

PROCEEDINGS OF THE CITY COMMISSION  
CITY OF EAST GRAND RAPIDS

**Regular Meeting Held September 15, 2014**

Mayor Seibold called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. in the City Commission Chamber at the Community Center and led the audience in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Present: Commissioners Dills, Duncan, Goebel, Graham, Miller, Skaggs and Mayor Seibold

Absent: None

Also Present: City Attorney Huff; Public Safety Director Herald; Finance Director Mushong; Parks & Recreation Director Bunn; Acting Public Works Director Lark; Zoning Administrator Faasse; City Clerk Brower; Planning Consultant LeBlanc

2014-109. Commissioner Dills congratulated those who participated in the Reeds Lake Triathlon on September 6<sup>th</sup> and thanked all the staff members and volunteers who worked so hard to make the event a success.

Commissioner Goebel announced he was resigning his position as 2<sup>nd</sup> Ward Commissioner effective September 16<sup>th</sup> because he had taken a new job out of town and would no longer be able to attend meetings. He thanked his fellow commission members and the city staff for the discussions and assistance over the past three years and stated he would miss working with everyone.

Mayor Seibold thanked Commissioner Goebel for his service to the community for the past three years and expressed her appreciation for his contributions to many issues facing the city. She stated the City Commission would need to appoint someone to fill this position within 90 days.

Mayor Seibold also thanked the Parks & Recreation Department and the Public Safety Department for the many hours and the effort involved in overseeing and implementing a fun and safe event such as the Reeds Lake Triathlon. She reported the Historic District Study Group would be presenting their findings at a meeting tentatively scheduled for Monday, November 17<sup>th</sup>. The meeting would be held at the EGR High School's Performing Arts Center to accommodate as many people as would like to attend.

Mayor Seibold welcomed Cadence reporter Jan Holst back to work after her injury over the summer. Ms. Holst thanked the commission for the flowers sent to her home and for the many well wishes received while she was recovering.

2014-110. A zoning variance hearing was held regarding the request of Alan & Marnie Salmon of 2861 Bonnell to allow the relocation of the existing home creating a front setback of 90' instead of the required average front setback of 112.6.'

Zoning Administrator Faasse explained the plan to rotate the existing house and build a new garage wing. The current front yard setback is 74' and the proposal is to place the home at a 90' setback. The average front setback required by ordinance is 112.'

Mike Corby of Integrated Architecture showed drawings and elevations of the existing home and proposed new location with new garage.

Mayor Seibold opened a public hearing. The following people were present to express their opinions:

Ed Twohey, attorney representing owner of 2905 Bonnell and 2883 Bonnell, stated his client feels the front yard setback will be adequate but is concerned about the plans to build the pool and accessory structures so close to the property line between their properties. He felt a 10' setback would be preferred over the 3' proposed currently.

Edward F. Twohey, architect representing owner of 2905 Bonnell and 2883 Bonnell, explained his client objects to the plans to build a raised patio and pool accessory building just a few feet from the property line. He stated the steep slope of the property would make the structure appear even taller next to the lot line. He asked that the city carefully review the ordinances for references to measurements made on sloped ground.

Alan Salmon, owner of 2861 Bonnell, stated the front yard setback was the only variance being requested as all other setbacks and zoning requirements were met by the current proposal. He noted that objections to the side yard setback and height of the pool accessory building should not be considered this evening. He stated he had already revised the plans to accommodate Mr. Fowler, but feels the request to move build structures farther from the lot line than currently required was not reasonable. Mr. Salmon felt the front yard setback requested would be an improvement to the current situation and more attractive to the neighborhood.

The following communications were received at City Hall concerning this variance request:

- Edward Twoney on behalf of Greenbrier Trust	Opposed.
- Peter Secchia, 2833 Bonnell	In Favor.

No other public comment was received. Mayor Seibold closed the public hearing.

- A. Dills-Skaggs. That the request of Alan & Marnie Salmon of 2861 Bonnell to allow the relocation of the existing home creating a front setback of 90' instead of the required average front setback of 112.6' be approved.

