

PROCEEDINGS OF THE CITY COMMISSION
CITY OF EAST GRAND RAPIDS

Regular Meeting Held March 18, 2024

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 Burdick, Groff-Blaszak, Hunter, Schulz, Schwartz, Wessely and Mayor Favale.

Absent: None.

Also Present: City Manager Charles; Deputy City Manager La Fave; City Attorney Huff; Parks and Recreation Director Melville; Public Safety Captain Ric Buikema; Zoning Administrator Gianotti; City Clerk Parmenter; Parks and Recreations members Patrick Parks and Lauren Jacobs.

2024-48. The agenda was approved.

2024-49. Public comment:

Ronald Seif, 1237 Underwood, is part of the Urban Agriculture Initiative. He represents East Grand Rapids and the Third Ward of Grand Rapids. Their goal is to help with community gardens so residents can grow their own crops.

2024-50. Mayor and City Commission comments, including committee liaison reports.

Mayor Favale thanked everyone for the information regarding the water issue in Grand Rapids. She also reminded everyone about the Sustainable Neighbors series starting Tuesday at the library.

City Manager Charles thanked Doug La Fave and the team for disseminating EGR was not affected by the watermain break in Grand Rapids.

2024-51. Consider appointing Captain Ric Buikema as acting Public Safety Director effective March 18, 2024.

City Manager Charles reviewed the request.

2024-051-A. Burdick-Schwartz. To appoint Captain Ric Buikema as acting Public Safety Director effective March 18, 2024.

Mayor Favale thanked Ric for stepping into this role.

Yeas: Burdick, Groff-Blaszak, Hunter, Schulz, Schwartz, Wessely and Favale – 7

Nays: None.

2024-52. Planning Commission Annual Report for 2023.

Zoning Administrator Gianotti reviewed the report.

2024-53. Consider approval a resolution for the addition and certification of Elinor Lane as a public Local Street to the City of East Grand Rapids municipal street system and accept constructed infrastructure as public infrastructure for the City of East Grand Rapids as noted in the as-builts.

Deputy City Manager La Fave reviewed the information.

2024-053-A. Wessely-Schulz. To approve a resolution for the addition and certification of Elinor Lane as a public Local Street to the City of East Grand Rapids municipal street system and accept constructed infrastructure as public infrastructure for the City of East Grand Rapids as noted in the as-builts.

Yeas: Burdick, Groff-Blaszak, Hunter, Schulz, Schwartz, Wessely and Favale – 7

Nays: None.

2024-54. Consider approval of the Manhattan Park Improvement Project construction plans and authorize City staff and consultants to proceed with releasing the project for competitive bidding.

Parks and Recreation Director Melville reviewed the request.

City Manager Charles noted that the cost does include a 10% contingency and stated that we will be seeking alternate bids for the surfacing of tennis and pickleball courts.

Commissioner Schulz asked about the cost for the sound barrier. Parks and Recreation Director Melville stated that from what he has seen, it would be between \$30,000 and \$40,000.

Commissioner Wessely asked about the flexible base vs. concrete. Ken Bosworth with Virdis stated that he would not advocate for flexible surfacing due to settling and other factors. Commissioner Wessely said that we could consider selling memorializing pavers to help pay for some of the cost.

Chris Meyer, 350 Manhattan, reviewed the sound study results and recommendations.

Commissioner Schwartz likes the community fundraising aspect.

Commissioner Groff-Blaszak is uncomfortable with fundraising due to the millage.

Commissioner Wessely stated that it was more than fundraising, but it was giving people a way to memorialize a loved one.

Mayor Favale agrees that fundraising was done with the millage.

Commissioner Burdick supports the idea of memorializing bricks and benches.

2024-054-A. Wessely-Groff-Blaszak. To approve of the Manhattan Park Improvement Project construction plans and authorize City staff and consultants to proceed with releasing the project for competitive bidding.

