

MINUTES

BIRMINGHAM PLANNING COMMISSION

The Birmingham Planning Commission convened in the City Council Chambers on the Third Floor of Birmingham City Hall on Wednesday, July 17, 2019 at 9:17 a.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT: Chairman Brian Ruggs, L'Tryce Slade, Dr. Nyesha Black, Haley Colson-Lewis, Mashonda Taylor, Brian Gunn, Councilor Steven Hoyt (Melva Langford), Councilor Valerie Abbott (Beatrice Collins), and Fred Hawkins

MEMBERS ABSENT: Vice-Chairman Michael Morrison, Chairman Pro-Tem Selena Rodgers-Dickerson, Patty Pilkerton, Devon Sims, Dr. Kathryn Doornbos, Ronald Crenshaw, and Kevin Moore

STAFF PRESENT: Tim Gambrel, Michael Ward, and Kasandra Brundidge

I. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Ruggs. Commissioner Langford made a motion to approve the agenda. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Taylor and the agenda was approved unanimously.

Chairman Ruggs introduced Brian Gunn, who is a new member of Birmingham Planning Commission.

II. APPROVAL OF MINUTES FROM FEBRUARY 6, 2019

Commissioner Langford made a motion to approve the minutes from the February 6, 2019 meeting. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Taylor and the minutes were approved unanimously.

III. DIRECTOR'S REPORT

No Director's Report

IV. CASE NO. PF-5-19

SUBJECT: A request for approval of the location, character, and extent of improvements associated with the planned construction of the Birmingham Xpress/Bus Rapid Transit—West Transfer Station.

APPLICANT: Charles Jordan, Project Coordinator with Studio 2H Design, LLC; acting as an agent for the City of Birmingham.

PREMISES: 4802 & 4812 Avenue W in the Five Points West Community

Senior Planner, Michael Ward, gave a brief introduction of the case. Mr. Ward said the proposed project is a part of the \$44 million Birmingham Xpress/BRT Project that will eventually transform a 10-mile stretch of city streets stretching from Five Points West to Woodlawn. He mentioned that several public involvement meetings were held to get citizen feedback about the overall BRT project. He stated that the BRT corridor will touch 25 of 99 neighborhoods, and 21 percent of the City's population is within a half-mile of accessing the Birmingham Xpress. He added that this project is the first of two Community Transfer Stations that will be built (the other one will be built in Woodlawn at the eastern end of the route).

Mr. Ward said the proposed West Transfer Station will be centrally located where transit passengers can transfer between the BX and MAX service. He stated that there will be two sets of transit canopies onsite, one for MAX buses and one for BX buses.

Mr. Ward mentioned that the proposed West Transfer Station site will also include a central plaza that will provide a comfortable space for passengers to wait and help control water runoff through diversified plantings. He also mentioned that the 2,400 sq. ft. transfer station building will provide passenger amenities such as restrooms, passenger information, ticketing, and waiting area, along with small support spaces for BJCTA staff. He added that the Design Review Committee approved the West Transfer Station project on June 26th of this year.

Charles Jordan, Project Coordinator with Studio 2H Design, addressed the Planning Commission. Mr. Jordan said the transfer station will be located between other existing public facilities, such as the Crossplex, the Five Points West Library, and the Birmingham Police Department's West Precinct. He mentioned that although vehicles can still access the site, a couple of access points will be for buses only. He stated that the site will have plenty of landscaping to provide shade and there will be plantings installed to control stormwater runoff. He added that the outdoor site furnishings, such as the benches, bike racks, and the waste receptacles, are similar to the outdoor site furnishings at the Intermodal Facility.

Chairman Ruggs asked if the exterior will be similar to the Five Points West Library and the surrounding buildings. Creig Hoskins, Co-Owner of Studio 2H Design, addressed the Planning Commission. Mr. Hoskins said they wanted to bring the Intermodal elements into the project because the area around the proposed site doesn't have a consistent design.

Chairman Ruggs asked what the plan for the adjacent parking deck is. Andre Bittas, Director of the Capital Projects Management Office with the City, addressed the Planning Commission. Mr. Bittas said the parking deck may be removed in the future.

