

PROCEEDINGS OF THE CITY COMMISSION
CITY OF EAST GRAND RAPIDS

Regular Meeting Held October 2, 2023

Mayor Favale called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. in the City Commission Chambers at the East Grand Rapids Community Center and led the audience in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Present: Commissioners Arendshorst, Burdick, Hamrick, Schulz, Schwartz, Wessely and Mayor Favale.

Absent: None.

Also Present: Deputy City Manager LaFave; City Attorney Huff; Finance Director Seath; Parks & Recreation Director Melville; City Clerk Parmenter.

2023-194. The agenda was approved as submitted.

2023-195. Public comment:

Phil Skaggs, State Representative, 2615 Hall St, gave an update on what the legislatures have been doing. He noted that they passed the largest funding for K-12 schools to date, all universities will be funded equally, and the zoo will receive \$14 million in funding.

2023-196. Mayor and City Commission comments, including committee liaison reports.

Commissioner Schwartz would like an update on recent crimes and would like public safety to share talking points on updates relating to enforcement.

Commissioner Hamrick echoed Commissioner Schwartz's comments.

Commissioner Schulz noted the GVBA was hosting the second Night Market from 5-8 p.m. this Thursday and there were still spaces available. The Community Foundation is redefining themselves and he is hoping to be able to update the Commission at the next meeting. He also reminded everyone that it is Hearts of Gold Week.

Commissioner Burdick thanked public safety for their help and participation in the Homecoming Parade.

Commissioner Wessely reminded everyone that as it is getting darker to watch for walkers and students and to please adjust sprinklers for the students walking to school in the mornings.

Mayor Favale also noted the sprinklers and also thanked public safety for their help with the Homecoming Parade. She also reminded everyone to slow down and watch for the kiddos.

Deputy City Manager La Fave noted that leaf pick up starts on Monday.

- 2023-197. Consider the final reading of an Ordinance to Amend Subsection I of Section 9.56 of Chapter 93 of Title IX of the Code of the City of East Grand Rapids.

Deputy City Manager La Fave reviewed the proposed changes.

Patrick McCarthy, 980 Princeton Ave, remembers when people were upset because 7-Eleven was selling alcohol next to the high school.

- 2023-0197-A. Schulz-Burdick. To accept the final reading and adopt the changes of an Ordinance to Amend Subsection I of Section 9.56 of Chapter 93 of Title XI of the Code of the City of East Grand Rapids.

Yeas: Arendshorst, Burdick, Hamrick, Schulz, Schwartz, Wessely and Favale – 7
Nays: -0-

- 2023-198. Consider authorizing the purchase of a ballot on demand system.

City Clerk Parmenter highlighted the request.

- 2023-0198-A. Burdick-Arendshorst. To authorize the purchase of a Ballot in Demand system through Election Source in the amount of \$5,212.50.

Yeas: Arendshorst, Burdick, Hamrick, Schulz, Schwartz, Wessely and Favale – 7
Nays: -0-

- 2023-199. Consider adopting a resolution approving an early voting site.

City Clerk Parmenter highlighted the request.

- 2023-0199-A. Hamrick-Arendshorst. To adopt a resolution approving the early voting to be located at 750 Lakeside Dr SE.

Yeas: Arendshorst, Burdick, Hamrick, Schulz, Schwartz, Wessely and Favale – 7
Nays: -0-

- 2023-200. Consider retaining HRC (Hubbel, Roth & Clark) for engineering assistance during DTE's 2023-2024 Gas Renewal Project.

Deputy City Manager La Fave highlighted the request.

Commissioner Schulz asked for an explanation on why we want to do this. Deputy City Manager La Fave explained that DTE wanted a longer laid out process, but this will shorten it up.

Commissioner Burdick asked if there was a plan for residents to report issues as they arise. Deputy City Manager La Fave said that there will be additional boots on the ground to be proactive and they will be given contact information.

2023-0200-A. Schulz-Schwartz to retain HRC (Hubbel, Roth & Clark) for engineering assistance during DTE's 2023-2024 Gas Renewal Project as presented.

Yeas: Arendshorst, Burdick, Hamrick, Schulz, Schwartz, Wessely and Favale – 7
Nays: -0-

2023-201. Consider approving a six-month extension in the Low-Income Household Water Assistance Program to provide direct payment assistance for drinking water and wastewater utilities.

Deputy City Manager La Fave highlighted the request.

2023-0201-A. Arendshorst-Burdick. To approve a six-month extension in the Low-Income Household Water Assistance Program to provide direct payment assistance for drinking water and wastewater utilities.

Yeas: Arendshorst, Burdick, Hamrick, Schulz, Schwartz, Wessely and Favale – 7
Nays: -0-

2023-202. Hamrick-Schulz. To approve the consent agenda as follows:

2023-203. Minutes of the regular meeting held September 18, 2023.

2023-204. Disbursement of funds: payroll disbursements of \$308,070.52; county and school disbursements of \$265,804.46 and total remaining disbursements of \$1,268,794.05.

2023-205. Consider approving the renewal of the City's annual Microsoft 365 Business Premium and Exchange Online licenses for a total cost of \$10,512.00.

2023-206. Consider approving the Parks and Recreation Criminal Background & Driver Record Check Policy.

2023-207. Consider approving the Parks and Recreation Program Cancellation and Refund Policy.

2023-208. Consider approving the Parks and Recreation Program Fee Policy.

2023-209. Consider approving the Parks and Recreation Special Event Policy.

- 2023-210. Consider approving the Parks and Recreation Program Weather Policy.
- 2023-211. Consider casting a vote for three candidates for the Michigan Municipal League Liability and Property Pool.

