

PROCEEDINGS OF THE CITY COMMISSION
CITY OF EAST GRAND RAPIDS

Regular Meeting Held September 2, 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, Schwartz, Wessely and Mayor Favale.

Absent: None.

Also Present: City Manager Charles; Deputy City Manager La Fave, Parks and Recreation Director Melville, City Attorney Huff; Public Safety Chief Buikema; Zoning Administrator Gianotti; City Planner Paul LaBlanc; City Clerk Parmenter.

Mayor Favale noted that public comment for Item #6, Gaslight Investors, would occur after the Introduction of the plan revisions and City Commission questions.

2025-123. The agenda was approved as presented.

2025-124. Public comment:

Nancy Pattison, 2104 Gorham, received information about Reeds Lake and noted her previous comments.

David Thinger, 2232 Englewood, spoke about Gaslight Investors concept plan.

Scott Damon, 625 Bridge St., wants discussion about character and wonders who calls the Planning Commission meetings.

Anne Miller, 1116 San Jose, has concerns about new changes.

2025-125. Mayor and City Commission comments, including committee liaison reports.

Commissioner Burdick noted that Patrick Parkes was named the Chair for the Parks and Recreation Commission.

Commissioner Hunter said that a lot of people came out at the football game last week and were responsibly enjoying the social district.

Mayor Favale welcomed everyone back from the holiday weekend.

City Manager Charles reminded everyone that the triathlon is this weekend, Taste of East was a great event and he requested moving the public comment agenda item to

the second meeting in October as Mayor Favale would be gone on the September 15th meeting.

A motion was made by Commissioner Wessely and supported by Commissioner Schwartz to move the discussion of public comment no later than the second meeting in October.

Commissioner Groff-Blaszak has reservations on moving the meeting dates.

Yeas: Burdick, Hunter, Skaggs, Schwartz, Wessely and Favale. - 6

Nays: Groff-Blaszak. - 1

2025-126. Gaslight Investors revised Concept Plan and Draft Ordinance and Resolution.

City Manager Charles reviewed the information.

Mike Corby, Integrated Architecture, gave a presentation of the updated concept plan.

Commissioner Hunter asked if the number of units changed. Mr. Corby stated that they stayed the same. City Manager Charles pointed out the numbers in Zoning Administrator Gianotti's memo that was in the agenda information.

Commissioner Groff-Blaszak asked for an explanation of what the concerns with traffic were and how the change mitigated it. Mr. Corby met with Mr. Zull and noted that there was a concern with pedestrian flow. He stated that removing building E reduces the number of pedestrian crossings and it is not designed as a through street. There are raised areas and stop signs at crossings. There will be more parking and traffic discussions if final plans are prepared.

Mayor Favale questioned Fox 17 online article quoting City Manager Charles as saying that vehicle paths were adjusted in a way that added to the concerns of the traffic engineer about traffic circulation. City Manager Charles stated that the quote was not correct and that there must have been a translation issue. These changes addressed the concerns of the traffic engineer.

Scott Weirda, Gaslight Investors, noted that the changes reduced the areas of conflict between cars and pedestrians.

Commissioner Schwartz asked if the new community space is where you would envision the Christmas tree going. Mr. Corby said that it was.

Commissioner Wessely likes the revisions, questioned the vision with the incubator, wonders if the standards are still met and if facilities can meet the demand. Mr. Corby said that the inspiration for the incubator came from different areas. Deputy City Manager La Fave said that utilities have been there before and are able to be

accommodated. Public Safety Chief Buikema said that they have no concerns with staffing and access to the site.

Commissioner Hunter asked if there was going to be signage at the entrance on Wealthy across from the school that stated no pedestrians. Mr. Corby stated that they could put up a sign directing pedestrians.

Commissioner Skaggs thinks we are taking steps in the right direction. She would like to minimize the footprint for cars more.

Commissioner Burdick is encouraged with the social hub and the incubator idea and likes the reduced conflicts points. He appreciates the work and listening to suggestions.

Commissioner Wessely asked for an explanation on the process again. City Manager Charles said that actual renderings and designs come in the final plans then will go back through the approval process again.

Commissioner Groff-Blaszak said that there is nothing in the zoning ordinance that states studies happen in the final phase so that is up for interpretation.

Commissioner Wessely explained that we are looking at the basic concept right now and when/if we see the final plans, that is when we know exactly what will be constructed then we will look at the standards and studies.

