

**BIRMINGHAM CITY COMMISSION /  
PLANNING BOARD JOINT WORKSHOP MINUTES  
SEPTEMBER 19, 2016  
DPS FACILITY, 851 SOUTH ETON  
7:30 P.M.**

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

Mayor Rackeline J. Hoff called the meeting to order at 7:30 PM.

**II. ROLL CALL**

Present: Commissioner Bordman  
Commissioner Boutros  
Commissioner DeWeese  
Commissioner Harris  
Mayor Hoff  
Mayor Pro Tem Nickita  
Commissioner Sherman

Ms. Boyce  
Mr. Boyle  
Mr. Jeffares  
Mr. Koseck  
Ms. Lazar  
Ms. Prasad, alternate member  
Mr. Williams

Absent: Mr. Clein  
Mr. Share, alternate member

Administration: City Manager Valentine, City Attorney Currier, Deputy Clerk Arft, City Planner Ecker, Building Director Johnson

**III. ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION**

**A. Comprehensive Master Plan Update**

Ms. Ecker described what has transpired with the RFP for a Master Plan. In June, 2016 a draft scope of work was presented to the commission and board. At that time, it was agreed that a more holistic, comprehensive approach was desired, including a visioning process that would look at the character and future of the neighborhoods and how that would fit in with the commercial districts. Transitional zoning, parking concerns, and the use of present and future technology, among others, were also concerns. The intention is to get feedback tonight on the draft RFP and then bring the RFP formally to the City Commission for issuance. She said if the RFP is issued soon, respondents could submit in October, with interviews following, and an award in December of this year, with a kick-off meeting in January 2017.

Some of the additions to the draft include a public visioning process, a public engagement plan from firms. The Planning Board would work with the consultant to get a draft plan and then bring it to the City Commission. The Commission would be involved throughout the process in

the various design sessions, input sessions, and workshops. More detail was added to the parking analysis, including residential permit parking, city-wide parking plan.

Ms. Ecker said transitional zoning is not specifically called out for a study, but is referred to within the RFP as it relates to residential areas, the downtown, and commercial areas.

Mr. Williams would like to see representatives from residential communities added to the evaluation committee.

Ms. Ecker noted that the proposals would be reviewed by staff and the Planning Board, be narrowed down to two or three candidates, and be interviewed by the Planning Board. It would be brought to the City Commission to make the final selection. Ms. Ecker explained how the process was handled for the sub-area plans.

Mayor Hoff asked for thoughts on including residents on the selection committee. City Manager Valentine said the options would be to stay with the Planning Board, or create an ad hoc committee to serve as the evaluation panel for the proposals.

Mr. Williams said residents have complaints about a lack of input and he would like to get them involved. He would like the residents to appoint their own representatives from the beginning.

City Manager Valentine asked if the residents are part of the evaluation panel, are they going to have the same voting privileges as other members of the board.

Ms. Boyce thinks important for the Planning Board to make recommendations to the City Commission, and agrees it is important to have residents involved early in the process. She does not think there should be a separate committee and that the residents should not have a vote. The Planning Board already has qualified people on the board who have the knowledge and skills in this area.

Commissioner Boutros said the residents elected the commissioners to represent them and make decisions. He welcomes public involvement, but his fear is finding qualified residents to make the evaluations and decisions on this important plan.

Mayor Pro Tem Nickita said the key to public involvement is during the process to include as much as possible the public's interest and concerns and reaction to the proposals. In terms of selecting, he suggested we stay with the Planning Board or create an ad hoc committee to include members of different boards and some commissioners. He suggested it would be helpful to include the public in that dialog during the evaluation process with specific invitations and keep the final selection to the Planning Board.

Mr. Williams said since this plan will deal with residential areas and not just commercial as the sub-area plans have, the residents should be invited to participate at the beginning of the process. The residents would have opinions on what the study is going to look like as opposed to who the consultant is going to be.

Commissioner Bordman thinks an ad hoc committee could be created for the purpose of selecting the contractor to include MMTB, Parks & Recreation as well as the Planning Board and residents.

Mr. Boyle suggested those who respond to the RFP be asked how they would engage the public. He thinks we can deal with the selection of appropriate consultants by using the people who are experienced in this including the commission, staff and with a public meeting at the Planning Board with the consultants who respond.

Mayor Hoff said there are now two different opinions on how we should proceed. One is to create an ad hoc committee consisting of members of different boards and including members of the general public. The other is to have the Planning Board conduct the interviews with invitations to members of the public to attend that session and invite them to give their opinions on selecting the contractor.

Ms. Ecker said historically we have used an ad hoc committee if we do not have a specific board dedicated to the topic. She stated that the state law and city code specifically task the planning board with the planning of the city and making recommendations for land use, etc. to the City Commission.