Mayor Seibold questioned how issues regarding the pool structure would be addressed. City Attorney Huff stated the building permit review process would ensure compliance with all regulations. If zoning rules are met, the permit is issued. If rules are not met, the permit is not issued but the owner would be able to apply for a further variance. Any challenge of the zoning ordinance interpretations would be brought to the City Commission.

Commissioner Graham questioned whether the applicant had considered moving the house further west to allow a greater setback on the east. Mr. Corby stated the slope of the land on the west side prevented moving the house any farther.

Commissioner Skaggs felt the proposed front setback was a noticeable improvement over what currently exists and he would be supporting the variance.

Mayor Seibold agreed the proposed setback would be an improvement. She noted that using the average setback requires homes to be placed so that homes are more pleasing to the eye. She also agreed that the slope of the land toward the lake limited placement of the home.

Yeas: Dills, Duncan, Goebel, Graham, Miller, Skaggs and Seibold – 7  
Nays: -0-

- 2014-111. A zoning variance hearing was held regarding the request of Kevin Brant, owner of 715 Croswell, to allow the construction of a two-family home with the following variances:
- A. A minimum lot width of 50' instead of the required 80,'
  - B. A front yard setback of 8.2' instead of the required 25,
  - C. A combined side yard setback of 13.7' instead of the required 20,'
  - D. A least side yard setback of 5' instead of the required 8'
  - E. A maximum lot coverage for buildings of 40.7% instead of the maximum allowed 40%
  - F. A maximum lot coverage for buildings and pavement of 55.4% instead of the maximum allowed 45%.

Planning Consultant LeBlanc explained the proposal to demolish two homes and built two identical duplexes at 715 and 721 Croswell. He reviewed the variances needed for setbacks and lot coverage and noted the Planning Commission recommends approval with some minor plan corrections as noted in his report.

Commissioner Dills reported the Planning Commission had looked at many aspects of this project and worked with the developer on several modifications, including windows for the garage, the front wall, landscaping, rooftop details and stormwater management. He suggested the City Commission discuss the site plan as well as the variances requested before voting on any of the requests.

Mayor Seibold opened a public hearing. The following people were present to express their opinions:

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| - Kevin Brant, owner of both properties | Described the two buildings and how they would fit into the neighborhood. Reviewed modifications made since the inception, and stated this project will have front setbacks similar to the Bagley Townhomes and Crosswell Mews projects. Stated buildings were placed very close to the sidewalk to allow the drainage system in the rear. Noted the buildings would have 3-4 bedroom units each and include rooftop decks for resident's use. |
| - Arne Larson, Holland Engineering      | Explained stormwater detention area on the rear of the property. Stated underground detention tank was hard to clean/maintain and not cost effective due to the reinforcement needed.  |
| - Gordon Jones, 325 Rosewood            | Asked that the building next to the church be done first to avoid a "gaping tooth" effect if the second building is never built. Felt further softening of the façade was needed with front porches or other type of transition to make pedestrian friendly. Didn't feel detention area was needed. Expressed concern about the appearance of a member of the Planning Commission asking for such significant variances.                       |
| - Steve Ratliff, 435 Cambridge          | Questioned why this was not considered a multi-family dwelling and how the requirements differed.  |

The following communications were received at City Hall concerning this variance request:

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| -Barry & Lance Miller, 711 Crosswell      | In Favor.                            |
| - Star Nicklow & Lyn Parks, 720 Crosswell | In Favor.                            |
| - Steven Cencich, 716 Crosswell           | In Favor.                            |
| - Mark VanDellen, 2119 Lake Dr            | In Favor.                            |
| - Cindy Johnson, 2150 Wilshire            | Opposed.                             |
| - Kristin Siegel, 405 Edgemere            | Opposed to the look of the building. |
| - Gary Eberle, 2107 Lake Dr               | Opposed.                             |

No other public comment was received. Mayor Seibold closed the public hearing.

Planning Consultant LeBlanc explained the zoning ordinance allowed single-family, two-family or multiple-family developments. Because these were separately platted lots, two-family zoning requirements were followed. However, more strenuous stormwater management rules were required because of the total number of units being added in this area. Mr. Faasse noted the project will be combined into a condominium on one parcel when completed.