Yeas: Arendshorst, Burdick, Hamrick, Schulz, Schwartz, Wessely and Favale – 7
Nays: -0-

Work Session Items

- 2023-212. Provide feedback on potential leaf blower regulations.

Commissioner Arendshorst mentioned that over 170 cities have some kind of ban on gas leaf blowers. They create 100 decibels of noise which is comparable to a passenger jet. They are linked to health issues and hearing issues. Two cycle engines are the most damaging and are the same as in the 1950's.

Commissioner Schulz stated that there is a desire to be stewards of the environment.

Commissioner Wessely read every communication sent and would think twice about owning one now. He mentioned the carbon neutral initiative but is not in favor a ban especially when they are not carbon neutral yet. He would like to maybe take a deeper dive into the noise ordinance.

Mayor Favale seconds to lead by example and to encourage rather than enforce. She noted that Ann Arbor had enforced a ban solely in the commercial district due to poor air quality, but their residential was fine.

Deputy City Manager La Fave said that we could do some baseline testing regarding air quality.

Mayor Favale and Commissioner Hamrick thinks that testing would be a great idea.

Commissioner Schwartz voted for initiatives to move to carbon neutral and noted that the biggest problem would be enforcement. She is concerned with using public safety's time for this. She also stated that it would put a financial burden on residents and we would need to consider a buy back program if we go forward. She is not comfortable with this level of control but is open to revisiting the noise ordinance and limiting the hours of use.

Commissioner Arendshorst asked if the current noise ordinance could read to include leaf blowers. City Attorney Huff stated that it could be read to include blowers but there would be a high personnel cost to do measurements for that also and noted that it is difficult to rely on decibel levels.

Deputy City Manager La Fave said that they could look at time restrictions for leaf blowers and other items.

Commissioner Schulz asked if we have codes preventing any type of pollution. City Attorney Huff stated that we follow the state guidelines.

Finance Director Seath noted that there was one company in East that is electric.

Commissioner Wessely mentioned maybe teaming up with EGGreen, Lowes or Ace for initiatives and let the residents make the decision.

Mayor Favale does not have much of an appetite for an immediate ban and is interested in looking into incentive programs. She does not see a cost benefit to doing testing. Deputy City Manager La Fave can report back to Commission on a cost.

Commissioner Burdick thinks that air quality testing would be helpful.

Commissioner Hamrick mentioned trying educational posts on social media about the two- and four-cycle motors.

Mayor Favale asked if there was any interest in a ban on gas powered leaf blowers.

Consensus was more interest on further discussion on the noise ordinance.

Patrick McCarthy, 980 Princeton, stated he heard a lot of voices of reason tonight. He thanked channel 8 for putting it out so he found out about this. He understands motors and knows they are loud and put out a lot of emissions. He said that selling them on the secondary market only moves the problems elsewhere.

Armand Robinson, 2736 Cascade Rd, stated he has a sizable yard and uses a lawn service. He does not see the impact of emissions.

Daniel Brown, 2519 Hampshire, stated he is a green guy and loves his battery tools. He wonders what is next if they mandate leaf blowers and wonders what we do with batteries when done with them. They are hazardous waste.

Jon Geer, MNLA representative, read a letter sent by Amy Upton earlier in the day.

Jon Van Hekken, 535 Manhattan, does his own lawn and stated to let the market lead this and said that mandates would cause contention.

Jim Benedict, 842 Orchard, was angry when he heard about this. He knows the noise is disruptive but it also needs to be done. He is on a limited budget and agrees it would be an overstep and there should be incentives to go green. He encourages the City to drop the ban.

Marc Armstead, 2202 Elmwood, is a commercial operator. He stated that blowers were used in construction to clear streets, gutters and tree services use blowers. Blowers are a universal tool with many uses. He knows blowers are loud and obnoxious. He uses ear plugs all day. He wonders what would be banned next.

Jamin DeJong, Tender Lawn Care, stated that industry at this time does not have an electric comparable to gas blower. He can't supply truck with enough batteries to keep crew going.

Jason Mulder, Everetts Landscape, wants to be green, but would need an infrastructure change to charge the batteries needed and would have to focus on only what can get done. It would slow things down and plants would suffer. East Grand Rapids is a beautiful place with lots of trees.

Maria Young, 2810 Hall St, supports everyone who has spoken and doesn't want right taken away and noted people can make their own decisions.

David Sawyer, 821 Pinecrest, said this is a slippery slope regarding individual rights and to heed what was said today.

John Chronowski, 775 Bagley, is a member of EGReen and noted the group was there to support the City, but we have to look at the bigger picture. The engines do emit carcinogens. He did his own lawncare for years but raked his lawn. He noted that Clear Air Lawncare and Egreen Lawn Services were looking to do more services in East. He stated the City should look into a sustainability department at the City.

Natalie Owen, 1125 Cambridge, noted that they were a community of independent thinkers, smart, independent thinkers that are able to make their own decisions.

Phil Skaggs, 2615 Hall St, said that if there was a question about where you could recycle, Google recycle in Kent County. Reimagine Trash, Lowes and Home Depot will recycle also as well at Kent County DPW.

Mayor Favale asked Commissioners for direction for staff on this issue.

Consensus was to look into incentive programs, education, possible revision to the noise ordinance and to have an electric lawn service come do a presentation for the Commission. Also, possibly lower license fees for green companies.

The meeting adjourned at 8:27 p.m., subject to the call of the Mayor until October 16, 2023.

Lori A Parmenter, City Clerk