Mayor Pro Tem Nickita prefers to base the decision making on some level of precedent that we have had success with. This is a special plan, more broad, more inclusive, more unique in the sense it has not been done in 30 years, so it may be appropriate to have the Planning Board lead, but incorporate some of the other boards as an option.

Commissioner DeWeese suggested a compromise of perhaps three or more Planning Board members that the board selects and maybe one member of other boards that are critical, along with a public representative.

Commissioner Harris agrees with the creation of an ad hoc committee for this review.

Mr. Jeffares suggested using the Planning Board and adding a few people to that. After the decision is made, the Planning Board will be working with the plan, and it is important to have the seven Planning Board members all feel like they were in on the decision.

Commissioner Sherman suggested that what is contemplated is how the city is going to grow and fit together, and he thinks it falls more in the category of a committee as we have set up for things like Shain Park where we had multiple aspects that went into it. All of the boards will be involved in various aspects of this plan, but he would limit the task of this committee solely to selecting the contractor. The plan itself is going to come back to each of the boards for review. At that point, the board's comments and interpretation are going to be incorporated into the plan. Selection is only part of it. Getting the right candidates to submit their proposals is more important.

Commissioner Boutros asked how the individual members feel.

Mr. Williams wants to be inclusive and go beyond the Planning Board.

Mr. Jeffares is in favor of the Planning Board and add a few of the other key players.

Ms. Prasad has experience in working on master plans and she does not believe that she has ever presented to a group that has not been tailor made to select the planner for that particular exercise. She agrees with including members of other committees that could add value with the Planning Board would be the right approach.

Ms. Boyce said the Planning Board is the appropriate board to make the selection for the recommendation and agrees that it would be beneficial to have others invited and hear their comments at a public meeting. She would not put them on the board and specifically give them a vote

Mr. Boyle is in favor of inclusiveness and wants the Planning Board members to be involved. At the end of the day, the board will be working with the consultant and their teams. He suggested that Parking, Multi-Modal Transportation Board, Parks and Recreation, and Design Review Boards be included, and there may be others.

Mr. Koseck said the Planning Board members have been appointed by the commission. Members of other committees would bring expertise to the group which might make it better.

Mayor Hoff said we are now talking about the Planning Board and four other people, or an ad hoc committee comprised of three or four planning board members and people from the other committees and boards. She believes the makeup makes a difference.

Ms. Boyce said this discussion began with including residents and asked if that is important or not.

Commissioner Sherman does not think the entire board should sit on the selection committee plus other committee members. He would rather see a couple board members plus the other committees mentioned, and a couple of residents. It will be looked at from different points of view made up of a mixed bag of people with different skill sets.

Mayor Hoff said if that is the way we go, we need to discuss the composition of the committee.

Mayor Hoff noted the contractor selection recommendation committee will be made up of three Planning Board members, two residents (one property owner), and one member of each of the following committees: Multi-Modal Transportation Board, Advisory Parking Committee, Parks and Recreation, Design Review Board.

Mayor Hoff asked for comments on the Introduction.

Commissioner DeWeese suggested changes in the reference to dense urban communities.

Mayor Pro Tem Nickita agreed and suggested the words "...traditional, walkable..." be used.

Commissioner Bordman suggested adding the words "...encouraging residents to participate in a public involvement process,...".

Mayor Hoff suggested "conducting strategic visioning sessions with residents".

Commissioner Bordman would like to see it in the introduction on the first page. She questioned the use of only "current" demographic data, and suggested that "projected" be added. Ms. Ecker noted it was spelled out in more detail on the next in the Updated Data Collection and Analysis section. Ms. Ecker said the word would be added.

Resident Deangelo Espree commented.

Commissioner DeWeese referred to bullet point 4, and said he would like to have something referring to a vision for neighborhoods. There is disagreement in this city over how the neighborhoods look and he would like to more directly address that with a vision on which we can get some agreement.

Mr. Williams would like to address the trends in the city since 1980, and analyze what has taken place in neighborhoods.

Commissioner DeWeese said we have a clear vision for the downtown and commercial areas, but we do not have a clear vision of the neighborhoods.

Commissioner Bordman suggested "Update of residential housing section to include an analysis of changes in residential areas from 1980 to present, neighborhood goals, projections..."

Commissioner DeWeese wants some direction. He wants to know where the city needs to be moving.

Mr. Boyle suggested adding "...future direction" to Commissioner Bordman's suggestion.

