readiness	
Car Share Space Equivalent Calculation	Landmark Tree Revisions	