

PROCEEDINGS OF THE CITY COMMISSION
CITY OF EAST GRAND RAPIDS

Regular Meeting Held May 19, 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, Skaggs, Wessely and Mayor Favale.

Absent: Commissioner Schwartz.

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 Safety Officers were sworn in to newly promoted positions.

2025-59. Public comment:

Tom Walker, 2847 Elmwood, spoke about DOGEL, Department of Government Efficiency Local.

Betsy Anderson, 435 Edgemere, spoke about different ways to get information to residents.

Sharon Barkwell, 1051 Pinecrest, is opposed to amendments to the original PUD ordinance and stated that the project was too massive.

Joe Spaulding, 307 Riley St, spoke regarding housing and racial boundaries.

2025-60. Mayor and City Commission comments, including committee liaison reports.

Commissioner Skaggs congratulated the new Public Safety Captain and Sergeants on their promotions. She noted that EGR was designated a Tree City USA once again and reminded everyone about Wednesday on Wealthy this week.

Commissioner Burdick reminded everyone that with the nicer weather there are more pedestrians, bikes, boats, and cars around and to be cautious and noted that Manhattan Park renovations are moving along.

Commissioner Hunter congratulated EGR on the Tree City USA designation.

Commissioner Groff-Blaszak congratulated the graduating seniors and the other students who are advancing a grade and thanked teachers for their work.

City Manager Charles noted that the City's website was continuously updated for construction.

- 2025-61. Review and provide input on a draft PUD amendment for the Gaslight Investors PUD based on the revised concept plan presented on May 5, 2025.

Zoning Administrator Gianotti reviewed the information.

Mayor Favale asked if the details for the studies are dependent on the final plan. Zoning Administrator Gianotti stated that with more details the final plan will have more accurate data from the studies.

Commissioner Skaggs asked where the standards were located that are used to determine if the criteria are satisfied. Zoning Administrator Gianotti stated that they were in section 5.47.

Commissioner Burdick asked what can be done to remediate issues if something comes up in the studies. City Manager Charles stated that all issues have to be addressed prior to final approval and if not, the site plan can be denied.

Commissioner Hunter wanted to verify that we are in the site plan phase? City Manager Charles stated that we are in the concept site plan phase. The final site plan will show all the details and Cascade Township will decide what studies need to be done to ensure that everything is constructed properly.

Christopher Zull, Progressive Companies, stated that the traffic analysis that have been done to date includes the whole PUD and stated that buildings A and B are already up and running. This reduces the number of trip generations with just the new buildings being taken into consideration.

Commissioner Groff-Blaszak stated that it was her understanding that these traffic numbers are not based on actual traffic data at this time. Christopher Zull stated that was correct.

Commissioner Hunter asked for clarification on the trip generated analysis. Christopher Zull explained that the analysis was related to the original concept plan presented but now included changes with the updated concept site plan.

City Manager Charles noted that traffic counts have been compared over the last 20 years and there has not been a significant increase. He is confident with having so much data over 20 years that the infrastructure can handle it.

Mayor Favale noted that staff and the experts are comfortable with the studies and findings to this point.

Commissioner Hunter asked what the traffic studies will show. City Manager Charles stated that it will look at pedestrian safety, traffic safety, levels of service, and cyclists and it will show any conflicts, changes will have to be made.

Deputy City Manager La Fave noted that post analysis/conditions can be applied as well.

Commissioner Groff-Blaszak noted that the studies should have standards now rather than later. Christopher Zull stated that criteria is very directly related to community and it is difficult to set standards at this time. There needs to be a level of understanding to get that level of detail. Contractors will do real-time surveys compared to what the development will be. The City has to accept the preliminary plans before studies are done and give the developer confidence to move forward with the studies.

City Attorney Huff said that the final plans firm up what types of buildings are going to be done to allow for accurate studies. The ordinance and resolution go back to the 2004 PUD what at that time was Jade Pig. He noted the two existing buildings already in use in the PUD. The ordinance is now in line with how other municipalities structure PUD ordinances. The new ordinance also includes provisions from the Planning Commission, City Commission and staff.

City Manager Charles also noted that section 6 also outlines an expiration date which was missing from the previous ordinance.

Mayor Favale asked when the time starts for the expiration. City Attorney Huff said that they can extend the final site plan stage for one year with good cause.

