

## MINUTES

### BIRMINGHAM PLANNING COMMISSION

The Birmingham Planning Commission convened in the City Council Chamber on Wednesday, December 7, 2022, at 8:39 a.m.

**MEMBERS PRESENT:** Vice-Chairman Dr. Nyesha Black, , Brian Gunn, Stephen Schrader, J. Charles Jordan II, Sharon Deep-Nelson, Patty A. Pilkerton, Mashonda Taylor, Dr. Victoria Hollis, Councilor Valerie Abbott, Councilor LaTonya Tate (Brandon McCray), Chaz Mitchell, and Michael Eddington

**MEMBERS ABSENT:** Chairman Michael Morrison, Chairman Pro-Tem Haley Colson-Lewis, and Ronald Crenshaw

**STAFF PRESENT:** Michael Ward, Heather Garrison, Tim Gambrel, Kim Speorl, Katrina Thomas, Tracey K. Hayes, and Rick Journey

#### **APPROVAL OF AGENDA**

The meeting was called to order by Vice-Chairman Dr. Black. Commissioner Schrader made a motion to amend the agenda to have the items heard in reverse order with Case No. PF-9-22 being heard first. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Taylor and the amended agenda was approved unanimously.

#### **II. APPROVAL OF MINUTES FROM NOVEMBER 2, 2022**

Commissioner Gunn stated that the minutes need to be amended to reflect his presence at the November 2<sup>nd</sup> meeting. Commissioner Taylor made a motion to approve the minutes from the Commission's meeting on November 2, 2022 with the amendment reflected. The motion was seconded by Commissioner McCray and the minutes we approved unanimously.

#### **III. DIRECTOR'S REPORT**

No Director's report.

**IV. CASE NO.** PF-9-22

**SUBJECT:** A request for approval of the location, character, and extent of improvements associated with the new Cougar Crossing Exhibit at the Birmingham Zoo.

**APPLICANT:** Cory Varden, Senior Project Manager, Rives Construction Company

**PREMISES:** The site is approximately 0.2 acres of land within the 150 acres of land owned by the City of Birmingham and leased to the Zoo.

Corey Varden from Rives Construction introduced himself to the Commission as a representative for the Zoo.

Vice-Chairman Dr. Black opened the meeting for anyone interested in speaking and no one presented.

Commissioner Pilkerton asked if the facility would be occupied. Jennie Whitman, the Chief Financial Officer for the Birmingham Zoo, responded that it would not be occupied permanently, but fully for use. Commissioner Pilkerton requested that the term “non-occupied” be removed. Mr. Varden explained that the verbiage was purely code related.

Commissioner Eddington asked where on the property will the exhibit be located. Ms. Whitman explained that the exhibit would be located to the west of the property in the Alabama Wilds area.

Commissioner Abbott asked if the Zoo had cougars now. Ms. Whitman responded that no, there are no cougars, only a wildcat and are looking for cougars to adopt.

Commissioner Abbott asked how much tree removal the project entail to which Mr. Varden would answer that it would be minimal and only where the building is located.

Commissioner Abbott asked if cougars climbed trees to which Ms. Whitman explained that yes, they did climb trees and a climb net would be in place as well as a lid.

Commissioner Schrader asked if the water feature on the plans was purely for stormwater or waste disposal. Ms. Whitman expressed that it was purely stormwater, and their form of waste disposal is cleaning the facilities daily.

With no additional questions, Commissioner Taylor made a motion to approve the location, character, and extent of improvements associated with the new Cougar Crossing exhibit. Commissioner Gunn seconded the motion. Commissioner Taylor rescinded her motion to approve the location, character, and extent of improvements associated with the new Cougar Crossing exhibit and striking out the term “non-occupied”. Commissioner Abbott seconded the motion and the following resolution was approved unanimously:

**WHEREAS**, the Birmingham Zoo is requesting the approval of the location, character, and extent of improvements associated with the new Cougar Crossing exhibit; and

**WHEREAS**, the project includes the design and construction of a new enclosed, conditioned, non-occupied animal care facility; and

**WHEREAS**, the new Cougar/Bobcat Exhibit is less than 2,000 square feet; and

**WHEREAS**, the exhibit and associated infrastructure will be developed on approximately 0.2 acres of land within the 150 acres of land owned by the City of Birmingham and leased to the Zoo; and

**WHEREAS**, the new exhibit and animal care facility will encompass six animal dens, keeper work area, training area, public viewing area, viewing dock, cougar yard, bobcat yard, and associated landscape/hardscape areas; and

**WHEREAS**, the proposed project will enhance and improve the overall visitor experience at the Birmingham Zoo, now therefore

**BE IT RESOLVED** by the Birmingham Planning Commission that the request for the approval of the location, character, and extent of improvements associated with a new Cougar Crossing Exhibit is hereby **APPROVED** as illustrated in the document entitled “Birmingham Zoo Cougar Crossing”, dated October 6, 2022.

