

PROCEEDINGS OF THE CITY COMMISSION
CITY OF EAST GRAND RAPIDS

Regular Meeting Held July 15, 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, Schwartz, Wessely and Mayor Favale.

Absent: None.

Also Present: City Manager Charles; Deputy City Manager La Fave; Attorney Roth in place of City Attorney Huff; Parks and Recreation Director Melville; Public Safety Captain Ric Buikema; City Clerk Parmenter.

2024-114. Motion was made by Groff-Blaszak and supported by Hunter to change Item 7 to setting a special meeting rather than to appoint a First Ward Commissioner.

Commissioner Groff-Blaszak stated that the decision requires deliberation.

There was discussion on changing the agenda.

Mayor Favale noted that there is a viable candidate, and a special election would cost the taxpayers money and leave the seat vacant for possibly a year.

City Manager Charles stated that Monday, July 22nd is the last day to appoint a Commissioner. After reviewing the Charter language, the State of Michigan has changed election laws since the Charter was written. May, August and November are the only times that an election can be held. Candidates would have to be in by this Thursday to be included on this November's ballot. If there are more than three candidates, May would be a special primary election followed by the candidate being chosen on the August 2025 ballot.

Commissioner Wessely wondered why the other candidates bowed out. Mayor Favale will forward the emails.

Commissioner Schwartz noted the very short time frame to get any candidates for this November's ballot.

There was a roll call vote taken to change Item 7 to scheduling a special meeting.

Yeas: Hunter and Groff-Blaszak – 2

Nays: Burdick, Wessely, Schwartz and Favale – 4

Motion failed.

2024-115. Public comment: None.

2024-116. Mayor and City Commission comments, including committee liaison reports.

Commissioner Wessely reminded pedestrians, motorists and boaters to be super cautious at the boat launch.

Commissioner Schwartz stated that the Planning Commission meeting was just under four hours with the request to approve Gaslight Investors plan, but they asked for a pause to get more studies and information.

Commissioner Groff-Blaszak said that the Infrastructure Committee had a robust discussion regarding traffic beacons.

Commissioner Hunter thanked Planning Commission for their due diligence on projects.

City Manager Charles thanked staff for the July 4th festivities and noted that it was a good turnout for the Trail Blazer. He noted that EGR received 2.6 inches of rain last night and reminded everyone to clear drains in front of homes if you can and to be safe around downed lines.

Mayor Favale thanked City staff for the July 4th festivities.

2024-117. City Commission candidate interviews.

Mayor Favale noted that two candidates dropped out of the interview process and introduced Kate Skaggs.

Kate Skaggs introduced herself.

Commissioner Wessely asked if she had any conflicts that would prevent her from the duties of Commissioner. Kate Skaggs replied that there wasn't anything.

Commissioner Groff-Blaszak asked if there were any personal or professional conflicts. Kate Skaggs explained her job and stated that there were no conflicts.

Commissioner Wessely asked if this was her first time applying for Commission and if she would run for re-election in November 2025. Kate Skaggs stated that it was her first time applying and she would run for re-election.

Commissioner Hunter asked what committees she would like to be on or remain on. Kate Skaggs replied that she would like to stay on the Community Foundation.

Commissioner Groff-Blaszak asked how she would vote on a contentious issue. Kate Skaggs stated that she would research, talk to citizens and make an informed decision.

2024-118. Consider appointing a First Ward City Commissioner.

City Manager Charles highlighted the request and noted that a Commissioner has to be appointed by July 22.

Commissioner Hunter referenced two emails that had been sent earlier in the day.

Commissioner Groff-Blaszak questioned why the position was not being vetted.

Mayor Favale noted that it has never been vetted on partisanship.

There was a lot of discussion regarding the process in obtaining candidates leading up to the meeting.

2024-0118-A. Wessely-Burdick. To appoint Kate Skaggs as First Ward City Commissioner for a partial term expiring December 2025.

Yeas: Burdick, Hunter, Schwartz, Wessely and Favale – 5

Nays: None.

Abstain: Groff-Blaszak -1

2024-119. Consider adopting a resolution to rescind outdated and superseded policies.

City Manager Charles reviewed the request.

2024-0119-A. Schwartz-Wessely. To adopt a resolution to rescind outdated and superseded policies.

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

Nays: None.

2024-120. Consider approving Varnum’s proposed terms of service for City Attorney John Huff to continue with the City of East Grand Rapids.

City Manager Charles reviewed the request and noted that the Finance Committee was comfortable with moving forward with Bloom Sluggett, PC and continuing with Attorney Huff and Varnum.

Commissioner Wessely noted that with Bloom Sluggett, we will have the whole firm.

Commissioner Groff-Blaszak questioned the increase in the retainer for Varnum. City Manager Charles noted that it is the difference in their cost center.

2024-0120-A. Groff-Blaszak-Hunter. To approve Varnum’s proposed terms of service for City Attorney John Huff to continue with the City of East Grand Rapids.

Commissioner Schwartz thanked John Huff and Varnum for their services and noted the years of institutional knowledge.

Yeas: Burdick, Groff-Blaszak, Hunter, Schwartz, Wessely and Favale – 6
Nays: None.

2024-121. Consider approving a permanent easement for Consumers Energy Company at Manhattan Park.

Parks and Recreation Director Melville reviewed the request and the need for new electrical to come into the park.

2024-0121-A. Hunter-Groff-Blaszak. To approve a permanent easement for Consumers Energy Company at Manhattan Park.

Yeas: Burdick, Groff-Blaszak, Hunter, Schwartz, Wessely and Favale – 6
Nays: None.

2024-122. Wessely-Burdick. To approve the consent agenda as follows:

2024-0122-A. Minutes of the regular meeting held July 1, 2024.

2024-0122-B. Disbursement of funds: payroll disbursements of \$296,421.24; county and school disbursements of \$0, and total remaining disbursements of \$332,633.74.

2024-123. Consider voting for three (3) candidates for the Michigan Municipal League Workers' Compensation Fund.

Yeas: Burdick, Groff-Blaszak, Hunter, Schwartz, Wessely and Favale –6
Nays: None.

The meeting adjourned at 7:33 p.m., subject to the call of the Mayor until August 5, 2024.

Lori A Parmenter, City Clerk