City Attorney Huff said that it is hard to say that the standards are completely met. The final approval will have more conditions to be met. The size of the buildings could go down but not up.

Commissioner Hunter questioned the square footage of the apartment buildings relating to how many units. There was much discussion regarding the size of the buildings and number of units.

Commissioner Skaggs asked what the dimensions were on the social hub. Mr. Corby stated that it is probably 140 feet at the widest part, but it is an odd shape.

Sarah Buck, 308 Manhattan, asked for denial of the concept plan.

Nyal Deems, 701 Laurel Circle, is against the project and said that we will be locked in.

Elizabeth Christopherson, 2000 Lake, stated that change is good, growth is good but is concerned about parking.

Jerry Anderson, 435 Edgemere, and David Decker, 925 Bellclaire, did a skit regarding Jade Pig.

Linda Najjar, 530 Lovett, has a sour taste for the developer.

Mary Reagan Shapton, 553 Greenwood, said that the information was helpful on what happens in the concept phase and has concerns about traffic and parking.

John Chronowski, 775 Bagley, thinks a better traffic study needs to be done.

Nick Curcio, Nunica, MI, spoke on behalf of the EGR Responsible Development group.

Judith Baxter, Hall St, asked that the development be scaled back.

Scott Damon, 625 Bridge St, spoke against the concept plan.

Nancy Pattison, 2104 Gorham, spoke against the concept plan.

Betsy Anderson, 435 Edgemere, spoke against the concept plan.

Anna More Butzner, 2311 Wealthy, is concerned about traffic and size of development.

Commissioner Groff-Blaszak asked about the three phases and noted that the parking garage is not listed in with any of them and what the rationale was behind that. Mr. Corby stated that the parking garage would be needed to meet the parking requirements but not a phase in itself. The north side is a phase and each of the other two buildings are a phase.

Commissioner Groff-Blaszak said that she is firm on the word public being in the ordinance but noticed that it was not and wonders why. Mr. Corby stated that it is private property and will operate like the rest of Gaslight Village. City Attorney Huff echoes what Mr. Corby said about it being private property.

Commissioners Skaggs, Groff-Blaszak and Hunter feel they are not getting their questions answered.

There was more discussion about this being private versus public land and Mr. Wierda not being present.

Mayor Favale asked if we were locked in with the concept approval. City Attorney Huff explained that the concept phase is knowing what can be built and where. No conditions are lost with concept approval. Deputy City Manager La Fave reviewed

the traffic study that has been done to this point and made changes to the concept plan to address what the issues were to this point. As more details are completed in the final phase, more studies will be done.

Commissioner Groff-Blaszak mentioned that Mr. Wierda was not present.

Mayor Favale is comfortable moving forward.

Groff-Blaszak – Hunter. To postpone conversations until appropriate representatives are present to answer questions.

Commissioner Schwartz said that it is important to have discussions and likes the idea of going through the changes.

Mayor Favale stated that the point is that somebody is here that can answer questions and is comfortable starting the discussion.

Commissioner Hunter will be a no vote for the first reading but a yes vote for reviewing the ordinance.

There was more discussion about Mr. Wierda not being present.

Mr. Corby addressed the private land aspect within the development again.

Commissioner Wessely and Burdick want to move forward and discuss.

Yeas: Groff-Blaszak, Hunter and Skaggs – 3

Nays: Burdick, Schwartz, Wessely and Favale - 4.

Motion failed.

City Manager Charles began reviewing the changes that were listed within the memo.

City Attorney Huff stated that the extension language is favorable to the City and the extension have to have conditions to extend the time.

Commissioner Skaggs noted a distrust with the developer due to past approvals being abandoned.

Commissioner Groff-Blaszak asked why the developer has had so much input on this.

City Attorney Huff reminded the Commission that they are the only ones to vote on this and they don't have to agree to any of it.

Commissioner Schwartz feels that the work that they have done to this point is being downplayed.

Commissioner Wessely asked for clarity on the parking garage. Mr. Corby said that it would be built with building C or D and that it is needed to meet parking requirements.

Commissioner Skaggs wants the parking garage to be built in the ordinance or agreement. City Attorney Huff said that it could be part of the resolution.

There was more discussion regarding the parking garage and phases of the project.

Commissioner Wessely stated that the language is pretty clear and gives little flexibility.

Commissioner Burdick said that he is not a developer or ordinance writer and trusts staff and attorneys because this is what they do.

There was more discussion regarding the language and if it was clear enough.

