

PROCEEDINGS OF THE CITY COMMISSION
CITY OF EAST GRAND RAPIDS

Regular Meeting Held January 6, 2025

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, Skaggs, Wessely and Mayor Favale.

Absent: None.

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

2025-01. The agenda was approved.

2025-02. Public comment:

Catherine Kriegbaum, 2249 Estelle Dr., asked the Commission to make changes to the property exemption and resolution at the next meeting.

2025-03. Mayor and City Commission comments, including committee liaison reports.

Commissioner Skaggs wished everyone a Happy New Year and go Lions.

Commissioner Burdick reminded everyone that the Christmas Tree pickup ends January 17.

Commissioner Wessely wished everyone a Happy New Year and go Lions.

Commissioner Schwartz wished everyone a Happy New Year.

Commissioner Groff-Blaszak thanked public safety for the water rescue and reminded everyone about the recycling event on January 11th.

Mayor Favale wished everyone a happy, healthy prosperous New Year, reminded everyone about the recycling event from 10am -12pm this Saturday and stated that she was grateful for city staff and the Commission for their service. She then reviewed Robert's Rules of Order and explained why public comment is not a question-and-answer session.

City Manager Charles gave kudos to Public Safety for the ice rescue, noted that the park bond sale would go out from proposals in the near future and asked all to keep March 1 open for the Strategic Planning session.

2025-04. Public hearing to consider the establishment of a Brownfield Redevelopment Authority.

City Manager Charles reviewed the information.

Susan Wenzlick with Fishbeck gave a slide presentation regarding Brownfield Redevelopment Authorities.

Mayor Favale asked about whether elected officials can serve on the BRA. Ms. Wenzlick stated they are not prohibited but it is a little unusual.

Commissioner Hunter questioned how the refunded amount is determined. Ms. Wenzlick stated that a proforma is required for each project and that it is a state requirement.

Commissioner Groff-Blaszak questioned the rent amounts in relation to the AMI in the examples that were given. Ms. Wenzlick stated that it was determined in the policy that was set within the BRA and that MSHDA releases new rent levels in the spring of each year based on inflation.

Commissioner Skaggs asked if debt is collected from the taxes. Ms. Wenzlick said that debt cannot be collected.

Commissioner Hunter questioned if other BRA's have mixed use in their developments. Ms. Wenzlick stated that Grand Traverse County has mixed use in theirs.

Mayor Favale asked who does the market analysis. Ms. Wenzlick stated that the developer typically does this, but it is not a requirement.

Public Comment opened at 7:01 p.m.

Mark Secchia, 2640 Reeds Lake Ct., questioned how long the repayment for the Traverse City project lasted and stated that the city needed to negotiate with the developer.

Sean Sperling, 1779 Whitfield Rd., stated that the city needs to negotiate with the developer to put in more affordable housing.

Andrew Sochacki, 650 Cambridge Blvd., came to express his discontent with this.

Marc Armstead, 2202 Elmwood, stated that this does not make a lot of sense to him.

Public Comment closed at 7:07 p.m.

2024-04-A. Wessely-Skaggs. To approve a resolution to create a Brownfield Redevelopment Authority.

Commissioner Wessely stated that there is a housing shortage in East and we want to add diversity and more kids in school and the BRA can be used as a bargaining tool with the developer.

Commissioner Skaggs said that as a City we can encourage housing development with BRA and that Grand Rapids passed a BRA unanimously.

Commission Schwartz agrees with creating this tool, come up with policies and says to go ahead with this plan and not projects.

Commissioner Burdick supports having this tool available to use and noted that it encourages oversight.

Commissioner Hunter questioned if 10% rentals at 120 AMI is standard. Ms. Wenzlick stated that it can be negotiated with the BRA. Commissioner Hunter stated that he was not comfortable moving forward.

Commissioner Groff-Blaszak noted that affordable housing is a public benefit, but we don't have a plan and there is 30-days to act on this.

Commissioner Groff-Blaszak made a motion to table this item. Commissioner Hunter supported the motion.

Yeas: Groff-Blaszak and Hunter – 2

Nays: Burdick, Schwartz, Skaggs, Wessely and Favale – 5

Motion failed.

Commissioner Schwartz agrees with having a plan but stated that this is not looking at any project at this time that we are just creating the BRA.

Commissioner Burdick stated that we can't base a BRA on one developer's hypothetical plan.

Commissioner Skaggs noted that affordable housing may not be the only public good that comes from this.

Mayor Favale stated that she is comfortable moving forward and having this in our toolbox.

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

Nays: Hunter.

2025-05. Consider approval of the Naming & Recognition Policy.

Parks and Recreation Director Melville reviewed the policy.

Commissioner Groff-Blaszak asked if this applies to all joint facilities. Parks and Recreation Director Melville stated that it was city owned property only.

Commissioner Groff-Blaszak asked if there was a mechanism for renaming something if needed. City Manager Charles stated that since this is a policy and not an ordinance, the Commission could make naming changes as needed.

2024-05-A. Burdick-Schwartz. To approve the Naming & Recognition Policy.

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

2025-06. Consider approving the appointment Tim Mroz to the Rapid/Interurban Transit Partnership Board for a two-year term ending December 31, 2026.

City Manager Charles highlighted the request.

Mayor Favale noted that Mr. Mroz was recommended by other Mayors and leaders in the County.

2024-06-A. Skaggs-Burdick. To approve the appointment Tim Mroz to the Rapid/Interurban Transit Partnership Board for a two-year term ending December 31, 2026.

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

2025-07. Consider utilizing a Promotional Assessment Center for the position of Sergeant from EMPCO, Inc.

Public Safety Director Buikema highlighted the request.

2024-07-A. Schwartz-Groff-Blaszak. To approve utilizing a Promotional Assessment Center for the position of Sergeant from EMPCO, Inc.

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

2025-08. Groff-Blaszak-Burdick. To approve the consent agenda as follows:

2024-08-A. Minutes of the regular meeting held December 16, 2025.

2024-08-B. Disbursement of funds: payroll disbursements of \$360,766.73; county and school disbursements of \$318,633.41, and total remaining disbursements of \$1,104,544.78.

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

Nays: None.

The meeting adjourned at 7:51 p.m., subject to the call of the Mayor until January 21, 2025.

Lori A Parmenter, City Clerk