

PROCEEDINGS OF THE CITY COMMISSION
CITY OF EAST GRAND RAPIDS

Regular Meeting Held February 17, 2025

Mayor Favale called the meeting to order at 6:05 p.m. in the East Grand Rapids Performing Arts 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; Zoning Administrator Gianotti; City Clerk Parmenter.

2025-35. The agenda was approved.

2025-36. Public comment: None.

2025-37. Mayor and City Commission comments, including committee liaison reports.

Commissioner Schwartz mentioned the Planning Commission held a work session on the Master Plan and also that the survey was still open.

Commissioner Groff-Blaszak appreciates the conversations about the Gaslight Investors project and the love for EGR.

Commissioner Hunter noted a conversation with a resident who would like to see the city motto reviewed for possible change.

Commissioner Skaggs thanked everyone for the comments received regarding the Gaslight project.

Commissioner Burdick thanked the community for their involvement with this project.

Commissioner Wessely thanked everyone for the amazing turnout and for sharing their thoughts. He stated that no decisions will be made this evening and noted that you can sign up for notifications for projects in East.

Mayor Favale hoped all enjoyed the time off, thanked the school for the use of the PAC for the meeting and thanked residents for being here, sharing comments online and through email.

City Manager Charles thanked DPW for their work during the snow events. He also reported to the Commission that there is not currently an electric aerial ladder fire truck available and that they are working on finalizing the contract that was approved at the previous meeting.

- 2025-38. Public hearing on a revised Gaslight Investors PUD Concept Plan at 2255 Wealthy St. SE and 515 Lakeside Dr. SE.

Zoning Administrator Gianotti reviewed the history of the property, the standards to be met and the conceptual development information.

Mike Corby with Integrated Architecture presented a slideshow of the conceptual plans for the project. He reviewed traffic connectivity and the connection to Bagley and noted that the number of spaces for parking could change.

Julie Kroll with Fleis & VandenBrink reviewed the current traffic and parking information and noted that a safety review would be done for the area as well as a traffic study in the spring to identify any recommendations for the site.

Commissioner Groff-Blaszak questioned if the Commission can require a traffic study as part of the concept phase and asked about soil studies. City Manager Charles said that a traffic study could be part of the concept phase and that the soil study is up to the developer.

Commissioner Hunter asked how the square footage differed from 2004 to the current plans. Zoning Administrator Gianotti noted the comparatives on page 8 in the information packet.

Commissioner Schwartz questioned one parking space for each apartment and one space for townhomes. Mike Corby noted that townhomes each have four spaces.

Commissioner Wessely questioned how the height difference changed. Mike Corby stated that it was the way height is measured to the slope of the roof vs. how the city measured height.

Mayor Favale noted that the height was 94 feet in the previous plans and 94 feet in current.

Commissioner Burdick wanted to hold off on questions until after public comment.

Public Comment opened at 7:25 p.m.

Anna Moore Butzner, 2311 Wealthy, Unit 34, said that the concept plan is too big, and she is concerned about traffic.

Tina Murua, 1031 Lakeside, would like attainable housing clarified and stated that more affordable/attainable housing is needed to bring young families to East.

JT Weis, 719 Plymouth, loves the walkability, character of East and in general is in favor of the project but has concerns about the size of building. He also noted that the project needs to stand on its own financially.

Brienne Postema, Carolina's Lowcountry Kitchen, said that customers are spending money in surrounding areas that have embraced growth. Expanding will help Gaslight and parking. She feels the development will have a positive impact.

Gary Barnes, 1720 Oxford, stated that increased population density can have negative impacts.

John Meilner, 920 Santa Barbara, strongly supports the project. He said that you get empty store fronts and vacant houses when you don't invest in the community and noted that there were very little choices to move to in East when downsizing.

Jerry Anderson, 435 Edgemere, encouraged the Commission to proceed with caution and said that the buildings were too tall and too dense.

Patricia Westveer, 2311 Wealthy, said the proposed development needs to be scaled back and there will be too much traffic, but she is in favor of developing the property.

Judith Baxter said that the development will transform the area to an urban are and wonders if our community can support it.

Jon Tessin, 1060 Conlon, said that he moved here for a small town and the development has to go.

Timkovich, 1450 Breton, wants to be able to downsize and this sort of development belongs here but is concerned with the tax giveaway.

Brian Hamrick, 3004 Oakwood, is in favor of the project, need to create housing and focus on housing not parking.

Deanna Eckert, 537 Greenwood, is concerned about entrance/exits and likes the addition of commercial options.

Chip George, 2700 Manor, is excited about the project and having more restaurants and affordable apartments.

Tom Doyal, 943 Floral, is disappointed with options to downsize in East. He is hoping for a project for housing options to create more opportunities for people to move to East.

Josh Greenberg, 2770 Woodcliff Cir., supports development, great concept, but there is work to be done.

Dennis Goebel, 413 Gladstone, his main concern is traffic and parking.

Lauren Hayes, 520 Cambridge, stated that 7 stories is too high, but is for development in some capacity.

Paul Hegele, 2073 Hall, is interested in the project and hopes the work continues with the developer.

Chris Chappus, 1026 Monterey, is concerned with development. He wants studies completed prior to start.

Brent Slay, 757 Bagley, is concerned about public safety.

Don Markham, 540 Gladstone, has concerns about the height of the buildings and he doesn't trust traffic studies.

Karey Hamrick, 3004 Oakwood, as a former commissioner, she heard over and over about no place for seniors to downsize, noted that it lined up with the Master Plan and asked them to think about vehicle charging for residents.