Commissioner Graham thanked Mr. Brant for investing in the community with this type of project, but expressed his concern about the front façade of the building not being very attractive. He felt it was very austere and institutional and could look much better.

Commissioner Dills agreed. He noted the Planning Commission was not as concerned with the number of variances needed as with the look and feel of the project. He stated he would be willing to reduce the front yard setbacks even further to get small balconies or porches on the front the buildings. Mr. Dills also stated he did not like the brick wall along the sidewalk.

Commissioner Duncan felt these new homes would be a valuable asset, but also suggested softening the fronts of the buildings with porches or other design elements.

Commissioner Goebel supported the multi-family units in this neighborhood, but felt the character of the buildings could be improved to fit into the neighborhood better.

Commissioner Skaggs noted there were lots of elements that go into designing an infill project such as this on two small lots. He cited the Master Plan as designating this area as mixed use and anticipating projects that have a residential feel. He supported the project but felt the current façade would negatively affect surrounding properties.

Commissioner Miller stated he was originally skeptical, but after looking at the mix of styles in the surrounding area, felt it could be a real asset to the neighborhood. He agreed that some type of relief was needed from the stark brick front, but felt it could be done so that the project would fit in.

Mayor Seibold was not opposed to the variances requested as she felt that development on these small lots would require zoning relief to some extent. She summarized everyone's thoughts that the improvement to the neighborhood was welcome, but work was needed on the front façade.

Commissioner Duncan questioned whether trees could be added in the front. Mr. Brant stated there was no room for trees with the very small strip of front lawn, but overall they would be planting five trees when construction was complete.

Commissioner Dills suggested tabling the request until the applicant could submit revised designs for the façade of the buildings.

- A. Duncan-Graham. That the request of Kevin Brant, owner of 715 Croswell and 721 Croswell, to allow the construction of two duplexes with multiple variances and the requested site plan be tabled until a future meeting:

Yeas: Dills, Duncan, Goebel, Graham, Miller, Skaggs and Seibold – 7  
Nays: -0-

- 2014-112. Miller-Duncan. Motion to approve the consent agenda as follows:

- A. To approve the minutes of the regular meeting held September 2, 2014.
- B. To approve payroll disbursements of \$205,044.57; county and school disbursements of \$100,766.72, and total remaining disbursements of \$247,895.18.
- C. The purchase of a treadmill for the employee fitness room from Fitness Things Inc. in the amount of \$4,095.00.
- D. The purchase of a salt spreader from Truck & Trailer Specialties in the amount of \$10,121.00.
- E. The purchase of a vehicle for the Public Safety Department in the amount of \$13,013.00 from Stehouwer Auto Sales.
- F. The preliminary minutes of the Parks & Recreation Commission meeting held August 11, 2014.
- G. The preliminary minutes of the Planning Commission meeting held August 12, 2014.

Yeas: Dills, Duncan, Goebel, Graham, Miller, Skaggs and Seibold – 7  
Nays: -0-

- 2014-113. Mayor Seibold announced that Acting Public Works Director Chuck Lark was attending his last meeting tonight before retiring on October 3<sup>rd</sup>. The City Commission thanked Mr. Lark for his 27 years of service to the citizens of East Grand Rapids, beginning with his time in the Parks & Recreation Department, his years of service in the Public Safety Department, and the last eight months as Acting Director of the Public Works Department. Everyone wished him well in his future endeavors.
- 2014-114. Bob Synk, candidate for 19<sup>th</sup> District Kent County Commissioner, introduced himself to the City Commission and offered to discuss any issues of interest after the meeting.

John Nowak, 2831 Woodcliff Circle, asked for an update on the historic district issue. Mayor Seibold explained the current status and the upcoming meeting. Mr. Nowak further asked that consideration be given to using other streets for some of the races around Reeds Lake, and questioned whether donor recognition plaques would be placed on the newly renovated Canepa Tennis Center Courts. He offered further assistance with the Canepa Tennis Center if needed in the future.

The meeting adjourned at 8:05 p.m., subject to the call of the Mayor until October 6, 2014.

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Karen K. Brower, City Clerk