

PROCEEDINGS OF THE CITY COMMISSION
CITY OF EAST GRAND RAPIDS

Regular Meeting Held July 21, 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, Schwartz, Skaggs, Wessely and Mayor Favale.

Absent: Commissioner Hunter.

Also Present: City Manager Charles; Deputy City Manager LaFave; City Attorney Huff; Parks and Recreation Director Melville; Finance Director Seath; Zoning Administrator Gianotti; City Clerk Parmenter.

2025-90. The agenda was approved as presented.

2025-91. Public comment:

Jerry Anderson, 435 Edgemere, gave a reminder of Commissioner roles.

Suzanne McCarty, 1138 Kenesaw, reviewed information found online.

David Decker, 925 Bellclaire, stated that Manhattan Park looked great and spoke about the article and interview with Derek Melville.

Erica Dunten, 2100 Gorham, wants consideration for a scooter ordinance.

2025-92. Mayor and City Commission comments, including committee liaison reports.

Commissioner Skaggs noted that the compost shed was locked this weekend, but there was a bin available. She would like it to be more accessible again.

Commissioner Burdick thanked Public Works for the bike lane striping.

Commissioner Groff-Blaszak reminded Commission that there was a request for action from Walk, Ride & Roll.

Mayor Favale thanked Derek Melville and the team for their hard work at Manhattan Park.

City Manager Charles thanked Derek Melville and the team for a great job at Manhattan Park. He also noted that Robinson Rd/Cascade are in the final stages of completion.

2025-93. Consider electing a president to serve in the absence of the Mayor for FY 2025-26.

City Manager Charles reviewed the information.

2025-093-A. Burdick-Skaggs. To elect Commissioner Schwartz as president to serve in the absence of the Mayor for FY 2025-26.

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

Nays: None.

2025-94. Review of Gaslight Investors concept plan.

City Manager Charles gave an overview of the process for this agenda item.

Zoning Administrator Gianotti reviewed the plan.

Commissioner Schwartz questioned the no setback requirements with building E in the concept plan. City Manager Charles noted that in the final plans, setbacks will be taken into consideration.

Commissioner Groff-Blaszak asked what the benefit was to move building E. City Manager Charles it would be to address any circulation issues and noted that the location could affect the first-floor commercial uses. Zoning Administrator Gianotti is comfortable with the flexibility until the final plan.

Commissioner Skaggs questioned why only the flexibility having to move building E. City Manager Charles stated that issues can be resolved with building E but moving all of the buildings would require this going back to the Planning Commission.

Zoning Administrator Gianotti reviewed Standard A.

Commissioner Groff-Blaszak asked which conditions have been met. City Manager Charles referenced the resolution and read what was found to be met.

Commissioner Schwartz questioned the density levels. City Attorney Huff explained that the lower density would be on the edges with higher density inside and adjacent to other structures.

City Commissioner Groff-Blaszak asked what the definition of quality construction was. City Attorney Huff said that it exceeds the expectations of the building code. City Manager Charles noted that this will be done with the final plans.

City Manager Skaggs questioned the phasing plan. City Manager Charles stated that they anticipate they will do the project in phases.

Commissioner Schwartz asked if we could allow a maximum number of phases. City Attorney Huff stated that we can.

Commissioner Wessely questioned the phases relating to timing. City Attorney Huff stated that there are time limits that they have to complete the project and if they don't meet it, they have to start back at the beginning of approval.

Commissioner Groff-Blaszak questioned the recognizable benefit compared to traditional zoning. City Attorney Huff stated that with traditional zoning, there would be no control over open space like there is in a PUD.

Zoning Administrator Gianotti reviewed Standard B.

Commissioner Skaggs questioned the purpose of using the Master Plan as a vision for this. City Manager Charles stated that the approved 2018 Master Plan shows the vision for this piece of property. Zoning Administrator Gianotti stated that the Master Plan also speaks to housing and deviations to reach goals.

Commissioner Groff-Blaszak said that the Master Plan speaks to walkability and bike ability as well. Zoning Administrator Gianotti said that it develops the framework for this. Commissioner Groff-Blaszak said that she doesn't see that connectivity here. City Manager Charles noted that modifications can be asked for in the final plan if this is not met.

Commissioner Schwartz mentioned the pedestrian walkway from D & W parking lot from Wealthy all the way through development. Commissioner Groff-Blaszak is not sure that rises to the level of what the Master Plan envisioned.