Yeas: Burdick, Groff-Blaszak, Hunter, Schwartz, Wessely and Favale – 6

Nays: None.

Abstain: Schulz.

2024-55. Consider approving a baseball field improvement project in the amount of \$252,033 with 10% contingency and 8% for project engineering and construction observation for a total not to exceed project cost of \$300,000 with 50% of the project being paid by East Grand Rapids Public Schools.

Parks and Recreation Director Melville reviewed the request and noted that the color schemes were not final.

City Manager Charles noted that the Board of Education did vote last week to approve the project and expenditure.

Commissioner Wessely said that this was brought up in infrastructure and it was cool looking system and a fraction of the cost of raising the field.

2024-055-A. Schulz-Burdick. To approve a baseball field improvement project with Water Management Specialists from Mason, MI in the amount of \$252,033 with 10% contingency and 8% for project engineering and construction observation for a total not to exceed project cost of \$300,000 with 50% of the project being paid by East Grand Rapids Public Schools.

Yeas: Burdick, Groff-Blaszak, Hunter, Schulz, Schwartz, Wessely and Favale – 7

Nays: None.

2024-56. Wessely-Schwartz. To approve the consent agenda as follows:

2024-056-A. Minutes of the regular meeting held March 4, 2024.

2024-056-B. Disbursement of funds: payroll disbursements of \$ 307,034.61; county and school disbursements of \$73,134.36, and total remaining disbursements of \$351,442.19.

2024-056-C. Consider authorizing the purchase of one V18 Supervac Valor battery operated ventilation fan with accessories in the amount of \$5437.50.

Yeas: Burdick, Groff-Blaszak, Hunter, Schulz, Schwartz, Wessely and Favale – 7
Nays: None.

2024-57. Consider holding a work session to discuss the recently adopted City Code Section 9.96 of Chapter 95 of Title IX - Outdoor Furnaces And Accessory Structure Heating Devices.

City Manager Charles reviewed the request and noted that they have done nine to ten months of research on this topic.

David Stoffer, 1925 Lake Drive, thinks the City should take a second look at the ordinance. He stated that this is a neighbor situation and would like to come up with better ways to create new laws.

Randy Russo, 1933 Lake Drive, reviewed the harmful effects of wood burning, He noted that the sauna is three feet from the lot line, and this has to do with the pollution and not a neighbor dispute. He strongly supports the ordinance.

Steve Jones, 1512 Woodcliff, disagrees that this is a neighbor against neighbor and is not sure what the benefits of a wood burning sauna are but burning wood is very toxic.

Commissioner Schulz stated that a neighbor brought this to light and that there was no reason that someone should have to suffer in their own home.

Commissioner Wessely said that this was an isolated issue and knows that staff did their homework but is concerned with impeding on someone's rights.

Mayor Favale thinks that usage is part of the issue. Multiple neighbors have complained and stands by what was done.

Commissioner Groff-Blaszak feels more solidly that this ordinance is a good thing and has done a lot of research.

Commissioner Schwartz said that multiple neighbors have complained and that everyone deserves to live comfortably in their own home.

Commissioner Schulz hopes that this will curb future issues.

Commissioner Wessely questioned if we were creating a slippery slope with grills, smokers and chimneys.

Commissioner Hunter said that things would have to be looked at on a one-by-one basis.

Mayor Favale said that for her it comes down to usage.

City Manager Charles noted that fire pits are regulated by hours.

Commissioner Wessely questioned if a home could be heated solely by burning wood and if there was a hybrid version that could burn wood and gas. Deputy City Manager La Fave stated that it has to meet the building codes.

Commissioner Schwartz said that she would be willing to look at this in the future if new information arises.

Mayor Favale has learned a lot through this process and is more comfortable with the ordinance since learning more.

The meeting adjourned at 7:40 p.m., subject to the call of the Mayor until April 8, 2024.

Lori A Parmenter, City Clerk