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Gwendolyn Lewis, MBA
Frederick E. Russell, Jr.
Rachel M. Udabe

City Planning Commission Meeting

MINUTES
January 16, 2025
5:00 P.M.

I. Opening

A. Call to Order – Chairperson Donovan Smith called the meeting to order at 5:25 p.m.

B. Roll Call

Attendees: Adrian-Keith Bennett, Kenneth Daniels, Ritchie Harrison, Gwen Lewis, Frederick Russell (5:25-7:40 pm), Donovan Smith and Rachel Udabe

A quorum was present.

C. Amendments to and approval of agenda

Commissioner Daniels moved to approve the Agenda, seconded by Commissioner Russell. Motion Approved.

II. Meeting minutes of September 19, 2024.

Commissioner Udabe moved to approve the minutes of September 19, 2024 seconded by Commissioner Bennett. Motion Approved.

III. Public Hearings, Discussions and Presentations

- A. 5:15 PM CONTINUED PUBLIC HEARING** – The request of Great Lakes Water Authority (GLWA) to amend Article XVII, Section 50-17-33, District Map No. 31 of the 2019 Detroit City Code, Chapter 50, Zoning, to show an R5 (Medium Density Residential District) or PD (Planned Development District) zoning classification where an R2 (Two-Family Residential District) zoning classification is shown at 700 Conner Street, 692 Conner Street, 686 Conner Street, 682 Conner Street, 678 Conner Street, 672 Conner Street, 703 Navahoe Street, 693 Navahoe Street, 687 Navahoe Street, 681 Navahoe Street, 675 Navahoe Street, and the vacated Freud Street and public alleys located between Conner Street and Navahoe Street.
- (EF)**

60 mins

Present: Eric Fazzini, CPC Staff
Petitioner: Navid Mehram and Paul Ransom

Eric Fazzini presented via PowerPoint and based on CPC Report dated January 15, 2025, the request for Great Lakes Water Authority (GLWA) rezoning from R2 to R5 to construct a new pumping station. The site is located in District 4 Jefferson Chalmers Neighborhood. Freud Street stretches across three neighborhoods across East Jefferson Avenue from the Marina District to the west and Jefferson Chalmers to the east. The site's surrounding zoning in the area is primarily R2. He showed a map displaying the location of the proposed new pumping station and images of the road that would be removed and rerouted to the north. Currently, the construction work in this area is utility work related to the road rework, not specifically the newly proposed pump station. Mr. Fazzini explained the Freud Pump Station (constructed 1954) is a combined station of both sanitary and storm water, and it is one block from the proposed new pumping station. He discussed the reasons why GLWA wants to build a new pumping station. There are existing relief sewers (Ashland Relief Sewer and Fox Creek Relief Sewer) below Freud Street in this location coming from Algonquin to the north and to the east. GLWA states they chose this location since the sewers parallel themselves there. He showed proposed site plan and renderings of the final rerouted Freud Street with improvement and greenery. The new pumping station building will be 48 feet tall with a fenced parking lot to the south and fencing along the side. The proposed façade may change and they are still working on elevations. GLWA had a community meeting on December 11, 2024, and upcoming meetings scheduled for March 19, 2025, May 21, 2025 and September 17, 2025.

Mr. Fazzini emphasized the point from Staff's status report, "Commissioners may wish to discuss with GLWA if it would be feasible to intercept the Fox Creek Relief Sewer in a different location, and how interception at a different location further away from the existing Freud Pump Station would impact servicing and maintaining the existing Pump Station during dry weather." Mr. Fazzini provided CPC with possible options for locations other than the proposed that CPC may want to ask GLWA for their input.

Mr. Fazzini stated there is no Staff recommendation at this time.

Navid Mehram of GLWA presented via PowerPoint and provided background information on GLWA's purpose and service areas. Mr. Mehram explained GLWA services the tri-county area of 2.8 million people, 19 member partners and 79 communities. He explained technical definitions of wastewater and sanitary treatment such as interceptors, relief sewers, nine sanitary pump stations, and process of flow in dry weather flow and wet weather flow (graphics and video shown). He defined flood plain, flooding, and Flood Insurance Rate Maps (FIRM) developed by Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). He detailed the slide that showed the combined versus the separated sewers. He explained that flow is collected through the three main major interceptors in the regional system northwest interceptor, northeast interceptor and Detroit River interceptor. GLWA operates three main pump stations within the eastside namely, Bluehill, Conners Creek and Freud, and all have sanitary and wet weather (storm component). Mr. Mehram discussed why GLWA chose this area to construct the new pump station and detailed all the alternatives weighed by GLWA. Mr. Mehram described facility exterior aesthetics as pending GLWA is committed to work with the local community to find a facade that would meet the local neighborhood's choice while not losing the functionality of the station.