Zoning Administrator Gianotti reviewed Standard C.

Commissioner Groff-Blaszak asked if there was a guiding vision for character. Zoning Administrator stated that this would be reviewed more in Standard D.

Zoning Administrator Gianotti reviewed Standard D.

Commissioner Groff-Blaszak asked how staff conceptualized the character. Zoning Administrator Gianotti said that the look at what the property was previously and the surrounding area. Commissioner Groff-Blaszak noted that part of the history is that the property sat vacant for 20-years. Zoning Administrator noted the 2004 approval and the 2018 Master Plan that anticipated development.

Commissioner Schwartz said that if character relates to uses around it, it should not be decided after a plan is submitted. We can't change the rules.

Commissioner Groff-Blaszak said that she has not seen the definition of character. City Manager Huff stated that there is no definition of character, but it is done by looking at surrounding property.

Commissioner Groff-Blaszak said that it would be helpful to see case law on this. City Attorney Huff stated that the concept is exactly what is surrounding and what was previously there.

Zoning Administrator Gianotti reviewed Standard E.

Commissioner Skaggs questioned the study relating to parking and conflicts that the school did. Asked about a simulated parking study. City Manager Charles said that there are studies like that for traffic but not sure about for parking.

Commissioner Skaggs asked about how construction is contemplated when speaking about impact on the community. City Attorney Huff said that restrictions can be placed to help minimize impacts.

City Commissioner Groff-Blaszak has concerns moving forward with the lack of mitigation during the garage demo. Deputy City Manager La Fave stated that there were steps in place, but residents need to contact the City directly to report issues and not just post on Facebook.

Commissioner Groff-Blaszak asked about the traffic and mobility study that was supposed to be completed by June but is not done and wondered what we can't get our hands on to be able to complete this. Deputy City Manager La Fave stated that the developer has been provided with the previous traffic studies and we have not identified any concerns at this time. City Manager Charles note that all traffic concerns would be addressed prior to final approval. Deputy City Manager La Fave stated that we don't have the size of the rental units or commercial store types to complete utility and traffic studies.

Commissioner Schwartz stated that we have to have the final plans to be able to do accurate studies.

Commissioner Groff-Blaszak stated that it is a risk to the community if the studies are not done now.

Commissioner Schwartz asked about laying the ground rules now and something else comes up.

Commissioner Groff-Blaszak stated that there could be language included about the other stuff.

Commissioner Wessely said that some preliminary studies have been done. He agrees with Commissioner Schwartz that until you have the final details you are spinning your wheels.

Commissioner Skaggs said that it seems like things are locked in. City Manager Charles stated that the buildings have to stay within the PUD ordinance which speaks to the three feet limit which is why the resolution speaks to building E. He reminded everyone that they have to meet the conditions in studies to our satisfaction. City Attorney Huff noted that the proposed documents have 18 conditions that have to be met before final approval.

Zoning Administrator Gianotti reviewed Standard F.

Commissioner Groff-Blaszak asked if there was a list of what falls under Public Services. Deputy City Manager La Fave stated that it was public infrastructure.

City Manager Charles asked the Commission to review the standards to determine if they were met.

Commissioner Skaggs said that A, B and E are not met.

Commissioner Burdick feels all the standards are met and is comfortable moving forward.

Commissioner Wessely believe all standards are met.

Commissioner Groff-Blaszak stated that standards A, B, C, D and E are not being met.

Commissioner Schwartz believes the standards are met and looks forward to building this out.

Mayor Favale stated that the more information the better. She is comfortable with meeting the standards and is good to move forward with the revised ordinance and resolution.

City Manager Charles reviewed the ordinance.

Commissioner Schwartz asked what happened if the PUD expired. City Attorney Huff stated that they would have to start over to revive it.

City Manager Charles reviewed the ordinance process and the separation between the resolution and the ordinance.

Commissioner Groff-Blaszak noted that a resolution does not carry the same weight as an ordinance and thinks it should be in the ordinance. City Attorney Huff stated that the resolution is defining the concept plan which allows more flexibility. Commissioner Schwartz asked if this is common to do a resolution. City Attorney Huff stated that this PUD itself is not common.

There was more discussion about the resolution.

Commissioner Skaggs would like the timeline tightened down that the developer has to make decisions, no more than a one-year extension, and wondered if we can limit the number of phases. She would also like to set a time limit on acceptance of the agreement from the developer.

