

**Birmingham City Commission**  
**Long Range Planning Minutes**  
**January 23, 2021**  
**Virtual Meeting**  
**8:30 A.M.**  
**Meeting ID: 655 079 760**  
**Video Link: <https://vimeo.com/392335194>**

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

Pierre Boutros, Mayor, opened the meeting with the Pledge of Allegiance.

**II. ROLL CALL**

Abrial Hauff, Deputy City Clerk, called the roll.

Present: Mayor Boutros (location: Birmingham, MI)  
Mayor Pro Tem Longe (location: Birmingham, MI)  
Commissioner Baller (location: Birmingham, MI)  
Commissioner Hoff (location: Birmingham, MI)  
Commissioner Host (location: Birmingham, MI)  
Commissioner Nickita (location: Birmingham, MI)  
Commissioner Sherman (arrived at 9:00 a.m.) (left at 2:20pm) (location: Birmingham, MI)

Absent: None

Administration: City Manager Markus; Police Chief Mark Clemence, City Planner Cowan, Library Director Craft, City Attorney Currier, City Planner Dupuis, Planning Director Ecker, Communications Director Gamboa, Police Operations Commander Grewe, Deputy City Clerk Hauff, City Attorney Kucharek, Parks and Recreation Manager Laird, Museum Director Pielack, Consulting City Engineer Surhigh, Fire Chief Wells, DPS Director Wood

**III. PUBLIC COMMENT**

David Bloom shared a list of topics he wanted the City to address. Most of the topics were recently broached at other City meetings. The only two topics not recently raised at other City meetings were his concerns regarding the law firm currently representing the City and his concerns regarding current returns on the City's pension fund.

**IV. DISCUSSION ITEMS**

**I. Finance**

**A. Five-Year Financial Forecast**

Finance Director Gerber introduced the item.

Timothy St. Andrew from Plante Moran presented the item.

Commissioners Hoff, Host, and Baller asked questions.

FD Gerber explained:

- The CDGB funds were included in with the other federal funds;
- The project infrastructure cost for E. Lincoln to Humphrey went up due to increasing construction costs and the project was delayed because the City could not afford to undertake it last year;
- FY 2023-2024 for local streets includes money for repairs of two streets, cape sealing projects, and \$500,000 for not yet scheduled street improvements;
- FY 2021-2022 and 2022-2023 also include \$500,000 each for not yet scheduled street improvements;
- State shared revenue will be approximately the same amount as in years past;
- Capital spending projects for sewers is lower towards the end of the projection only because projects have not yet been scheduled; and,
- Having about \$5 million each in unrestricted net positions for the water and sewer funds is appropriate. Those amounts will decrease as more projects are scheduled.

Public Comment

Mr. Bloom said only residents, and not developers, should benefit from subsidized building permit fees and inspection fees.

**II. Public Services**

DPS Director Wood introduced this section of the agenda.

A. Parks & Recreation Bond Timeline

Parks and Rec Manager Laird reviewed the item.

Commissioner Baller and Mayor Boutros spoke in favor of expediting the plans for the pickleball court to be done in Spring 2021 if at all possible. Commissioner Baller suggested that if the permanent court could not be completed by then that a temporary one be installed in Spring 2021 until the permanent one is available in Spring 2022. Mayor Boutros stated residents are so enthusiastic about pickleball that the City might also want to partner with an operator of a local indoor tennis court during the winter months to make year-round pickleball available.

Commissioners Hoff and Nickita asked why the Rouge River Trail was so low on the priority list, and said they would like to see it moved up given the amount of planning and discussion that has occurred regarding the project.

Commissioner Hoff said she was confident in the Parks and Recreation Board but said they are also relatively new. She said she was concerned that they may not be aware of the previous park concept plans that have been developed, such as the one for Kenning, but not yet implemented. She also asked why the Commission has not reviewed or made suggestions for the priority list.

Commissioner Nickita recalled that there had been a subcommittee that studied options for Booth Park. He recommended that any future plans on Booth Park take that subcommittee's work into account. He said he was also in favor of developing Booth Park Corner since it serves as a trailhead.

