

PROCEEDINGS OF THE CITY COMMISSION
CITY OF EAST GRAND RAPIDS

Regular Meeting Held May 5, 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; Finance Director Seath; Parks and Recreation Director Melville; Zoning Administrator Gianotti, City Planner LaBlanc; City Clerk Parmenter.

2025-57. The agenda was approved.

2025-58. Public comment:

Sean Sperling, 1779 Whitfield, thanked Doug La Fave and team for the additional high visibility crossing and discussed conflict of interest.

James Panter read a letter written by Sharon Barkwell.

Erica Dunten, 2100 Gorham, we are a community and asked that everyone be respectful of everybody at all times.

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

Commissioner Groff-Blaszak thanked Doug La Fave on the RRFB's and spoke about electric bikes and scooters.

Commissioner Hunter noted that EGGreen Sustainability Committee exchanged eight gas leaf blowers for certificates for electric blowers.

Mayor Favale asked that everyone keep their eyes open, slow down and watch for pedestrians and stated that the East Grand Rapids Community Foundation funded the gas leaf blower buyback.

City Manager Charles stated that 37 pounds of medication was turned in last Saturday. The Robinson and Cascade pathway is almost complete on Cascade.

2025-60. Gaslight Investors present an updated concept plan.

Zoning Administrator Gianotti reviewed the information.

Traffic consultant Christopher Zull reviewed the traffic study and noted that it would be part of the final approval, reviewed the process and timeline.

City Manager Charles noted that the study would include vehicles, bikes, pedestrians, etc.

Commissioner Hunter asked how much time there would be between the concept and the final plan approval. City Manager Charles stated that it would depend on how fast Gaslight Investors got the final plans done.

Commissioner Groff-Blaszak what do we expect to see from the traffic impact study? Christopher Zull stated you will see level of services for vehicles, connectivity throughout the site, how people are accessing the site, and expect to see zones for parking, safety, sidewalks, etc. He noted that everything adjacent to the site plan is part of the study and is done as part of the final approval process.

Commissioner Schwartz questioned if the traffic study is limited to the adjacent area or if can be expanded. Christopher Zull stated that typically it is only done around adjacent property but can be expanded if wanted. Commissioner Schwartz would like it expand it.

Commissioner Burdick questioned the area at Reeds Lake Blvd., Lakeside Dr. and Lake for traffic flow. City Manager Charles stated that it is something that they are already looking at.

Commissioner Schwartz asked what is sufficient for a traffic study for a community. Christopher Zull stated that this analysis is more than typical.

Commissioner Skaggs questioned what changes might come back to the commission from the concept to final design. City Manager Charles said that if there is something more intense, the commission may be asked to reconsider the concept plan.

Commissioner Groff-Blaszak mentioned that the next steps in the memo state that the draft ordinance goes to the Planning Commission first for a public hearing and wondered why not the City Commission first. City Manager Charles stated that this was a box that they wanted to check off. City Attorney Huff stated that all zoning ordinances have to go to the Planning Commission and the public hearing is a requirement.

Mike Corby, Integrated Architecture, reviewed what has been done to this point with conversations, meetings, altered plans, traffic flow and parking.

Commissioner Schwartz spoke about a rooftop element. Mike Corby said that they have not gotten to that point yet but likes the idea.

Commissioner Schwartz asked why there was more surface parking and has concerns about the community space with traffic of three sides. Mike Corby stated that when they removed parking in building D to bring the height down, it forced them to create more surface parking.

Commissioner Groff-Blaszak asked if private roads were still planned in the development and questioned how they got to the 10% of attainable housing at 100-120 % of the AMI. Mike Corby stated that they are still in talks with the City regarding the roads. Scott Weirda stated that they came up with the attainable housing because of a law that was passed relating to Brownfield Act.

Commissioner Hunter asked if they were willing to be a part of the school/city parking discussions. City Manager Charles stated that they were trying to connect the dots, but we have not suggested or asked them to be at the table at this point.

Commissioner Hunter asked if the service lane is still a pedestrian and bike area. Mike Corby stated that it was.