City Manager Charles noted that building E came out.

Commissioner Schwartz questioned the working in subsection C when was wrote as open space and features when the code says "or".

There was more discussion on public space.

City Manager Charles noted language that was added regarding street closures and holding public events. He then continued to review changes.

Commissioner Schwartz asked about environmental studies. Deputy City Manager La Fave noted that there were already requirements in place for this.

There was more discussion about studies and stormwater.

Commissioner Groff-Blaszak wants to revisit the parking study that was already completed before setting requirements in this concept plan.

There were more parking discussions.

Commissioner Schwartz said that we have to be careful listing standards as we have a whole book of standards.

There was more discussion about standards, studies, pedestrian safety and future maintenance.

Commissioner Skaggs wants a process for closing the streets. City Attorney Huff stated that there is a process in the language for this and he is not comfortable taking out the clause about keeping access to homes. Mayor Favale agrees. Commissioner Groff-Blaszak stated that she does not have access to hers when special events go on. Commissioner Hunter agrees with her.

City Manager Charles continued reviewing changes.

Commissioner Wessely questioned when the social hub would be constructed and if the size could get smaller. Mr. Corby said that he was not sure which building it was tied to and the size would be defined better in the final plans.

City Manager Charles noted that the Planning Commission would review the concept plan, ordinance and resolution at their meeting on September 9th. Only tweak was to the language on phases.

Commissioner Hunter said that residents were made aware of the Planning Commission meeting and wondered if City Commission feels a burden to do this tonight.

Commissioner Schwartz understands the perception but doesn't feel pressure to do this.

Commissioner Hunter has concerns about character and would like discussion on this.

Commissioner Groff-Blaszak thinks discussion on character has validity.

Commissioner Groff-Blaszak went through a list of her questions and concerns that had not been answered yet.

There was a lot of discussion regarding language in the ordinance about the "findings".

Skaggs – Groff-Blaszak. To table discussion until the next meeting.

Yeas: Groff-Blaszak, Hunter, Skaggs and Wessely. - 4

Nays: Burdick, Schwartz and Favale. - 3

- 2025-127. Consider participating in the National Opioid Settlement Agreement with Purdue (and certain of its affiliates) and the Sackler family and authorize the City Manager to execute any documents necessary on behalf of the City of East Grand Rapids.

City Manager Charles reviewed the information.

Commissioner Groff-Blaszak questioned the wording about not participating may reduce the amount of money for the settlement funds. City Attorney Huff explained that it is because that by not participating, it gives you the right to sue them directly which would take away from the settlement funds.

- 2025-0127-A. Wessely-Schwartz. To authorize participating in the National Opioid Settlement Agreement with Purdue (and certain of its affiliates) and the Sackler family and authorize the City Manager to execute any documents necessary on behalf of the City of East Grand Rapids.

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

- 2025-128. Consider proposed revisions to Snow and Ice Guidelines related to Department of Public Works Operations with respect to winter maintenance.

Deputy City Manager La Fave reviewed the information.

Commissioner Groff-Blaszak thanked Mr. La Fave for the revisions and asked to change resident to property owner and they are encouraged to clear the snow from sidewalks.

- 2025-0128-A. Groff-Blaszak-Hunter. To approve with changing “resident” to property owner and adding that they are encouraged to clear snow from sidewalks to Snow and Ice Guidelines related to Department of Public Works Operations with respect to winter maintenance.

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

- 2025-129. Consider approval of the Grand Valley Metro Council (GVMC) Regional Cooperation for National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) Stormwater Permit Compliance.

Deputy City Manager La Fave reviewed the information.

- 2025-0129-A. Burdick-Skaggs. To approval of the Grand Valley Metro Council (GVMC) Regional Cooperation for National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) Stormwater Permit Compliance.

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

2025-130. Wessely-Burdick. To approve the consent agenda as follows:

2025-131. Minutes of the regular meeting held August 18, 2025.

2025-132. Disbursement of funds: payroll disbursements of \$330,364.75; county and school disbursements of \$24,648,391.51, and total remaining disbursements of \$1,684,817.48.

2025-133. Consider appointing East Grand Rapids City Manager Shea Charles to the Kent County Dispatch Authority.

2025-134. Minutes of the Parks and Recreation Commission meeting held on June 23, 2025.

2025-135. Communications.

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

The meeting adjourned at 12:08 a.m., subject to the call of the Mayor until September 15, 2025.

Lori A Parmenter, City Clerk