Public Comment

Mr. Bloom offered feedback regarding the Ice Arena and Booth Park. He said he agreed with Commissioners Nickita and Hoff regarding the Rouge River Trail.

B. Ice Arena Financial Forecast

Robert Stempien from Plante Moran Cresa reviewed the item.

Commissioner Sherman observed that the \$2 million for Ice Arena repairs already allotted by the City budget would yield the estimated \$300,000/month reductions in utility costs. He noted that the additional \$3.1 million for additional updates being requested from the bond money was not being projected to bring in any further cost reductions or revenue.

Commissioners Nickita and Sherman said they were still concerned about the proposed \$3.1 million expenditure.

Commissioner Baller reminded those present that the Commission has an upcoming workshop to discuss the Ice Arena and recommended this discussion be saved for that workshop.

Public Comment

Mr. Bloom suggested options for increasing revenue for the Ice Arena.

C. Lead Water Line Testing Program

DPS Director Wood reviewed the item.

Public Comment

Mr. Bloom said he would like to know how many properties still have undefined water service.

**III. Engineering**

A. Lead Water Line Replacement Program

Consulting City Engineer Surhigh introduced the item. He also told Mr. Bloom that the City is in the process of updating its information regarding homes with undefined water service.

Mike McDonald of Hubbell, Roth & Clark, Inc. reviewed the item.

Commissioner Host thanked DPS, Engineering, and Mr. McDonald for their proactive work on this item.

FD Gerber stated that the funds for this program are allocated to the operations and maintenance cost in the water fund in the City's budget.

Mr. McDonald stated:

- Michigan requires municipalities to replace all lead water lines between the water main and the water meter;
- The process takes about three hours per affected home; and,
- With a \$5,000 average replacement cost for homes, the costs can range from about \$3,500 to \$6,500.

#### Public Comment

Mr. Bloom asked if there was a way to do these replacements either with City employees or with a less costly contractor.

#### B. Backyard Sewer Lining Program

Consulting City Engineer Surhigh presented the item.

City Attorney Currier reviewed the current issues regarding not receiving easements from some property owners for this work. He stated that there are a few other ways to address the issue, including possible accommodation proceedings or condemnation of parts of the properties in question. He noted the City has not wanted to pursue either of those options up to this point due to concerns regarding cost and/or resulting animosity between the property owners in question and the City. He said those options would be brought before the Commission for its consideration at a future date.

#### C. Major Streets, Unimproved Streets Planning, and Infrastructure Scoring Program

Consulting City Engineer Surhigh reviewed these items together per the Mayor's request.

Commissioner Baller asked Consulting City Engineer Surhigh to make a spreadsheet publicly available that will contain all of the infrastructure scores listed by year so that residents can keep track of the scoring changes.

Commissioner Hoff said she was pleased with a number of the planned updates to major streets.

Commissioner Host said he would like underground ~~lighting~~ utilities<sup>1</sup> to be included in the infrastructure improvements.

Consulting City Engineer Surhigh said Engineering could ask the Police Department if there are areas with particularly heightened public safety concerns in regards to lighting, and could factor that information into the infrastructure improvement process.

CM Markus cautioned that adding additional infrastructure requirements, such as underground ~~lighting~~ utilities<sup>2</sup> and sidewalks, to this current set of planned updates will complicate the process of getting the improvements done.

Mayor Pro Tem Longe asked that all of the slideshows used during the present meeting be made available to the public for their review.

Consulting City Engineer Surhigh confirmed that the lead service line replacement data will be included in the infrastructure scoring process.

Commissioner Nickita said he was in favor of adding sidewalks where there are none present and improving sidewalks where appropriate in order to meet the goal of having complete streets.

There was Commission consensus that the S. Old Woodward project should be ready to bid by Fall 2021 with the physical work to start as soon as appropriate in Spring 2022.

Consulting City Engineer Surhigh said that could be done.

#### Public Comment

In reply to Dominic Polis, Consulting City Engineer Surhigh said the physical work on street improvements could start as early as 2022.

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<sup>1</sup> As amended at the February 8, 2021 Commission meeting.

<sup>2</sup> As amended at the February 8, 2021 Commission meeting.