**V. SUBJECT:** Housing Plan review associated with the proposed redevelopment of Smithfield Court and other sites within the Smithfield Choice Neighborhood project area.

**APPLICANT:** City of Birmingham and the Housing Authority of the Birmingham District (HABD)

**PREMISES:** The Smithfield Choice Neighborhood project area is generally bounded by Interstate 59/20 to the north, Interstate 65 to the east, Graymont Avenue to the south, and 7<sup>th</sup> Street West to the west.

Senior planner Heather Garrison introduced the Conceptual Plan for the Smithfield Choice grant proposal. Ms. Garrison introduced Cory Stallworth, Senior Deputy Director of the City’s Community Development Department and Nando Micale, Principal with LRK to present the proposal and provide additional information regarding the conceptual plan.

Commissioner Schrader opened the floor to comments and questions concerning the information presented. Commissioner Abbott asked if the two schools and the library would be demolished. Mr. Stallworth responded that there are plans to demolish one school and surplus property proposing new rental and homeowner occupied dwellings behind the surplus property.

Commissioner Abbott then asked what the plans for the JCCEO site were and if it would be demolished. Mr. Stallworth explained that the current plan is to keep the building and use it for senior living and early learning. Commissioner Abbott asked if the plan was to demolish the Smithfield Public Library to which Mr. Stallworth responded that there would be new construction on the site that will be innovative and located within the same space.

Commissioner Abbott asked if the parks within the project area the responsibility of the Housing Authority of the Birmingham District (HABD) to which Mr. Stallworth explained that the HABD would maintain the parks and green space throughout the project area. Mr. Stallworth continued to say that he would send the presentation to everyone.

Commissioner Taylor asked what the neighborhood response to the proposal was, would there be residents moving and out, and would the income level be mixed throughout the development. Mr. Stallworth responded that Smithfield Court is 80% seniors, and they are comfortable with the plan and like the idea of senior living at the JCCEO site. The residents expressed that they wanted more green space. In addition, this grant provides the opportunity to assist existing homeowners with a facade improvement program and home repairs. Mr. Stallworth also said that each development will be mixed income with no concentration of income level in a particular location.

Commissioner Taylor asked about legacy planning with regards to estates and wills and how would the program be doing this. Mr. Stallworth answered that they are working with the existing programs.

Commissioner Gunn asked if there was a reason why Elyton Village was left out of the plan. Mr. Stallworth explained that both Elyton Village and Smithfield Court are large areas and they did not have the capital or an existing redevelopment plan for both.

Commissioner Jordan pointed to the site plan within the presentation and asked if Mr. Stallworth could explain what is going on. Mr. Stallworth walked through the site plan following the number of each site in sequin with Phase 1, Phase 2, etc. He explained that the JCCEO site would be in the first phase that would begin in the first quarter of 2024.

Commissioner Schrader mentioned that he did not see a lot of public realm stuff and if Mr. Stallworth could speak to this. Mr. Stallworth expressed that there is stuff planned that is not shown on the site plan, including complete streets on 8th Avenue. Mr. Nando Micale responded via Webex that this presentation shows renderings, streetscapes, that will be implemented. The plan invests in streetscapes along 8th Avenue and it will revitalize the gateway into the neighborhood. Mr. Stallworth went on to say that the Parker site development will have community space and encourage walkability.

Commissioner Schrader asked what the final standards/goals for this plan will look like. Mr. Stallworth answered that they provided some elevations and contextual background. Mr. Micale expanded on this saying that revitalization will take place at the plaza across from the library and you can see complete streets in the images. Additionally, trail improvements have been proposed and when the plan returns on January 4th, 2023 all of these details will be fleshed out.

Commissioner Dr. Hollis commented that this plan was thoughtful and in-depth by looking at ways to mitigate trauma from relocation and the thought put into limiting emotional trauma. She continued to say that this is an excellent model for redevelopment throughout the city and confident that with the partners and leveraging this will be successful.

Commissioner Gunn stated that this would be a game changer for the community and asked the development team to educate residents on the process of relocation to prevent future displacement. Mr. Stallworth respond that this was at the forefront of their planning. Commissioner Schrader closed the item.

## **VI. OTHER BUSINESS AND COMMUNICATIONS**

Principal Planner Michael Ward took a moment to thank Dr. Victoria Hollis for her work as a commissioner with the Planning Commission. Mr. Ward informed the Commission that the meeting would be Dr. Hollis' last and expressed that she would be missed.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 9:39 a.m.