

PROCEEDINGS OF THE CITY COMMISSION
CITY OF EAST GRAND RAPIDS

Regular Meeting Held August 4, 2025

President Schwartz 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 and Wessely.

Absent: Commissioner Skaggs and Mayor Favale.

Also Present: City Manager Charles; City Attorney Huff; Public Safety Chief Buikema; Finance Director Seath; City Clerk Parmenter.

2025-101. Commissioner Hunter made a motion to add a discussion of the standards for the Gaslight Investors concept plans to the agenda. This was supported by Commissioner Groff-Blaszak.

Yeas: Groff-Blaszak and Hunter – 2

Nays: Burdick, Wessely and Schwartz – 3

Motion failed.

Commissioner Hunter made a motion to move public comment to the beginning of the agenda item where there are ten or more public wanting to speak. Motion was supported by Commissioner Groff-Blaszak.

Motion by Commissioner Groff-Blaszak to amend the original motion to discussing a policy for moving public comment to the beginning of the agenda item where ten or more public are wanting to speak and a policy setting City Commission agendas back to the City Commission on or before September 15, 2025. Motion was supported by Commissioner Hunter.

Yeas: Groff-Blaszak, Hunter, Schwartz and Wessely – 4

Nays: Burdick – 1

Motion passed.

Commissioner Hunter made a motion to add a request for any consultant working for the City for a period of 30 days or more to have a City email to the agenda. This was supported by Commissioner Groff-Blaszak.

Yeas: Groff-Blaszak and Hunter – 2

Nays: Burdick, Wessely and Schwartz – 3

Motion failed.

The agenda was approved as presented after much discussion.

2025-102. Public Safety Chief Buikema presented Detective Lobbezoo with an award for his work catching a dangerous person.

2025-103. Public comment:

Anna Moore Butzner, 2311 Wealthy, spoke about vacant stores and the Brownfield Authority.

Susan Fiore, 602 Lovett, said that a three-dimensional design for the proposed development may help people to see what it will look like.

Erica Dunten, 2100 Gorham, said that her and her husband came back to east for the safety and mentioned that adjusting the agenda would help for public comments.

Wendy Scott, 435 Lakeside, said that the concept plan lacks studies.

Nancy Pattison, 2104 Gorham, referenced the Master Plan and spoke about Reeds Lake.

Charles Caldwell, 2037 Lake Point, said that the current apartments have vacancies and a lot of turnovers.

Scott Dammon, 625 Bridge St, stated that the enhancements at Manhattan Park are great and noted that people are looking for convenience of movement around the City. He also does not feel the Commission is ready for a vote on the concept plan.

Jerry Anderson, 435 Edgemere, spoke about the standards of approval.

Theodora Walschots, 427 Lakeside Dr., is terrified about the development.

Betsy Anderson, 435 Edgemere, feels we shut people out on public commenting.

Judith Baxter, Hall St., said that if the concept plan is approved, it will lock in the number of buildings and their height. She wants a citizen input group to define the character of the area.

David Decker, 925 Bellclaire, shared a quote from Mayor Favale from 2019, read a quote from MLive regarding the last meeting and spoke about the standards sheets from the last meeting.

Stuart Citron, 2615 Oakwood, noted that City Manager Charles was not looking up when residents were speaking.

Nyal Deems, 701 Laurel, spoke about the development.

2025-104. Mayor and City Commission comments, including committee liaison reports.

Commissioner Burdick said that the new turf at the dog park looks great.

Commissioner Schwartz thanked everyone for coming out and let them know their comments are heard and feelings are valid. She stated that this is a legal decision to be made and that it is not a deal done.

City Manager Charles said that Gaslight Investors is scheduled to be on the August 18th agenda and that the revisions to the ordinance have been sent to the developer. He noted that a spokesperson for Gaslight Investors would be present at the meeting. Jose Babshkas received a MEDC grant for renovations. There have been additional picnic tables ordered for Manhattan Park for outside of the pavilion area.

2025-105. Public Safety quarterly report.

Public Safety Director Buikema reviewed the information.

Commissioner Wessely asked what the minor minor/miscellaneous items were and questioned the number of suicide attempts. Public Safety Director Buikema said that the minor category was items such as animal matters and trespassing. He said that it was a catch-all. The suicide number did not mean that someone physically attempted suicide, but it could have been someone in a mental health crisis. They are looking to change this for the next report, so it is more accurate.

Commissioner Burdick asked if they were staffed adequately and noted that the staff is friendly and inviting. Public Safety Director Buikema said that they are staffed adequately at this time.

Commissioner Groff-Blaszak asked how it was determined if there is a citation issued. Public Safety Director Buikema said that there were many factors that go into it and gave a brief explanation.

Judith Baxter, Hall St., stated that Public Safety does a wonderful job and our community is safe because of them.

Commissioner Groff-Blaszak wants a data analysis because she feels there is racial inequity.

Commissioner Hunter is all about additional data.

Commissioner Schwartz said that she is willing to ask questions of someone who knows more than her.

Commissioner Wessely is not sure about the correlation between citations and crashes. He has been on a couple ride-a-longs and noted that race in most cases is not known before the traffic stop.

City Manager Charles said that it would be sixty to ninety days to get a plan for an analysis.

2025-106. Consider introduction of an amendment to the City's Purchasing Ordinance.

City Manager Charles reviewed the changes.

Commissioner Groff-Blaszak asked if Section 1.211 should state "electronic" communication and in Section 1.212 the gender specific pronouns should be changed to gender neutral.

City Attorney Huff stated that written communication should be sufficient.

Commissioner Hunter would support that as well.

City Manager Charles noted that this item can still proceed with those changes.

Commissioner Burdick said that all invoices are reviewed through the Finance Committee every two weeks.

Commissioner Hunter said that he sits on Finance with Commissioners Burdick and Schwartz.

2025-0106-A. Wessely-Hunter. To accept the introduction of an amendment to the City's Purchasing Ordinance with adding the work "electronic" and changing to gender neutral pronouns.

Yeas: Burdick, Groff-Blaszak, Hunter, Schwartz and Wessely – 5

Nays: None.

2025-107. Consider approving the revised purchasing policy.

City Manager Charles reviewed the changes to the policy.

Commissioner Groff-Blaszak questioned approving this ahead of the final reading of the ordinance. City Manager Charles said that it can be approved but would not be effective until the ordinance was passed and said that if procedurally, if Commission is more comfortable waiting, it is fine.

Commissioner Groff-Blaszak would like to see wording about "aligning with the CAP, etc." She will send items to City Manager Charles she would like to add.

2025-108. Consider a one-year pool use agreement with Aquinas College for scheduled use of the Community Pool.

City Manager Charles reviewed the information.

2025-0108-A. Burdick-Wessely. To approve a one-year pool use agreement with Aquinas College for scheduled use of the Community Pool.

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

2025-109. Burdick-Hunter. To approve the consent agenda as follows:

2025-0109-A. Minutes of the regular meeting held July 21, 2025.

2025-0109-B. Disbursement of funds: payroll disbursements of \$314,871.17; county and school disbursements of \$0, and total remaining disbursements of \$3,733,223.53.

2025-0109-C. Communications.

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

The meeting adjourned at 8:02 p.m., subject to the call of the Mayor until August 18, 2025.

Lori A Parmenter, City Clerk