Pam Graham said unimproved streets with cold patches resulting from lead water line replacements should be ranked higher on the infrastructure priority list because the cold patches are unlikely to be very durable.

Consulting City Engineer Surhigh told Ms. Graham that permanent pavement patches will be put over all cold patches stemming from lead water line replacements on a rolling basis.

Mr. Bloom reiterated his comment from a previous Commission meeting suggesting that these projects could be bonded and put out for bidding to potentially complete the work quicker and at less cost.

#### **IV. Planning**

##### **A. 2040 Master Plan Update**

PD Ecker reviewed the item.

Commissioner Host noted that the majority of residents that spoke at the January 13, 2021 Planning Board meeting expressed concern regarding the master plan draft proposals of creating more affordable housing along seams, increasing residential density in some areas, and allowing accessory dwelling units in certain areas.

In reply to Commissioner Hoff, PD Ecker stated that based on resident feedback and concerns the Planning Board recommended to the master planning team that seems only be proposed for a select few areas and that increased residential density be focused in currently mixed use areas.

##### Public Comment

Mr. Bloom said residents need more opportunity to discuss the neighborhood proposals in the master draft plan. He said he was also in favor of creative approaches to promoting aging-in-place.

Erica Grey said she is not in favor of the seam proposal.

##### **B. Multi-Modal Initiatives, Lot Combinations, and Green Infrastructure**

The Planning Department reviewed these items together per the Mayor's request.

PD Ecker reviewed Multi-Modal Initiatives, CP Cowan reviewed Lot Combinations, and CP Dupuis reviewed Green Infrastructure.

Three Commissioners and the Mayor commented that the City must do whatever work is necessary to clarify its policy on lot combinations. They agreed that there should be no grey area in the policy. Commissioner Nickita noted that factors like the character, rhythm, and pattern of a given neighborhood can be defined and that the policy should make clear how those factors affect lot combinations. Mayor Boutros said the policy should be clear enough that most lot combinations could be granted or denied administratively. He said lot combinations coming before the Commission should be the exception.

Commissioners Hoff, Nickita and Baller spoke in favor of green infrastructure proposals. Commissioner Baller recommended that the Commission hold a workshop on green infrastructure possibilities, saying it might be possible for the Commission to approve the City's use of a number of those options. He also said further green infrastructure in the City is an opportunity to develop leadership in the region.

Commissioner Nickita said incentivizing LEED certification is good but mandating it should be considered with caution since there are some non-LEED approaches that can be even more sustainable. He said he wants to see green infrastructure integrated into the S. Old Woodward updates. He recommended that adaptive reuse should be given more attention in the green infrastructure plan, stating that the greenest building is the one that is already built.

Commissioner Baller commended CP Dupuis on his leadership in the green infrastructure work.

Commissioner Nickita commended PD Ecker on her work regarding multi-modal initiatives. He said he was in full support of trainings for the members of the Multi-Modal Transportation Board. He added that the City should budget funds to purchase each MMTB member the National Association of City Transportation Officials Urban Street Design Guide and the Institute of Transportation Engineers' Designing Walkable Urban Thoroughfares: A Context Sensitive Approach so that they had reference materials available, in addition to their trainings, when reviewing projects and proposals.

## **V. Lunch Recess**

The meeting was paused for a ten minute lunch recess.

## **VI. Birmingham Shopping District**

### **A. Downtown Retail Attraction Program**

Jeff Hockman, Chair of the BSD Board, reviewed the item.

In reply to Commissioner Host, Mr. Hockman said that while some commercial landlords in Birmingham have raised their rates during the pandemic, the BSD Board has been working to impart to them that it is most essential to maintain occupancy. He said the BSD Board is working to educate them on the local and national circumstances and how to keep tenants.

In reply to Commissioner Hoff, Mr. Hockman confirmed that the BSD Board is involved in replacing the BSD Executive Director.

In reply to Commissioner Baller, Mr. Hockman stated that monies previously in emergency reserves and monies allocated for special events were reallocated over the past year to increase the BSD's marketing abilities in light of the pandemic.