Commissioner Wessely asked how committed they are to being a part of the parking group and if the parking ramp would be free for retailers. He also stated that he loves the rooftop restaurant idea. Mike Corby stated that parking would be free.

Commissioner Burdick asked if the area could be shutdown for special events. Mike Corby stated that they are open to discussions on that.

Commissioner Skaggs is concerned about surface parking and prioritizing vehicles over pedestrians.

City Manager Charles stated that he was looking for confirmation to develop and amend ordinance incorporating the Planning Commission requirements and would include any that the Commission set by early next week.

Wessely is in favor.

Judith Baxter, Hall Street, stated the development is too massive.

Jerry Anderson, 4354 Edgemere, reviewed information in the packet and spoke about the ordinance and density.

Betsy Anderson, 435 Edgemere, gave a breakdown of public comment.

Janet Dietsch, 562 Greenwood, doesn't want to live in a busy city and we should compare the current proposed changes to the 2004 plan.

John Fuger, 2738 Elmwood, wants a traffic study before voting on concept and wants someone to make a motion to delay the vote until studies are done.

Suzanne McCarty, 1138 Keenesaw, spoke about the information in the packet.

Erica Dunten, 2100 Gorham, said that we need to lead with data, give people the vote for the development and engage with the community.

Kathleen Gillette, Eldorado Dr., asked why we are not doing the traffic study during football, asked when the Brownfield was going to happen and wants a public hearing on the concept plan.

Sean Sperling, 1779 Whitfield, thanked Commissioner Schwartz for her insight on additional intersections for the traffic study.

City Manager Charles reminded everyone that the purpose of this was to approve the development of the ordinance incorporating the conditions set by the Planning Commission. This is the plan that Gaslight Investors would like the city to consider. The city and schools have been in constant contact regarding the development, and they have no concerns about it.

Commissioner Hunter said that things are unclear and is stuck on their recourse on this and is not sure why studies don't get done first.

Commissioner Burdick wants clarity and is in support of moving forward to get studies done.

Commissioner Wessely stated that staff is very thorough and that the city leads with data.

Commissioner Skaggs stated that there needs to be a balance between the developer and the residents and is not comfortable moving forward.

Commissioner Groff-Blaszak said that conflict is caring, and she is not ready to move forward yet and wants the standards met before moving forward.

Commissioner Schwartz stated that their engagement is more than listening to people in the room and email. There are a lot of people out there that don't want to comment publicly because this is such a heated topic. She reminded everyone that they are

bound by standards, and it doesn't mean that they don't care about the comments. Let the attorneys give us a framework.

Mayor Favale echoed what Commissioner Schwartz, Wessely and Burdick said. She advocates for framework with the ordinance and to email Mr. Charles with suggested changes.

- 2025-61. Consider approving HVAC heat pump/mini-split system equipment and installation in the amount of \$18,452, plus 10% contingency.

Deputy City Manager La Fave reviewed the request.

- 2025-061-A. Burdick-Groff-Blaszak. To approve HVAC heat pump/mini-split system equipment and installation in the amount of \$18,452, plus 10% contingency.

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

- 2025-62. Consider agreeing to participate in a joint City/School subcommittee to discuss options for High School & Gaslight Village Parking.

City Manager Charles highlighted the request.

Commissioner Burdick asked about a GVBA representative on the committee. City Manager Charles stated that they have not got there yet.

- 2025-062-A. Hunter-Schwartz. To agree to participate in a joint City/School subcommittee to discuss options for High School & Gaslight Village Parking.

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

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

2025-063-A. Minutes of the regular meeting held April 21, 2025.

2025-063-B. Disbursement of funds: payroll disbursements of \$308,808.83; county and school disbursements of \$147.10, and total remaining disbursements of \$533,028.03.

2025-063-C. Minutes of the Parks and Recreation meeting held on February 24, 2025.

2025-063-D. Communications.

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

- 2025-64. CIP work session.

Mayor Favale questioned rescheduling the work session given the time or continuing on. The consensus was to reschedule the work session.

Lori Parmenter to send out emails for additional availability for work sessions to focus on the budget.

The meeting adjourned at 8:40 p.m., subject to the call of the Mayor until May 19, 2025.

Lori A Parmenter, City Clerk