Commissioner Burdick asked what happens if it expires. City Attorney Huff stated that they would not be able to build.

Commissioner Wessely asked if it was possible to replace the previous PUD with the new one. City Attorney Huff stated that if they build, the new one will replace the old one.

Commissioner Burdick asked if it was possible for the property to go back to commercial zoning. City Attorney Huff stated that the property owner and the city have the right to change zoning but have to be careful because of existing buildings.

Commissioner Hunter questioned if this was an amendment of the 2004 ordinance. City Attorney Huff noted that the 2008 version is dormant because nothing was built.

Commissioner Groff-Blaszak asked if there was a red line document so we could see the changes. City Attorney Huff said that this was started but so much of the document had narrative language that didn't need to be in there, it was better to do a resolution.

Commissioner Groff-Blaszak asked for both ordinances in packets going forward to they can compare the ordinances going forward.

Commissioner Groff-Blaszak said that section 5 on page 4 states that standards have to be met to adopt the ordinance. City Attorney Huff stated that that was true.

Commissioner Wessely asked if the concept plan has to meet the standards as well as the final plan. City Attorney Huff stated that both plans have to meet the standards and if they are not met, they can't build.

Commissioner Skaggs questioned section 4.C missing. City Attorney Huff stated that it would be in the PUD agreement.

Commissioner Hunter asked if we are approving the square footage numbers in the concept plan? City Attorney Huff stated that we were but that there is still a question of how many rental units that will be. One bedroom, two bedrooms, townhomes, etc. will come in to play in the final plans as to the studies and if it all meets the requirements. City Manager Charles noted that this was not the end, and it would come back to the Commission for final approval also.

Mayor Favale stated that they can email City Manager Charles with suggestions about the ordinance through Wednesday.

City Manager Charles stated that all suggestions would be shared with everyone and will be voted on as this is not a staff approval but a City Commission approval.

Commissioner Skaggs wonders about having conditions regarding conversations that must happen in the ordinance. City Attorney Huff stated that he had concerns about things in her last paragraph of the conditions she emailed in noting that they might be out of their legal right to ask.

Joe Spaulding, 307 Riley, showed a segregation map and spoke about fair housing.

Jerry Anderson, 435 Edgemere, reviewed the ordinance and stated that nothing was defined in the concept plan.

Brooke Deems, 2916 Hall, stated that the proposal is too intense and it should fit the landscape and wondered why private streets were proposed and stated that it should go to a community vote.

Freddie MacIntosh, 1156 Kenesaw, seems like we are putting the cart before the horse. What percentage of people that voted on this proposal still live in East. Wonders what legally lets someone legally act on a 22-year-old law.

Sam Massie, 1250 Woodshire, is concerned about parking and traffic as there are issues now.

Eric Williams, 2746 Albert, stated that the parking strategy looks flawed and the development needs to flow with the community.

Tom Miller, 1753 Asbury, noted that there was a lot of frustration surrounding this and that there are things that he likes and things he doesn't. He wants a traffic study done before a vote.

Shane Reed, 1057 Keneberry Way, is for the development, but his wife is not. He feels the contentious comments over the last few meetings. He noted that other cities have put in parking meters which has slowed traffic as more people walk or bike. He said to keep on track and finish the development.

Calvin Tran, Abundant Housing, MI, is in favor of the development. Younger generations have no path to homeownership as he has reviewed housing prices. East has a unique opportunity to build housing.

Judith Baxter, Hall St, thinks we are changing the ordinance to accommodate the developer and that is unfair.

Andrew Carley, 1930 Newark, said to keep housing and traffic mind.

Erica Duntun, 2100 Gorham, stated that she put a poll up on Facebook and also that it was hard to find a place to park.

Nancy Pattison, 2104 Gorham, does not bike here because of entitled teenagers with phones. She is a hard no on the development.

Sharon Barkwekk, 1051 Pincrest, doesn't want something like this.

Nyal Deems, 701 Laurel Circle, thinks things in the concept plan are not in the best interest of the citizens and stated that this was not a normal PUD.

Suzanne McCarty, 1138 Kenesaw, stated that there is a lot more traffic now than there was a couple of years ago.

City Manager Charles reminded everyone to send their additional conditions by Wednesday.

Commissioner Groff-Blaszak asked if we assume that the ordinance will be introduced at the next meeting. City Manager Charles stated that it is intent to bring a revised version of the ordinance.