Mayor Favale wondered if there were any exceptions for the time limits. City Manager Charles stated that we were not obligated to provide an extension.

Deputy City Manager La Fave said that two phases were fine. City Manager Charles stated that he would write it as two.

City Manager Charles reviewed the changes to the ordinance.

There was a request for a narrative on building E for location and uses, request that the word public remain regarding open space, plazas and streets, traffic conditions tightened down, streets and sidewalks remain publicly owned, requirement to close streets if the City requests it, not more than a one year extension, wording stating that all conditions must be met and to the satisfaction of the City Commission, clarification on who is funding improvements, and adding back pervious pavement.

Nyal Deems, 701 Laurel Circle, said that the project needs to be scrutinized.

Patricia Westveer, 2311 Wealthy, the additional number of units blows her mind.

Betsy Anderson, 435 Edgemere, asked for revisions.

Jerry Anderson, 435 Edgemere, spoke about developer, planner and the development.

Judith Baxter, Hall St, spoke about how long it took to get to public comment.

Stuart Citron, 2615 Oakwood, told the Commission to write down what they want for this development.

Dave Decker, 925 Bellclaire, spoke about the Master Plan and how it relates to character.

2025-95. Consider a one-year pilot contract with East Grand Rapids Public Schools for a cost of \$50,000 to provide vertical integration of Middle School sports.

Parks and Recreation Director Melville reviewed the information.

Commissioner Groff-Blaszak asked if any other staff members had been considered. Parks and Recreation Director Melville stated that no others came up due to Mr. Shattuck's position at the school, flexibility and knowledge.

Commissioner Groff-Blaszak asked if there was a program evaluation set. Parks and Recreation Director Melville stated that the expectations were being worked out.

Commissioner Burdick wants to make sure that we are looking beyond football.

Commissioner Skaggs said that middle school is a very pivotal time to keep girls' sports going.

Jerry Anderson, 435 Edgemere, thanked Parks and Director Melville for doing this.

2025-095-A. Burdick-Wessely. To approve a one-year pilot contract with East Grand Rapids Public Schools for a cost of \$50,000 to provide vertical integration of Middle School sports.

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

2025-96. Consider the EGR Crew request to rename the boathouse and to place donor recognition signage on the facility.

Parks and Recreation Director Melville reviewed the information.

Joanne Nicola, 810 Cambridge, questioned if the construction company should be named as well.

2025-096-A. Wessely-Groff-Blaszak. To approve the EGR Crew's request to rename the boathouse and to place donor recognition signage on the facility.

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

2025-97. Consider casting a vote for four candidates for the Michigan Municipal League Workers' Compensation Fund.

City Manager Charles reviewed the information.

2025-097-A. Groff-Blaszak-Burdick. To cast a vote for four candidates for the Michigan Municipal League Workers' Compensation Fund.

Yeas: Burdick, Groff-Blaszak, Schwartz, Wessely and Favale – 5
Nays: None.

2025-98. Consider designating a delegate and alternate for the Annual Michigan Municipal League Business meeting held during the annual convention.

City Manager Charles reviewed the information.

2025-098-A. Burdick-Schwartz. To designate City Manager Charles as the delegate and Mayor Favale as the alternate for the Annual Michigan Municipal League Business meeting held during the annual convention.

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

2025-99. Consider the Mayor's recommendations for the Board & Commission appointments.

City Manager Charles reviewed the information.

2025-099-A. Wessely-Schwartz. To approve the Mayor's recommendations for the Board & Commission appointments.

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

2025-100. Wessely-Burdick. To approve the consent agenda as follows:

2025-0100-A. Minutes of the regular meeting held June 16, 2025.

2025-0100-B. Disbursement of funds: payroll disbursements of \$320,834.91 and \$322,549.08; county and school disbursements of \$0, and total remaining disbursements of \$2,468,841.01 and \$2,691,419.89.

2025-0100-C. Communications.

2025-0100-D. Consider approval of the renewal of the City's membership with the Michigan Municipal League along with the Legal Defense Fund.

2025-0100-E. Minutes from the Parks and Recreation Commission meeting held on April 4, 2025.

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

The meeting adjourned at 10:42 p.m., subject to the call of the Mayor until August 4, 2025.

Lori A Parmenter, City Clerk