

PROCEEDINGS OF THE CITY COMMISSION
CITY OF EAST GRAND RAPIDS

Regular Meeting Held September 15, 2025

Mayor Favale called the meeting to order at 7:00 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.

2025-136. The agenda was approved as presented.

2025-137. Public comment:

Stuart Citron, 2615 Oakwood, spoke about little kids driving electric scooters in the streets and hopes that Commission could discuss an ordinance for this.

2025-138. Mayor and City Commission comments, including committee liaison reports.

Commissioner Skaggs spoke about the state of politics and community connection and reminded everyone that we are all neighbors.

Commissioners Burdick and Wessely agreed with Commissioner Skaggs.

Commissioner Groff-Blaszak spoke about the proposed concept plan and showed a rendering that she drew up.

Commissioner Schwartz thanked Commissioner Skaggs for bringing this up as she has wondered about how mad people are also. She met with the Walk, Rode and Roll group last week and Planning Commission met last week also to discuss the ordinance revisions relating to the concept plan.

City Manager Charles mentioned that Parks and Recreation Director Melville had a successful triathlon and said that Director Melville was running around with the cheer program kicking off also.

Mayor Favale thanked Parks and Recreation Director Melville for his work with the triathlon.

2025-139. Consider authorizing a change order for the placement of artificial turf at Lakeside Elementary by EGRPS.

Parks and Recreation Director Melville reviewed the information.

Commissioner Hunter asked if the schools have approved this already. Parks and Recreation Director Melville stated that he believed they had. City Manager Charles noted that this is a change order only. Commissioner Hunter said that it puts extra burden on the Commission with this already being approved by the schools.

Commissioner Schwartz said that the original request was that the City pay half of the cost of this, but the schools are now funding it on their own and we are being a conduit only with a change order.

Commissioner Skaggs wondered how the turf replacement of this field was the same turf for Mehney and the football stadium and how funding for turf funds was sufficient. Director Melville stated that it had not come up yet but could be talked about in Joint Facilities.

Commissioner Burdick said that it would be discussed in Joint Facilities.

Nyal Deems, 701 Laurel Circle, has concerns with artificial turf being laced with carcinogens.

Nancy Pattison, 2104 Gorham, said that artificial turf is associated with childhood cancer.

Jerry Anderson, 435 Edgemere, wondered what was going to be done with the turf removed from Mehney Field and if that could be used at Lakeside or Wealthy.

2025-0139-A. Wessely-Burdick. To authorize a change order for the placement of artificial turf at Lakeside Elementary by EGRPS.

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

2025-140. Consider AT&T lease amendment for placement of a backup generator.

Deputy City Manager La Fave reviewed the information.

Commissioner Groff-Blaszak asked about cellular outages during power events and if the generators were noisy. Deputy City Manager La Fave said that the trailer has been

brought in in the past and the generator is much quieter than the diesel ones on the trailer.

Erica Dunten, 2100 Gorham, works for a company that makes solar generators and can facilitate a discussion with them if we would like.

2025-0140-A. Schwartz-Burdick. To approve the AT&T lease amendment for placement of a backup generator.

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

2025-141. Gaslight Investors PUD amendment discussion and introduction.

City Manager Charles reviewed the information from the Planning Commission meeting.

Zoning Administrator Gianotti noted that the Planning Commission did vote to recommended approval.

Commissioner Schwartz sits on the Planning Commission and asked about the environmental impacts. She is reassured that they are in a good position in regard to this.

Judith Baxter, Hall St., spoke about the timeline that was talked about in the Planning Commission meeting.

Jerry Anderson, 435 Edgemere, thanked Commissioner Skaggs for her opening comments and said that the concept plan has no community benefit.

Suzanne McCarty, 1138 Kenesaw, spoke about the lack of trees and green space in the concept plan.

Patricia Westveer, 2311 Wealthy, wants forty of the housing units eliminated.

David Decker, 925 Bellclaire, reviewed comments from previous meetings.

Nyal Deems, 701 Laurel Circle, spoke about the development.

Erica Dunten, 2100 Gorham, spoke about the development.

City Manager Charles and City Attorney Huff reviewed the changes to the ordinance since the September 2nd meeting.

Commissioner Schwartz stated that the parking garage has to be built to satisfy the parking requirement for building C and D and reviewed information from the Planning Commission meeting. We don't need to reference every building, social hub, etc. in the language as it references the concept plan. She would like the social hub and north-south pathway included in the requirements as well. City Attorney Huff noted that these things could be a condition #8.

Commissioner Groff-Blaszak asked how all of this works when we anticipate they will be bringing us the final plans. City Attorney Huff said that even if they run out of time on the buildings, these items would still have to be constructed.

Pat Lennon, Honigman Law Firm, represents the applicant. He appreciated the comments of Commissioner Skaggs in the beginning of the meeting and thanked everyone present for their comments. He explained further the process of buildings C and D in relation to the social hub with this being the concept plan.

Commissioner Hunter asked if it was possible that C and D can be built without the parking garage. City Attorney Huff stated that they can't meet the parking requirements without the garage. They have leases with tenants that require parking.

Pat Lennon stated that it is conceivable that the garage may not be needed if C and D are not built.

Commissioner Schwartz reviewed the phases and the timeframe.

Commissioner Hunter just wants to make sure there is enough parking.

2025-0141-A. Schwartz-Wessely. To approve the introduction of the PUD ordinance amendment with changes discussed.

Commissioner Skaggs asked why the social hub was a condition rather than in the ordinance. City Attorney Huff said that it was primarily an issue of timing and will be built when C and D are complete.