- 2025-62. Consider approving the pavement marking cross section for Plymouth Road from Hall Street to Martin Luther King Jr. Street with respect to Options 1, 2 or other.

Deputy City Manager La Fave reviewed the request.

Commissioner Skaggs asked how this aligns with Grand Rapids to the south. Deputy City Manager La Fave stated that it does align with Grand Rapids.

Commissioner Hunter feels he needs more time to digest the information.

Mayor Favale stated that Option 1 appears to be the best option.

Commissioner Skaggs asked if there was anything that could be done with drivers “creating” a right turn lane where there isn’t one. Deputy City Manager La Fave stated that signage would help.

Commissioner Hunter questioned the number of parking spaces that were listed in the packet. Deputy City Manager La Fave noted that they were based on a “normal” size vehicle.

Andrew Carley, 1930 Newark, bikes in EGR daily but does not bike where there are no bike lanes. He supports option A.

Robert Blaszak, 2360 Lakeside, stated that Plymouth is unsafe for riders and that there was not any north/south way for riders to take that is safe.

Tom Tilma, 1635 Hall, is part of the Walk, Ride, Roll group and supports Option 1.

Mandy Shart Eizenger, 1643 Whitfield, thanked Mr. La Fave for the data and hopes that this is an easy yes.

Trip Frey, 945 Plymouth, asked that this gets tabled and talk about other options.

Catherine McKenzie, 966 Plymouth, concurs with Trip Frey and stated that there was more to it than data.

Commissioner Wessely likes option 1 and sees more to gain with this.

Commissioner Burdick agrees with Commissioner Wessely and noted that it was not a safe road to bike on.

Commissioner Hunter said that changing could be dangerous for bikers and wants a two-week delay on this.

Commissioner Groff-Blaszak has talked to residents on Plymouth and said that the mobility plan sets a north star for us and supports option 1.

2025-062-A. Skaggs-Burdick. To approve the pavement marking cross section for Plymouth Road from Hall Street to Martin Luther King Jr. Street with respect to Options 1, 2 or other.

Yeas: Burdick, Groff-Blaszak, Skaggs, Wessely and Favale – 5
Nays: Hunter - 1

2025-63. Consider approval of Motor Equipment Revolving Fund (MERF) replacement purchases for FY 25/26 in the amount of \$1,180,000 with an additional 15% contingency of the overall total with authorization to place orders and authorizing the sale of vehicles and equipment replaced at 5% commission.

Deputy City Manager La Fave highlighted the request.

Commissioner Groff-Blaszak asked for clarification on what will be electric. Deputy City Manager La Fave reviewed the vehicles.

2025-063-A. Groff-Blaszak-Wessely. To approve the Motor Equipment Revolving Fund (MERF) replacement purchases for FY 25/26 in the amount of \$1,180,000 with an additional 15% contingency of the overall total with authorization to place orders and authorizing the sale of vehicles and equipment replaced at 5% commission.

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

2025-64. Financial report for the period ending March 31, 2025.

Finance Director Seath reviewed the information.

2025-65. Consider budget adjustments for FY 2024-25 and approve the attached resolution.

Finance Director Seath reviewed the information.

2025-065-A. Hunter-Groff-Blaszak. To approve the attached resolution.

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

2025-66. Skaggs-Burdick. To approve the consent agenda as follows:

2025-066-A. Minutes of the regular meeting held May 5, 2025.

2025-066-B. Disbursement of funds: payroll disbursements of \$298,804.76; county and school disbursements of \$0, and total remaining disbursements of \$559,891.78.

2025-066-C. Minutes of the Parks and Recreation meeting held on March 2, 2025.

2025-066-D. Consider the purchase of replacement notebook PC's.

- 2025-066-E. Minutes of the Parks and Recreation meeting held on March 2, 2025.
- 2025-066-F. Minutes of the Planning Commission meeting held on February 11, 2025.
- 2025-066-G. Minutes of the Planning Commission meeting held on April 15, 2025.
- 2025-066-H. Communications.

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

2025-67. Tentative budget work session.

Lori Parmenter to reach out Tuesday to find a date that works for everyone to hold the work session.

The meeting adjourned at 9:38 p.m., subject to the call of the Mayor until June 2, 2025.

Lori A Parmenter, City Clerk