

PROCEEDINGS OF THE CITY COMMISSION
CITY OF EAST GRAND RAPIDS

Regular Meeting Held March 31, 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; Public Safety Director Buikema; Zoning Administrator Gianotti; City Planner LeBlanc; City Clerk Parmenter.

2025-57. The agenda was approved.

Mayor Favale addressed the rules and process for public comment.

2025-58. Public comment:

Mary Dersch, 956 Lakeside Dr., noted that the cupola was restored and is in the library for everyone to view.

Tonya DeOliveira, 1851 Hall St., is with the Walk, Ride and Roll initiative. Their focus is on safety for walkers, bicyclists, scooters and vehicles through policies and procedures. She wants to make East a safer place.

Mandy Sharp Eizinger, 1643 Whitfield Rd., is with the Walk, Ride and Roll initiative also and stated that they are wanting to make East a safer place through funding, education, policies and procedures and hopes the Commission will consider the initiative.

John Arendshorst, 2056 Wilshire, is in support of the Walk, Ride and Roll initiative.

Andrew Carley, 1930 Newark, wants more walkable, bikeable and dedicated bike lanes. He said that we can do better as a community. He supports the initiative.

Melissa Tungl, 1247 Breton Rd., supports Walk, Ride and Roll initiative.

Alisa stated that he likes to bike to Reeds Lake to go fishing and wants bike lanes on Breton.

Varytie said that she likes biking around Reeds Lake and wants a 5ft. passing distance.

Tom Tilma, 1635 Hall St., wants no turn on red at intersections, approved crosswalk ordinance and 5 ft. passing ordinance.

Kathy Tyron, 929 San Jose Dr., supports the Walk, Ride and Roll initiative.

Anna Marie Butzner, 2311 Wealthy St., would like RRFB at Wealthy and Lakeside and for bikers to ride single file.

Jennifer Metz, 303 Briarwood, stated that there needs to be education on the rules for pedestrians, bikers, etc. She supports the initiative.

Arielle Leipham Ellis, Friends of Slow Streets, stated that we need to invest in Infrastructure and street design are paramount.

Anthony Maurer, 421 Lakeside Dr., said that EGR is a campus community and walkers need to be protected. He advocated for full stops in crosswalks, 5 ft. buffer from bikes, no turn on red and personal mobility should be part of the ordinance.

Jamie Nye, 1821 Amhurst NE., is the president of Run G.R. She said that East is her first choice to run, bike and that there was a different mentality in EGR vs. GR.

2025-59. Mayor and City Commission comments, including committee liaison reports.

Commissioner Schwartz hopes everyone is ok after the storm last night. Thank you to staff for the cleanup. Thank you to everyone that came out to speak tonight. There will be no votes on Gaslight until at least May.

Commissioner Groff-Blaszak thanked public works for the cleanup and is energized working with the Walk, Ride and Bike group and excited to take up recommendations.

Commissioner Skaggs is grateful for the utility workers and DPW for their work after the storm and reminded everyone to check their drains in the street to make sure they are clear.

Commissioner Burdick thanked everyone who came out from Walk, Bike and Roll and stated that there are also other things in the works already.

Commissioner Wessely appreciates everyone who came out and noted that many are trying to figure out how to navigate e-bikes and scooters as there is not much regulations regarding this yet.

Mayor Favale thanked public works and said that they did an amazing job with the storm cleanup and with the cupola. She also reminded everyone to clear the drains and told everyone to have a safe and fun spring break.

City Manager Charles thanked public works and public safety for their work after the storm and Mary Mapes for clearing drains.

2025-60. Kent District Library Community report.

Carla Moyer Hotz introduced herself as the East Grand Rapids representative for KDL. She stated that East supports its library wonderfully and she is proud to be the representative.

Lance Werner, Executive Director of KDL, appreciates everyone's work, reviewed the awards the library has received and noted that they have partnered with Feeding America.

Scott Ninemeier, Library Director of the EGR Library, stated that East is a special community, and the library is in a good spot.