Matt Schwager, 443 Plymouth, said that the building height was a concern.

Mark Tomasik, 939 Lakeside, supports the project and noted that EGR is stagnant and encouraged development to move forward.

Jim Detamore, 451 Cambridge, said that the size is too tall, too dense and wondered what the timing of the plan.

John Fuger, 2738 Elmwood, said the size and scale is objectionable, objects to BRA and tax incentives.

Nick Nicola, 965 Breton, stated that it is a great design, and wondered about taking the road out of the middle and expanding Shopping Center Drive. He also noted that it is very hard to build without incentives.

Nyal Deems, 701 Laurel Cir., said the development is too large and to bring down the size because it needs to fit in with Gaslight. He also said that it would be setting a precedence with the height of the building.

Joseph Flikweert, 2611 Richards, said that this will change the urban core and it needs development but it needs to be done tastefully.

Kateri Schutt, 536 Belvedere, is in support of the project.

Susan McCarty, 1138 Kenesaw, has seen similar developments in different areas and some have been really successful and some were not.

Kathleen Gillett, 2014 El Dorado, said that there were still a lot of unanswered questions with the environmental studies.

Welch, 539 Greenwood, said that their main concern is traffic.

Michelle Marin, 1150 Kenesaw, would like an environmental impact analysis done.

Bob Kirchgessner, 1900 El Dorado, said that this was a smart development and that the other businesses would benefit. He is strongly in favor.

Ryan Schmidt, 812 Rosewood, stated that if he was a developer, he would design it the same way, but maybe a smaller scale.

Tom Shannon, 2347 El Dorado, is concerned about congestion on Lakeside with people getting boats in the water.

Mark Armstead, 2202 Elmwood, said that we are creating our own problem with affordable housing.

Jeff Olson, 1112 Eastwood, said to let the developers have some runway.

Public hearing closed at 9:22 p.m.

Commissioner Skaggs thanked everyone for coming out this evening. She said that we have to balance wants and needs, pedestrian safety, and reminded everyone that this was sent to the Commission with conditions when they approved the plan.

Commissioner Burdick wondered if we have to consider the precedence of the building height, wants to have clarity of what we can ask for and private property rights.

Commissioner Wessely noted that there are misunderstandings about the BRA and TIFF and commented regarding renters and crime. He thinks it would be a good idea to have another public meeting regarding this when more information is available.

Commissioner Hunter spoke regarding the 2025 PUD amendment and has concerns about the project, BRA and TIFF.

Commissioner Groff-Blaszak thanked everyone for coming out to speak and it will take some time to get the information needed.

Commissioner Schwartz thanked everyone for coming out and noted that concerns are traffic, walkability, space and pedestrian safety.

Mayor Favale thanked everyone for their time and told them to keep engaging and giving their thoughts.

- 2025-39. Consider approval of a contract for Cured-In-Place-Pipe (CIPP) to rehabilitate sanitary and storm sewer mains for authorized budgeted or approved/amended budgeted amounts for a one-year term for calendar year 2025 as noted.

Deputy City Manager La Fave reviewed the request.

Commissioner Burdick questioned if we utilized door hangers to let residents know this was being done. Deputy City Manager La Fave stated that we did.

- 2025-039-A. Burdick-Hunter. To approve a contract for Cured-In-Place-Pipe (CIPP) to rehabilitate sanitary and storm sewer mains with Corby Energy Services, Inc. for authorized budgeted or approved/amended budgeted amounts for a one-year term for calendar year 2025 as noted.

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

- 2025-40. Consider authorizing the purchase of a Pal 2 ADA Pool Lift from Pool Supply Unlimited for a cost of \$9,383.88.

Parks and Recreation Director Melville reviewed the information.

- 2025-040-A. Skaggs-Schwartz. To authorize the purchase of a Pal 2 ADA Pool Lift from Pool Supply Unlimited for a cost of \$9,383.88.

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

- 2025-41. Consider approval of the contract with One Pass Solutions for an aquatic membership reimbursement program.

Parks and Recreation Director Melville reviewed the request.

- 2025-041-A. Groff-Blaszak-Burdick. To approve the contract with One Pass Solutions for an aquatic membership reimbursement program.

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

- 2025-42. Consider authorizing the purchase of a scoreboard and components in the amount of \$12,000 for placement on Mehney Field and allocating \$2,500 for installation.

Parks and Recreation Director Melville highlighted the request.

2025-042-A. Groff-Blaszak-Hunter. To authorize the purchase of a scoreboard and components from Nevco Sports in the amount of \$12,000 for placement on Mehney Field and allocating \$2,500 for installation.

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

2025-43. Consider the Mayor’s appointments to various commissions and boards.

City Manager Charles highlighted the request.

2025-043-A. Schwartz-Skaggs. To approve the Mayor’s appointments to various boards.

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

2025-44. Consider a parking analysis of Gaslight Village for a cost not to exceed \$35,700.

City Manager Charles highlighted the request.

2025-044-A. Hunter-Burdick. To approve a parking analysis of Gaslight Village with HRC for a cost not to exceed \$35,700.

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

2025-45. Skaggs-Schwartz. To approve the consent agenda as follows:

2025-045-A. Minutes of the regular meeting held February 3, 2025.

2025-045-B. Disbursement of funds: payroll disbursements of \$283,283.99; county and school disbursements of \$304,989.74, and total remaining disbursements of \$381,076.66.

2025-045-C. Draft minutes of the EGR Library Commission meeting held on January 27, 2025.

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

The meeting adjourned at 10:28 p.m., subject to the call of the Mayor until March 3, 2025.

Lori A Parmenter, City Clerk