Mr. Mehram addressed the community's odor concerns that GLWA did not find any odor complaints during their City of Detroit records examination. He spoke of an incident at the Eastlake Baptist Church parking lot when a community member approached him and complained about an odor. He stated the odor was definitely coming from a different source. He explained that the odor was an industrial smell, since the odor from wastewater is more sulfur-like. He mentioned that particular smell was coming from north Jefferson, and it was not coming from GLWA's facility. Further, he explained that most vegetation will not grow around high sulfur areas, but there are trees right around the existing pump station.

He admitted that GLWA did not do much community engagement, and they are trying to improve. They are working with City Council Member Latisha Johnson and attending community meetings. Also, GLWA conducted a traffic study in response to Council Member Johnson's request, and it resulted in GLWA's modifying the rerouting to Jefferson and reducing neighborhood traffic.

Mr. Mehram announced GLWA's website with a hotline, so that residents can reach out and voice any concerns to Paul Ransom, GLWA project manager. GLWA also has a mailer.

Mr. Mehram explained they are trying to do better maintenance, and Jefferson Chalmers area is included in the servicing area of the storm pump station. When it rains all the storm water goes to the Freud Pump Station. The Freud Pump Station is the deepest pump station and the workhorse. The sooner that GLWA can get the water out of the system the better off the system is going to be. It is a direct benefit to the Jefferson Chalmers community. This was in response to Commissioner Harrison's questions.

Mr. Mehram responded that GLWA was stood up because of deferred maintenance on the larger infrastructure. He explained wet well access cannot be granted because there is live sewer that is continuously coming down. GLWA does not know the condition, since they have not seen it. GLWA needs to get inside these sewers. Currently it is reliable providing the service that it needs, but long-term planning is necessary. There are actual rings that are underneath the pump only accessible from the wet well, and those rings have not been done for a long time. The pump will still function, but it requires preventative work and any deemed repairs to avoid catastrophic failures. This statement was in response to Commissioner Harrison's questions.

Public Testimony

Glenda Cooper, resident of Jefferson Chalmers, commented that GLWA did not inform the community about the pumping station project. Also, she mentioned concerns regarding street rerouting, sour gas odors, and ground shaking from the pumping station. She mentioned land use impacts the neighborhood. The Jefferson Chalmers community is not pleased.

Elizabeth Logue, resident of Jefferson Chalmers, commented on the plan of vehicular circulation. Freud Street is easily accessible, and this project will have a detrimental affect on the residents by increasing traffic and by making access for emergency vehicles more difficult. Freud should not be disrupted. The manner which it is being done is disruptive and inappropriate. Industrial use of this project does not comport with the vision of the community and its future.

Ruth Byrd commented on danger of the project. There is a big gaping 90-foot hole at the end of the street of Algonquin and Freud that poses a public safety hazard to the community, especially walkers. She has displeasure in the way it is being handled and noncommunication from GLWA. She stated concerns of GLWA's telephone number untimely response, construction bad signage, no construction notification and streets being blocked. This will be for next four years.

Nicole Stone commented displeasure on the way GLWA has executed the project and not clarifying the project with the neighborhood. She stated a traffic study was requested but the neighborhood was not informed. She requested GLWA provide more alternative plans and negotiations. She stated the neighborhood is too small.

Gwendolyn Peoples commented that Jefferson Chalmers has stated in several meetings that this project will have a significant adverse impact on residents, environment, air, water, soil and noise level. She mentioned the flooding event of 2021, and the pumping stations. She stated GLWA was told during engagement that they do not support this project.

Vanessa Cartwright commented that this proposed project already has and will have significant adverse impact on their property and vicinity.

Jaliyah Harris and E'mani Kelley commented the proposed project is not suitable for the existing zoning classification, and it does not comply with the proposed land use.

Joslyn Harris, longtime resident and Chair of the Detroit District 4 Community Advisory Council, commented that she is displeased about this situation. This rezoning has the potential for an illegal action and spot zoning. She submitted spot zoning paperwork to CPC.

Twine Reeves, resident of Jefferson Chalmers, commented on the lack of an economic impact study. He disagrees with the statement that this is a prime location since it does not displace anyone. He advised that it is consider the future development costs and pumping station foregoing opportunity for future development and earnings. Much better jobs of conserving impact studies and comprising the public's trust. Two significant lapses of uses in the City since GLWA is taking over.

Caller named "no eminent domain" commented on the callousness of government on most impacted residents and compared this project to the solar farm initiative. Also, she commented on the flooding event of June 2021 and her opinion to separate the sewerage water from storm water.

Michelle Jackson, Chair for CAC District 4 work group for land and environment, commented that she spoke with the residents of Jefferson Chalmers and discovered that there is concern on why GLWA is allowed to do construction and work without approval for zoning change.

James Jackson, Chair of the Citizens District Council, commented there has not been any mediating with the new development and the old residents. They are putting municipal buildings in where residential homes were without regard for the residents that are going to have to stay there and look at the municipal buildings. Mr. Jackson admonished CPC to make sure those home owners are compensated and taken care of existing residents, curbside and alleys, so that people live in peace and comfortable.

