

## ODWNA Association Meeting Minutes

**Date:** Wednesday, March 17, 2021

**Place:** Held virtually (via Zoom)

**Board Members:**

**Present:** Peter Kushner, President; Chris Shook, Vice President; Christopher Bovid, Secretary; Kathy Shook, Treasurer; Diana Morton-Thompson; Eric Boersma

**In Attendance:** Approximately 24 people (includes Board members)



I. **Call to Order:** Peter Kushner, 7:02 pm

- Welcome
- Zoom meeting procedures overview
- Reminder regarding resources: website, Neighborhood Plan, and e-mail newsletter (3<sup>rd</sup> Monday of every month); also postings to separately-run Winchell Neighborhood Neighbors Only Facebook page
- April meeting guest speaker is Andrew Hahn from Kalamazoo Downtown Partnership
- Plan to continue to meet via Zoom for the April 21, 2021 meeting; we are also planning to hold our annual car show in on May 19 in Winchell Elementary School's front parking lot
- ODWNA does not hold/run it, but we do promote the neighborhood garage sale held on the last Saturday in April, which this year will be April 24, 2021. ODWNA encourages everyone to follow all appropriate COVID-19 protocols
- City of Kalamazoo will be holding a virtual town hall meeting on March 23, 2021 at 7:00 PM to review neighborhood infrastructure projects. For details on how to attend and the links to the City sites, go to the ODWNA website or see the March ODWNA newsletter.
- W-A-L-K Nature Route (through our neighborhood between Asylum Lake Preserve and Kleinstuck Preserve) is in process and updates will be forthcoming
- Regarding urban deer management, Pete Kushner had a meeting with the City of Kalamazoo Director of Community Planning & Development today. He is moving forward with establishing a committee with multiple neighborhood representatives throughout the City to work on the issue and everyone will have their chance to give citizen input.
- Our speaker tonight is the City of Kalamazoo's Development Coordinator, Jamie McCarthy. She helped get the Natural Features Protection Zoning Overlay ordinance and map put into place in the City of Kalamazoo. She is here to give us an update.

II. **Treasurer's Report**

- None

III. **Neighborhood Business (Old and New):**

- None

IV. **Notes from our Guest Speaker:**

- NFP is a section of our City's Zoning Code, Chapter 50. The City knew there were important parts of the City that have natural character, and there were neighborhoods that identified it in their Neighborhood Plans. Having some thoughtful design with those features in mind became important in reviewing development projects. The City came up with a set of zoning rules and an overlay district that includes just over 300 parcels throughout the City. The rules help the project integrate into its design, and be more sensitive of, natural features.
- NFP Phase 2 Re-launch
  - What's happened to date?
  - NFP Review Board Response & Goals
    - Reintroduce Phase 2 map
    - Text amendments: reasonable and concise
  - Continue community dialog
  - Extended notice period
- NFP Map – Expand to include
  - Water bodies
  - Steep, tree covered slopes
  - Preserves and green space
  - Connected corridor
  - Rules apply with development projects
  - From 300 to >1,000 parcels
- Categories covered by the NFP zoning ordinance:
  - Surface waters (creeks, rivers, lakes, wetlands)
  - Heavily wooded property
  - Individual trees (especially helpful in commercial development site review)
  - Steep slopes close to water bodies or that are heavily wooded
  - Rare species that have been identified on the specific parcel
  - Storm water treatment going above and beyond City's stormwater ordinances

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- Public Engagement Plan
  - March 23 Commission Joint special meeting with Planning
  - April 20 Public input & map approval
  - Early May Notice letters
  - Mid-May Virtual townhall & office hours
  - May 18 Public input @ NFP meeting
  - June 3 Present to Planning Commission
  - June - July Present to City Commission
- Phase 3
  - Public Education & Guidance for Development
  - Heritage Trees
  - Partnerships & Community Engagement
- Q & A:
  - Is it possible that for Phase 3 that the City work with the Historic Commission on documenting heritage trees, etc.
    - Community Planning & Development Department has discussed this. Jamie will reach out to Sharon Ferraro about it, though.
  - Some of the questions about Phase 2 concerned the residential aspect of the NFP as opposed to commercial development. How is the City addressing those concerns?
    - Questions came up about “will it cause too much of a burden for residents” versus “when is the City at risk of losing significant tree canopy”? The way the code is written, many of the rules don’t take effect until someone decides to do something substantial as far as construction/development.
  - As we get into Phase 3 of the NFP ordinance and overlay and educational process, it seems we are into territory that engages more fully with what could be termed a “climate action plan.” Is there any action toward an overall climate action plan as it coordinates with NFP?
    - The City has been working for a long time on a climate action plan and thinking of it holistically as a sustainability plan. It is still moving forward. There is a draft action table with tasks and priorities for the departments at the City. Jamie has met with the last Department director to finalize that table. She believes in the next couple months there will be a draft plan vetted through the City and out to the public. The City Commission had said they want to see something this year, preferably the first half of the year so that the budget finalization at the end of the year and approval in January can incorporate that. As far as how it might integrate with NFP, there are four main areas that are being focused on in that regard, including human health, the tree canopy, and protecting and enhancing both our drinking water system but also our natural water systems. That will help us bridge into NFP Phase 3 and likely within the sustainability plan.
  - If we are considering partnerships, the City should involve Wild Ones and particularly with landscapes, including residential properties rather than just public areas.
  - It seemed the Planning Commission was surprised by some of the negative reaction from the public. This person’s property will be included in Phase 2 but the letter that went out to the property owners wasn’t clear as to why some properties were included and some were not and what could be done. So it would be very helpful if the next letter is more clear rather than doing damage by making people fear that they are having something taken away from them.
  - Most people seem to think it is great that the City is taking steps to protect natural features in the City. The Planning Commission was given a plan with the parts but were not given much in the way of explanation of the positive value of the Natural Features Protection Phase 2. That should be forefront in order to prepare the Planning Commission for some of the negative feedback that they seem to also get.
  - Key dates seem to be April 20, May 18, and June 3 for public input. Should people be emailing Jamie McCarthy directly if they have supporting comments? People are often shy about speaking, though, which seems to have better resonance at the various commission hearings.
    - Letters emailed to Jamie or staff in the Planning Dept. will get into the packets given to the commission members. Perhaps in some cases those letters are brought up but they are not usually read aloud. As such, someone’s voice at the meeting can be very helpful and Jamie would encourage people to call in and record a message, including taking your letter and reading it. The call-in lines open a half hour before meetings and stay open until the comment period is closed. That should help alleviate some stage fright that one might otherwise experience live. Everyone still gets four minutes to speak.
  - It was hard to hear some negative squeaky wheels getting a lot of attention at the Planning Commission meeting. It is heartening to hear the comments tonight about people participating so as to add positive feedback at the meetings.
    - The NFP was essentially a resident-led initiative. It shows that the City can be very responsive to the needs of the residents. The City has had a really good number of cases that have come through and been reviewed in the last year and a half. There were a number of variances that were issued where a rule seemed too stringent, including even one concerning what was a really reasonable proposed project by the Southwest Michigan Land Conservancy.

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### V. **Additional Public Comments:**

- P. Kushner thanked everyone for attendance and participation
- P. Kushner gave reminder of guest speakers for ODWNA April Meeting: Andrew Hahn of the Kalamazoo Downtown Partnership
- Final reminder and request for everyone to attend and participate in the March 23 City infrastructure (virtual) meeting

### VI. **Adjournment:** 8:12 pm

Respectfully Submitted,  
Christopher Bovid, ODWNA Secretary