

**Birmingham City Commission-Planning Board**  
**October 23, 2023**  
**Department Of Public Services – 851 S. Eton**  
**7:30 p.m.**  
**Vimeo Link: <https://vimeo.com/875713393>**

**I. CALL TO ORDER AND PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

Mayor Therese Longe called the meeting to order at 7:30 p.m.

**II. ROLL CALL**

Commission

ROLL CALL:

Present: Mayor Longe  
Mayor Pro Tem McLain  
Commissioner Baller  
Commissioner Boutros  
Commissioner Haig  
Commissioner Host

Absent: Commissioner Schafer

Planning Board

ROLL CALL:

Present: Robin Boyle  
Bert Koseck  
Daniel Share  
Janelle Whipple-Boyce  
Bryan Williams  
Nasseem Ramin, alternate

Absent: Chair Scott Clein  
Stuart Jeffares  
Jason Emerine, alternate  
Asher Kaftan, student  
Matthew Wiegand, student

Staff: City Manager Ecker; City Clerk Bingham, Planning Director Dupuis, City Attorney Koleci

**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.

Frank Colosanti, Jr. made a comment critical of some of the kinds of construction allowed by ordinance, and in support of affordability and aging in place.

**IV. DISCUSSION TOPICS**

PD Dupuis presented the items. Staff answered informational questions from the Commission.

## A. Short-term Zoning Ordinance Modifications and Next Steps

Commissioner and Board member comments were as follows:

- In the case of properties that do not comply with the ordinance, the City should review its processes and specify consequences;
- The ordinance should continue to be modified to promote aging in place;
- The Planning Board is an extremely professional board and deserves commendation;
- The Planning Board should feel empowered to explore and address planning-related topics as it sees fit, and to then make planning-related recommendations to the Commission;
- Single family homes are mostly only evaluated for ordinance and code compliance. Their designs are not assessed by the City in most cases, and single family homes very rarely appear before the Planning Board;
- For the 2040 Plan, it would be appropriate for the Planning Board to consider how best to structure implementation, and to proffer preliminary recommendations to the Commission in March 2024;
- It might be appropriate to consider quarterly reports from the Planning Board to the Commission, to be presented by the Planning Director, during which the Commission could provide feedback if necessary;
- Each recommendation from the 2040 Plan would be reviewed at both the Planning Board and the Commission before implementation;
- The Commission would have an opportunity to weigh in on priorities from the 2040 Plan in March 2024;
- The Planning Board should review how best to implement the 2040 Plan recommendation that there be efforts to maintain the character of each neighborhood;
- Certain aspects of single family residential design are legislated within the ordinance;
- It would be useful to have consultants in to educate the Planning Board on how other communities implement single family residential design standards, and for both the Planning Board and Commission to discuss what might be appropriate for those standards;
- Alternatively, it might not be worthwhile to legislate style or design guidelines for single family residences. The demolition of older homes tends not to represent a significant loss to the City, and the new builds tend to represent what residents want;
- Part of Birmingham's uniqueness is its diversity of architectural styles;
- The Commission's commendation of the Planning Board was appreciated;
- The Commission should understand that many items in the 2040 Plan would affect the City in a holistic way but would not be driven by Planning Board decisions;
- If the Planning Board is tasked with making recommendations for implementation of the 2040 Plan, the Commission should understand that some of those recommendations would likely include recommendations for Commission actions, unless there was Commissioner discomfort with that aspect of the process;
- It would be valuable for the Commission to have joint meetings with other City boards;
- The deliverables from the present meeting will include the Planning Board's recommendations on addressing the smaller actions and on implementing the 2040 Plan;
- In terms of process, it will be important for the City to create ordinances that reflect the 2040 Plan's goals;
- It might be useful for some Planning Board members, Building Department Staff, Planning Department Staff, and professionals that work in the City to provide and review recommendations on ways the City's ordinances could be improved;
- It is important to remember that interpretations of ordinances and plans evolve over time, and that changes to the ordinances can be made based on those evolving understandings.

It would not be possible for all eventualities to be foreseen when initially writing ordinances, however, and that should not be expected; and,

- Improving the ordinances vis-a-vis the neighborhoods is important as well.

It was stated that the Planning Department would have a spreadsheet that could be viewed by the public in order to indicate the City's progress in implementing the 2040 Plan.

### Public Comment

David Bloom made comments in support of making the City's ordinances, and enforcement of said ordinances, more simple, clear, and consistent.

Jodee Gibson made a comment regarding signage asking drivers to slow down.

### B. Sustainability

Commissioner and Board member comments were as follows:

- All boards across the City should consider sustainability as part of their work;
- Some ostensible sustainability improvements are actually more resource-intensive than normal practices. It would be important to discern the difference between improvements that seem sustainable and improvements that are sustainable;
- Sustainability could be encouraged through different mechanisms, including changing the tax code to encourage renovations over demolitions;
- While the Planning Board is invested in promoting sustainability, it would be helpful for the Planning Board to collaborate with the Ad Hoc Environmental Sustainability Board to learn more about appropriate planning-related sustainability strategies. This collaboration could include joint meetings between the two boards;
- The City should explore ways of allowing residents to have front yards that are more sustainable than traditional lawns;
- The City should explore the creation of a landscaper code of conduct;
- The City should explore which sustainability goals would be easy to achieve and/or yield significant impact;
- Climate change is presently advancing faster than most governments are addressing it, and Birmingham should aim to deviate from that trend;
- PD Dupuis seems to be functioning as the de facto sustainability czar, and perhaps should be appointed as such; and,
- Maintaining existing buildings and infrastructure, requiring long-lasting construction materials, and encouraging or requiring systems that slow rainwater's entry into the sewer systems are some ways of promoting sustainability in the City.

### Public Comment

David Bloom made comments regarding sustainability topics including support for increased pervious surface requirements.

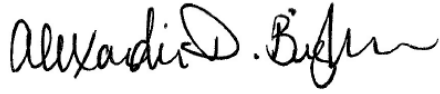
Commissioner Boutros noted this would be his last joint meeting with the Planning Board and thanked each Planning Board member for their work on the Board.

The Mayor thanked the Planning Board for their work as well.

**V. COMMUNICATIONS**

**VI. ADJOURN**

Seeing no further comment, Mayor Longe adjourned the meeting at 9:28 p.m.



Alexandria Bingham, City Clerk



Laura Eichenhorn, City Transcriptionist