

ODWNA Association Meeting Minutes

Date: Wednesday, January 19, 2022

Place: Third Christian Reformed Church – Fellowship Hall

Board Members:

Present: Peter Kushner, President; Christopher Bovid, Secretary; Paul Scott

Excused: Eric Boersma, Diana Morton-Thompson, Chris Shook, Kathy Shook

In Attendance: Approximately 29 people (includes Board members)



I. Call to Order: Peter Kushner, President, 7:01 pm

- Welcome, appreciation for those able to attend.
- Reminder of Neighborhood Plan focus by the Board of Directors and availability for review on website.
- Thank you to Third Christian Reformed Church for use of the building for this meeting while Kalamazoo Public Schools (“KPS”) is not allowing outside groups inside the facilities for the rest of our meeting season.
- Next month’s guest speaker is Dr. Paula Termuhlen, MD and Dr. Jack Mosser, PhD, from WMU Homer Stryker M.D. School of Medicine
- Neighborhood Community Read update: the book is *Nature’s Best Hope* by Douglas Tallamy
- Update by Consumers Credit Union on moving forward with development of new Consumers Credit Union building at corner of Oakland Drive and Parkview Avenue
- Update on 14-neighborhoods ad hoc urban deer committee study; report to be presented to City Commission at a meeting date in February 2022 TBD.
- Kalamazoo Dept. of Parks & Recreation’s First Annual Winter Golf Classic on (frozen) Woods Lake
- Inquiry regarding dilapidated condition of Waite Avenue and ways to report to the City

II. Introduction of Guest Speaker: Robert Durkee III; AICP; City of Kalamazoo / Dept. of Community Planning & Development; Planner for Village of Vicksburg

- Reaffirmation that online submission of issues through the City website is the most effective way to report them.
- Oakland Drive-Winchell Neighborhood “Line by Line”
- Indigenous Population History
- 1825 Territory Map – Reservation was set aside before Kalamazoo Township was created
- Potawatomi tribe occupied land
- Kalamazoo is Township 2 South, Range 11 West (from an established point in the State)
- Kalamazoo was a relatively slow, organically-developed city.
- Winchell Avenue used to be called “Inkster” Avenue. It was an unrecorded plat. There were unrecorded plats all over the City and the State and little regulation. People could just establish whatever they wanted.
- Today to do land division, need to comply with size and line rules, etc.
- One unrecorded plat shows a park on the north side of Woods Lake. Another one shows industrial sites proposed (which were never built).
- Overview of 1859 County Map
- Until 1920’s, not much ‘line creation’ going on in Winchell area
- Overview of 1938 aerial view of the city – development had started to move south on Oakland toward Winchell
 - Most of Winchell still an empty farm field
- Review of aerial view with current streets overlaid to show where plats / lines were drawn
- Interesting to note that whatever issues one might encounter with new development now is probably something that had come up in development discussions a century or more ago. “It’s all been done before.”
- Embury Road plat development
- Parkwyn Village plat development (1949)
 - FHA requirements for reasonably square lots
- Before the State created the Subdivision Control Act (right of way, lot size, etc.) was response to speculative planning from the Great Depression. Granted local municipalities oversight to handle amount of land development that needed to be managed and couldn’t all be handled by the State.
- Upjohn donated funds to establish a Planning Commission for Kalamazoo.
- Annexations of the City were long and contentious. There were many attempts to annex the entire Township.
- 1956 the vast majority of Winchell was annexed.
- Over 50% of the City’s land area was annexed. Half of the City land was undeveloped at the time.
- Housing Boom post-World War II
- As a result of Winchell’s development history, it is interesting to see nearly a hundred years of housing history in what is otherwise a suburban location.
- Map of Winchell area today (compared with 1938).
- Consideration of “Tomorrow”
 - Natural Features Protection ordinance
 - Land use and zoning working from the natural features
 - Protection for setbacks from clusters of trees

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- Asylum Lake
- NW corner of Oakland Drive and Parkview Avenue
- Consideration of what “boring” things today will be on a map a hundred years from now
- Site Plan Review Committee – covers commercial development; it is a staff committee made up of multiple disciplines within the City
- Anyone can sign up for site plan submission notifications and review site plans on the City’s website
- Comment on Neighborhood Plans:

Audience Q&A:

- How were street names determined? Why were there changes in some street names?
 - Two ways: Pre-1938 Subdivision Control Act, who knows how they were determined in the plats they created. After the 1938 Subdivision Control Act, most street name changes are tied to City Commission action. In the 1940’s and the 1960’s a lot of changes were made because of the annexations and dual street names. Today the County has a street naming guide with all kinds of requirements.
- Why is Oakwood so different from the Winchell area?
 - Bobby believes that the Oakwood Neighborhood was developed without subdivision controls in place as opposed to Winchell which was much more planned.
- Was “Stewart Estates” owned by the same owner as the Stewart furniture company?
 - Unknown but the owner’s name is on the dedication in the plat.
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- Are there restrictions in the City of Kalamazoo against redevelopment of older, smaller properties?
 - There are lot size and setback restrictions but if lots are combined there are few size restrictions as compared to surrounding homes/parcels.
 - Interesting to see how much of an increased in development there is in Kalamazoo in Bobby’s last nine years with the City.
- Around 1950 in Battle Creek when there was a lot of new development, they were building homes with no sidewalks. In Kalamazoo however, there are many places with no sidewalks. What was the reason they stopped making sidewalks? Was it allowed?
 - For any requirement there needs to be an enforcement mechanism. Before local governments had strong laws, there were few requirements. By current ordinances, there are requirements for sidewalks (although we don’t have a lot of new plats). Perhaps as each property was built, the inspector(s) might not have caught missing sidewalks.
- Who is responsible for replacing a sidewalk in bad shape?
 - By ordinance it is the adjacent owner that is responsible for replacing it.
 - Contact Joe Stark (City of Kalamazoo right of way coordinator) or 311
 - If the City Commission approves it in the budget, the City can cover up to 50% of sidewalk replacement costs.
- Does the “Indian Reserve Line” still have any relevance / priority today?
- Any chance for annexation of, e.g., Kalamazoo Township, Oshtemo Township, etc.?
 - No because all surrounding municipalities are incorporated.

III. **Additional Public Comments**

- Peter Kushner thanked everyone for attending.

IV. **Adjournment:** 8:26 pm

Respectfully Submitted,
Christopher Bovid, ODWNA Secretary