Pat Lennon said that with it in the concept plan, they are locked into it.

Commissioner Burdick said that the Planning Commission voted unanimously to recommend this and echo and support condition #8 to ensure that the social hub is completed with building C or D.

Commissioner Wessely echoes what Commissioner Burdick said and supports the first reading.

Commissioner Hunter wants to know what is on the table tonight. Asked if this document would come back to them for a final reading and approval. City Attorney Huff stated that was correct.

Commissioner Groff-Blaszak is not sure how to take action on the ordinance and resolution separately. City Attorney Huff stated that they had to be done separately as the ordinance requires two readings and the resolution does not.

Commissioner Groff-Blaszak said that questions have not been answered due to no representative being present, no opportunity to go back to questions, no conversation about character, things left on the table, and she sent an exercise that she did since the last meeting. She spoke about this being a legislative decision, major and minor changes, does this need to be a new concept plan and has concerns.

City Attorney Huff stated that this is only adoption of the concept plan. The fact that we chose the Legislative body to decide on this does not make it a Legislative action. He talked to other attorneys regarding splitting the ordinance and resolution.

Commissioner Groff-Blaszak stated that there was room for interpretation.

Commissioner Schwartz stated that the motion is strictly on the ordinance alone. She said that there are differences of opinions on whether things are still open and frustration will happen. She relies on experts and does her own research. It does not look like a legislative decision. She is disappointed that a fellow Commissioner would come at the 11th hour with a completely new draft document.

Yeas: Burdick, Schwartz, Wessely and Favale – 4

Nays: Groff-Blaszak, Hunter and Skaggs. - 3

Roll call vote. Motion carried.

City Manager Charles reviewed the changes in the resolution.

Commissioner Hunter did not know there was going to be a vote tonight, Commissioner Schwartz pointed out the memo where it was requested.

City Attorney Huff has made no changes to the document.

City Manager Charles said that they would like to add a City condition #8.

Commissioners Skaggs, Schwartz and Burdick agree that the north/south pedestrian pathway should be constructed no matter what.

Pat Lennon is confident that we can work out language that will work for everyone involved.

Commissioner Schwartz spoke about the articulated façade. She would like to change the language to allow flexibility to make the buildings more visually appealing.

Pat Lennon is open to the concept. He is willing to take a stab at enhancing the language in condition #2 to achieve this.

Deputy City Manager stated that recommendation was to allow some flexibility but not lock it in to limit them.

Mayor Favale likes the idea of flexibility.

Commissioner Skaggs appreciates the architectural flexibility.

Commissioner Schwartz is good with this as long as we are protected.

Commissioner Burdick likes the freedom but agrees with protection.

Commissioner Hunter is concerned about foot traffic going behind Chase Bank. What have we done to address this area. He has concerns about traffic.

Mike Corbey said that we create safe places they can go and put up signage.

Commissioner Skaggs wants some agreement to agree.

City Manager Charles noted that there may be some overlap in language.

Commissioner Groff-Blaszak asked where we would see overlap. City Manager Charles said that he can't answer that at this time.

Commissioner Groff-Blaszak read section 5.48 of the zoning ordinance.

Pat Lennon said that he thinks they are speaking about public utilities. They are committed to allow the public to use the private land as they always have.

Commissioner Groff-Blaszak asked if this includes streets. Pat Lennon said no.

Commissioner Schwartz asked if there were easements.

Commissioner Wessely is wondering if C or D do not get built, could it be designated as green space.

Pat Lennon thinks that would be a bit of a penalty if it was not built on time. He would have to come back with a plan.

Commissioner Wessely wondered if it would be possible to have a permeable surface in the interim. There could maybe be an agreement for this.

Commissioner Schwartz asked if the Planning Commission comments would be incorporated in the resolution. City Manager Charles said yes.

Commissioner Hunter would like to second Commissioner Wessely's comment about language about what to do with the green space if the buildings are not completed and asked about the slope of the land.

Mike Corby spoke about the buildings relating to the different grade and which ones would be tucked under grade.

Commissioner Burdick wanted to make sure that we caught everything the Planning Commission recommended. He asked about the street/sidewalk maintenance.

Commissioner Schwartz said they want to make sure they are meeting or exceeding standards.

Deputy City Manager La Fave noted that the development agreement would handle all of this.

Commissioner Groff-Blaszak would like a document that shows all the items that have been suggested to move to the agreement. City Attorney Huff said that he would try to have it by the next meeting.

Commissioner Groff-Blaszak has some suggested language. City Manager Charles asked her to send us the language.

Commissioner Hunter questioned the language about the City voluntarily funding sidewalks and streets. City Manager Huff stated that the thought for this was for public utilities. City Manager Charles noted that it is for public utilities. Deputy City Manager La Fave noted a situation like the Christmas tree if it needed some changes to electrical.

Commissioner Schwartz wants this language left in.

Commissioner Groff-Blaszak thinks #4 is redundant.

Commissioner Hunter asked Public Safety Chief Buikema if there were any new concerns on the PUD. Chief Buikema said that there were no concerns with the buildings or access points.

Deputy City Manager La Fave noted that sprinkler systems are requirements along with fire hydrants within 300 ft.

- 2025-142. Burdick-Wessely. To approve the consent agenda as follows:
- 2025-143. Minutes of the regular meeting held September 2, 2025.
- 2025-144. Disbursement of funds: payroll disbursements of \$317,588.56; county and school disbursements of \$0, and total remaining disbursements of \$723,327.96.
- 2025-145. Communications.

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

The meeting adjourned at 9:42 p.m., subject to the call of the Mayor until October 6, 2025.

Lori A Parmenter, City Clerk