Commissioner Slade asked about security. Mr. Hoskins said the building will be secure. He added that the site will have great lighting. Mr. Bittas mentioned that the station and the BRT route will have security cameras and call boxes. Mr. Bittas also mentioned that BJCTA staff will be present.

Commissioner Black asked about the building behind the site. Mr. Hoskins said it is an existing parking deck.

Commissioner Black asked if there's any additional information where people can know when the bus is coming. Mr. Bittas said we will have information at all stations and an app will be available. He added that the BRT will have 15 minute headways regardless.

Commissioner Black asked if people will have to go inside of the station to know when the bus is coming. Mr. Bittas said that information will be at the platforms as well.

Commissioner Black asked when will the app be available. Mr. Bittas said it is currently in the design phase and it should be available by May 2021.

Commissioner Black asked if the app can be rolled out sooner. Mr. Bittas said yes.

Commissioner Gunn asked what the average length of stay is for transit riders when they arrive at the facility. Mr. Bittas said the BRT buses will have 15 minute headways so transit riders will be at the facility for a short period of time.

Chief Planner Tim Gambrel said planning staff reviewed the landscaping plan and they would like to replace some of the species of trees and they would like some landscaping installed to screen the fuel canopy from the site. Mr. Gambrel added that there could be a competition to add public art on the BRT buses and in the plazas.

Commissioner Colson-Lewis asked if additional sustainability methods, like using solar panels to produce clean electricity, will be incorporated in the project. Mr. Hoskins and Mr. Bittas said they haven't considered solar energy for this project. Commissioner Black added that the City should consider solar energy for this project and future public facility projects.

After a brief discussion, Commissioner Langford made a motion to approve Case Number PF-5-19. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Taylor and the following resolution was approved unanimously:

WHEREAS, the proposed West Transfer Station will be centrally located where transit passengers can transfer between the BRT and MAX service; and

WHEREAS, the proposed West Transfer Station project is a part of the overall Birmingham Xpress/BRT Project that will eventually transform a 10-mile stretch of city streets

stretching from Five Points West to Woodlawn; and

WHEREAS, the proposal West Transfer Station project will integrate into the community through a public plaza and through its architectural character; and

WHEREAS, the 2,400 sq. ft. transfer station building will provide passenger amenities such as restrooms, passenger information, ticketing, and waiting area, along with small support spaces for the BJCTA staff; and

WHEREAS, the proposed project will improve public convenience and facilitate safe, efficient and cost-effective transit service for the traveling public; and

WHEREAS, the planned project is consistent with the planned redevelopment goals of the City's Comprehensive Plan and the Western Area Communities Framework Plan; and

WHEREAS, the project was approved by the Design Review Committee on June 26, 2019; now therefore

BE IT RESOLVED by the Birmingham Planning Commission that said Planning Commission hereby APPROVES the location, character and extent of improvements proposed on the hereinabove described properties as illustrated and set forth on the site plan entitled "COB Birmingham Express BRT West Transfer Station--Site Layout Plan", Case No. PF-5-19, subject to:

1. Applicant filing an acceptable subdivision that will eventually resurvey the project site into a single lot.
2. Applicant complying with all conditions as may be required by the Traffic Engineer regarding proper traffic/pedestrian circulation, vehicular access, parking layout, and maneuvering area.
3. Applicant complying with all conditions as may be required by the City Engineer relative to streets, sidewalks, utilities, and drainage.
4. Applicant meeting with Planning staff to finalize the landscaping plan.
5. Applicant will explore the feasibility of installing solar panels and using solar energy to power the proposed site.

V. Other Business and Communications

Chairman Ruggs passed out a recent article to the Planning Commissioners and the article stated that Family Dollar was planning to sell alcohol in the near future. He mentioned that the City of Birmingham already is oversaturated with dollar stores right now and he wants to see if there is anything that can be done as a Commission or if the City Council can do anything to prevent alcohol sales in dollar stores. Commissioner Langford said the Birmingham City Council can look into this further.

Commissioners Black and Colson-Lewis was still concerned that the City didn't consider solar for the transfer station project and they would like the City to have a policy to explore sustainability methods for all of its public facility projects. Mr. Gambrel said a sustainability policy should be further explored.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 10:12 a.m.