2025-61. Consider approving the purchase of modular study rooms including associated furniture from Custer Furniture for \$56,284.91.

City Manager Charles highlighted the request.

Scott Ninemeier, Library Director of the EGR Library, stated that the library needs additional study rooms, and they will be able to stay open during the project.

2025-061-A. Burdick-Schwartz. To approve the purchase of modular study rooms including associated furniture from Custer Furniture for \$56,284.91.

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

2025-62. Gaslight Investors to present the revised concept plan for 2255 Wealthy St. and 515 Lakeside Dr.

Zoning Administrator Gianotti reviewed the information and noted that no decisions would be made for at least 30 days.

Scott Wierda, Gaslight Investors, noted that they have adjusted height and density based on feedback and economic feasibility. They want to do something dynamic for East. Have opportunity to do something impactful. We need to keep the needle moving forward and pass the conceptual.

Scott Winn, Integrated Architecture, reviewed the concept plan changes based on feedback and the financial model. They made changes to parking, vehicular movement, etc. based on feedback. They are committed to having 10% attainable housing.

Commissioner Skaggs spoke with neighbors and the concern was that there was a lot of asphalt. She said that additional housing will be more students in school which will give the schools more money. She is concerned about the safety of walkers and parking.

Commissioner Burdick loved Commissioner Skaggs' idea for green space, thanked the developers for their response to the initial feedback and said that it was a step in the right direction.

Commissioner Wessely echoed what was just said and appreciates that the feedback was taken into account. He likes the idea of a community space and wondered where parking would be if the study shows that more parking was needed.

Commissioner Hunter thanked Scott and the group but shares the concern about parking.

Commissioner Groff-Blaszak is excited to see development. She is concerned about parking and storm water run off with the proximity to Reeds Lake. She would like to see a greater commitment for attainable housing if applying for a Brownfield.

Commissioner Schwartz spoke about the community being walkable and a campus community. She reviewed her drawing with pedestrian only zones and is in favor of adding parking levels to the garage.

Mayor Favale thanked Mr. Wierda and Mr. Winn for their thoughtfulness and vision and encouraged the community to continue to reach out.

Andrew Carley stated that if you build it, they will come. More parking equals more cars, which makes it less safe for pedestrians.

Patricia Griffin, 2311 Wealthy St., is concerned with traffic and parking and stated they there needs to be a parking study.

Judith Baxter, Hall St., read a letter from Jerry Anderson that was given to the Mayor and Commissioners.

Commissioner Skaggs left at 7:59 p.m.

Anna Marie Butzner, 2311 Wealthy St., wants more green space, more parking equals more cars and is against surface parking.

Janet Baxter, 180 Hodenpyl Rd., wondered how many other five story buildings are in East and said that it was a very dense use of space.

Susan McCarty, 1138 Kenesaw Dr., stated that one of the core values as a community is safety. She spoke about the demolition of the parking garage and said to be aware of the process.

Mary Shapton, 553 Greenwood Ave., would like to advocate for studies to be done.

David Decker, 935 Bellclaire, said to build as a PUD that can flex and integrate with the community and schools. People are going to have cars, and parking is needed to accommodate them.

Nyal Deems, 701 Laurel Cir., moved here for the city services. He is not opposed to development. It is the time to get it right and the problem is the scope of the project. He is glad for the adjustments but it is not enough. He wants it to go back to the Planning Commission.

2025-63. Wessely-Burdick. To approve the consent agenda as follows:

2025-063-A. Minutes of the regular meeting held March 17, 2025.

2025-063-B. Disbursement of funds: payroll disbursements of \$314,458.92; county and school disbursements of \$1.82, and total remaining disbursements of \$828,707.82.

2025-063-C. Consider approving the meeting schedule for 2025-26.

2025-063-D. Communications received since the March 17, 2025 meeting.

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

Nays: None.

The meeting adjourned at 8:32 p.m., subject to the call of the Mayor until April 21, 2025.

Lori A Parmenter, City Clerk