Mr. Hockman thanked the Commission for their support of City businesses and stated he was glad to be working with them and City businesses for the good of the Birmingham community as a whole.

## **VII. Fire Department**

### **A. ISO Review and Enhancements**

Fire Chief Wells reviewed the item. He explained that the best way for Birmingham to maintain or potentially improve its ISO fire score is for commercial properties to follow the fire code. He explained that when there is more adherence to the code fewer repeat inspections need to be done. When there are fewer repeat inspections more one-time inspections can be completed, and that helps Birmingham maintain or even potentially lower its rating.

Commissioner Host thanked FC Wells for trying to get the state to allow the Birmingham FD to administer Covid-19 vaccines, on getting new FD inspectors, and on getting a new ambulance.

#### Public Comment

Cindy Rose thanked FC Wells for trying to get the state to allow the Birmingham FD to administer Covid-19 vaccines.

FC Wells told Mr. Bloom that the City currently holds the best ISO fire score it has had, which is a 3.

## **VIII. Police Department**

- A. Mental Health Co-Responder Response Program**
- B. Crisis Intervention Training**
- C. Accreditation Program**
- D. Parking System Initiatives**
- E. ADA Upgrade Program**

Police Chief Mark Clemence reviewed the first three items together per the Mayor's request.

Police Operations Commander Grewe reviewed the following two items together per the Mayor's request.

Mayor Pro Tem Longe thanked PC Clemence for his proactivity regarding the co-responder response program and the crisis intervention training. She noted that many times callers with mental health or substance use issues are repeat callers of emergency services, and that the co-responder response program could help them get access to the underlying resources they need.

In reply to Commissioner Host, PC Clemence said Oakland County Health Network has applied for grants to fund the mental health co-responder response program. He said that if the PD hopes to begin the program before the grants come through he will come to the Commission with a request. As far as the crisis intervention training, he said OCHN will give Birmingham PD a discount on the training since they are working together on the co-responder program. He said the hope would be to get a certain number of officers trained from the Auburn Hills, Bloomfield Twp. and Birmingham Police Departments, at which point officers from those departments enthusiastic about the training could offer further training to otherwise untrained officers at a more affordable rate.

Commissioner Host thanked the Police Department, and asked them to work on noise issues on Woodward and the main thoroughfares.

**IX. Building Department**

A. Expanding Online Services

Building Official Johnson reviewed the item.

Commissioner Nickita said he had used the online system recently and that it was very user-friendly.

**X. Library**

A. Building Renovations - Phase 3 Plan

Library Director Craft reviewed the item.

Commissioners Host and Hoff commended everyone involved in the designs for the new work on the library, saying that it very much enhanced the building. Both Commissioners also commended LD Craft on her presentation.

Public Comment

Mr. Bloom suggested the City consider spending some of the Parks and Recreation Bond funds on the outdoor area of the library since it serves as a transitional space between the library and downtown.

**XI. Birmingham Museum**

A. Strategic Plan Update

Museum Director Pielack reviewed the item.

In response to Commissioner Host's inquiries, Museum Director Pielack stated that GIS and GPR are separate projects for Greenwood Cemetery and that an onsite event in the future will be used to generate enthusiasm and fundraise for some of the proposed enhancements.

Commissioner Hoff complimented the plans for the Museum. She said for Greenwood Cemetery the two priorities should be reclamation and GPR. Noting Cheri Arcome's December 2020 statement before the Commission that GPR had been conducted at Greenwood, Commissioner Hoff observed that the Commission had yet to receive a report on those GPR findings. She said she would like more information on what graves may be available outside of sections A-C in order to avoid putting additional new graves in the historic areas.

Commissioner Nickita said the City should consider installing more outdoor seating on the grounds of the Museum to encourage use and activate the space.

**XII. Manager's Office**

- A. Communications Updates
  - a. City-wide email service
  - b. New City website

Communications Director Gamboa reviewed the item.

Commissioner Baller said he was glad to meet CD Gamboa and thanked her for her presentation.

<b>V. ADJOURN</b>
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Mayor Boutros adjourned the meeting at 2:45 p.m.



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Alexandria Bingham, City Clerk

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