Mayor Pro Tem Nickita thinks it is more involved and maybe we need to expand the bullet, because it is going back to the percentage of the city that is single family residential for the most part and the amount of emphasis we have had on the planning and directing the non-residential. In order for us to identify where we want these neighborhoods to go, we have to recognize exactly what we have. Part of that is the distinction of identifying the characteristics of the different neighborhoods so that there is some definition of physical conditions of one neighborhood over another, because if we are going to start identify or analyze some type of variation of what is there, we need to understand how it is different from the next. He thinks the bullet point should expand to include "neighborhood typeology, neighborhood characteristics and neighborhood evolution". He said we cannot competently direct vision and set the stage for future development if we do not understand that.

Commissioner Harris suggested incorporating the RTA in the discussion in bullet 5.

Commissioner Bordman suggested adding "anticipated effects of autonomous vehicles". Ms. Ecker said that is covered on the next page under Parking Analysis.

Mr. Jeffares asked if that would cover the utility aspect since autonomous is mostly going to be electrical. Ms. Ecker agreed that should be added in section 3.

Commissioner DeWeese would like the words "and alternatives" added to item 4. Residential Permit Parking (city-wide). It would be clear that we are looking for alternatives.

Mayor Pro Tem Nickita said we need to be somewhat specific when referring to demographic data to include residential, office and commercial.

Mayor Pro Tem Nickita suggested adding to bullet point 7 "to incorporate current technological advancements" and "innovative policies". He feels "best practices" is too broad.

Mayor Pro Tem Nickita suggested under Public Participation language to include provide an app to develop and encourage as much public participation as possible.

Mr. Boyle suggested the words "...utilizing contemporary technologies." at the end of the last sentence.

Commissioner Bordman did not see anything like a monkey survey that the consultant would put together and offer to the public. She thought the city could use the email that we use now for the bulletins we send out so we could have a monkey survey ahead of or around the same time as the charrettes. It would involve people who due to work or family commitments cannot come to the charrette, but would still like to play a role to help figure out where we are going with this plan.

Mr. Boyle suggested more of a rewrite in the Visioning Process section to indicate we are looking for a consultant who understands the importance of capturing all views and brings these views early and often. He would like to put the onus on them to present to us a detailed plan for comprehensive community engagement, and that we assess that as part of the review process. They should bring experience of where it has been done before.

Mayor Hoff asked how we communicate that we want one public meeting for review of the final draft at the Planning Board and one before the City Commission.

Ms. Ecker suggested "....shall include at a minimum..."

Mayor Pro Tem Nickita suggested that the commission be involved in a preliminary meeting that provides a progress report.

Commissioner DeWeese suggested replacing the words "urban areas" with "dense, traditional, walkable communities" in 2. Updated Data Collection and Analysis.

Mr. Koseck suggested adding words "residential" before neighborhood in 1. Visioning Process.

Mayor Pro Tem Nickita suggested adding in 3. Infrastructure Analysis "and the incorporation of complete streets policies and walkable priorities."

Ms. Prasad said whatever we find in the infrastructure analysis and parking analysis, should feed the visioning process, and that the community engagement goes on throughout the whole term of the project.

Commissioner DeWeese suggested changes to item 6 on page 6. He said it needs to be more inclusive especially as it relates to the City Commission. Ms. Ecker will add language requiring progress reports and/or updates.

Mr. Boyle suggested the words "ongoing engagement with..."

Mayor Pro Tem Nickita said we may want to be more specific in the Deliverables section. He suggested that we add "...that clearly depict the plan concepts, proposed vision, and recommendations." We should be very clear on the documentation that they give us. We may want to add before and after illustrations, three dimensional illustrations of particular concepts, detailed plan document, including elements like buildings, pedestrian network, including sub-

area plans. We want to have in our hands at the end of the day that will give us the ability to implement the plan.

Mr. Boyce asked if we need the hard color copies. Ms. Ecker said historically we have supplied a copy of the plan to the commissioners.

Mr. Koseck said it might be more important to get a hard copy of a 90% complete set. It is common for architects to provide hard copies at 50% and 90% completion so the clients can mark it up.

Mr. Jeffares suggested an infographic might be helpful.

Mr. Koseck suggested that item 2 under Submission Requirements, identify key people and their roles, ask for references for those people, and a separate category for past projects that the firm has done with references.

Mr. Williams suggested we need to be flexible to accept both a contractor who brings along sub-contractors as opposed to a joint venture situation.

Mayor Pro Tem Nickita said it is important how we frame our desired qualifications.

City Attorney Currier said a joint venture agreement gives the city more protection and more accessibility.

Mr. Koseck suggested requesting an organizational chart in the submission requirements.

City Manager Valentine clarified this RFP will be bid under our normal procedure which is open and public as all bids are.

Mr. Williams said he is not sure a month is enough time to put together a joint venture. He thinks firms should have 60 days to respond.

Mayor Hoff adjourned the meeting at 9:44 pm.

Cheryl Arft  
Deputy City Clerk