Marsha Bruhn, former Director of CPC, commented opposition to the proposed rezoning to R5. She explained that R5 has much high intensity uses than R2 and rezoning to R5 surrounded by R2 would create spot zoning. The project cannot be properly blended in to the district as required by the zoning ordinance since a rectangular building is out of scale in the area and cuts the neighborhood into two both physically and visually. The adverse impact on other property in the vicinity.

Caller telephone ending #181 commented GLWA should separate the sewer from the storm water to protect the community.

A.J. King commented that GLWA has not spent enough time looking for alternatives to provide the necessary services. He discussed storm water, water seepage and sewer lines.

Commissioner Smith asked about the ground vibration and requested GLWA to supply a study or analysis that the proposed pump station will not have a vibrating impact on the neighborhood.

Commissioner Smith requested Staff provide a larger vision of the Freud Street Corridor and its impact on zoning.

Commissioner Lewis asked for a written statement that this is not spot zoning.

Director Todd mentioned that the Court determines if a land is a spot zone; however, the area's spot zone potential will be examined by Staff and provided in the CPC Staff recommendation. Later, he explained there is a difference between a spot zone and an illegal spot zone.

Commissioner Udabe commented that GLWA consider the suggestions of the community on landscaping for the site.

Commissioner Harrison asked Staff to clarify if R5 or PD create spot zoning for this proposed rezoning.

Commissioner Daniels suggested that since this is a major project causing many disruptions, that GLWA address the miscommunications and numerous complaints from the residents.

Mr. Mehram responded to public comments and various Commissioner's concerns as follows:

- He mentioned that it is GLWA's job with the contractors, and it is GLWA's responsibility to make sure the job site is safe and clean. The excavation is a part of the utility location and not nearly as deep as the shaft that will be constructed. Due to community comments, they relocated Freud Street and kept it to one lane. There are barriers there to ensure safety.
- He mentioned they send out mailers within a ½ mile radius of the project. The next engagement will include the façade of the building and landscaping.
- He clarified the 2021 rain event explaining GLWA initiated a third-party independent investigation to determine the cause of the 2021 rain event. The cause was found to be the size of and volume of water that was introduced. The storm that occurred was a 1000-year storm, and the facility and structure are not the size to handle that capacity.
- He requested time to review other pump stations designations to determine if they are

labeled municipal buildings or not.

Mr. Mehram responded that GLWA already awarded the prime contract to a company in Taylor, Michigan, yet they will need to hire subcontractors. This was in response to Commissioner Daniels' questions about the project's request for proposals (RFPs) and utilizing Detroit based businesses.

Commissioner Daniels suggested that GLWA attend the Detroit Police Department (DPD) community relations meetings and ask the DPD community officer for advice on how to get the word out to more people.

Point of Privilege

Council Member Johnson expressed her gratitude to community members that participated in this public hearing. She will be discussing their concerns and Ms. Cartwright's (proposed site's closest neighbor) concerns with GLWA. Also, she asked that since GLWA and Detroit Water and Sewerage Department are upsizing pipes in the Jefferson Chalmers community is there than an opportunity to have an outlet with screening directly to the Detroit River. This may remove the concern of Jefferson Chalmers area basement backups when there are heavy storm waters. She discussed her continued efforts to circumvent Jefferson Chalmers residents from enduring continued harm.

**B. 6:15 PM PRESENTATION – Jefferson Chalmers WATER Project update
(Jay C. Juergensen, Lead Organizer and Technical Expert) 30 mins**

Director Marcell Todd discussed that Staff felt it would be beneficial to allow Mr. Jay Juergensen on behalf of the Jefferson Chalmers WATER project to appear before CPC to provide updates and viewpoints of the proposed pump station given his previous presentation and communications before the Commission.

Jay Juergensen presented via PowerPoint the Jefferson Chalmers WATER Project mission and provide their perspective on the proposed rezoning of a new pump station. He explained the background, dynamics and wastewater collection system of GLWA (photos and diagrams shown). He discussed the difference between the flood plain and flood insurance rate maps (FIRM), the area's previous floodings, and the flooding event of June 2021. Mr. Juergensen described that the flood June of 2021 event as the blast from the Fox Creek CSO was so strong and huge tiger dams were destroyed and relocated. He stated more than 60% of residents had three feet of sewage in their basements. DWSD and GLWA use their basements as basins when the wastewater system cannot handle it. The June 2021 disaster was a massive infrastructure failure. Mr. Juergensen stated, "The R5 is a quick sleight of the hand, and the least obtrusive zoning that lets them do what they want to do." He described that this is an intense industrial use, and GLWA admitted to it. There is a force main that connects this project to the Detroit River interceptor. They admitted there is a way to reroute the sewage. GLWA mentioned in their presentation the benefits of new, but what about the alternative locations. Residents would like to see more homes built in their neighborhood. This project is one acre or 10 residential lots three times the size of anything in the neighborhood that surrounds it. He stated that the neighborhood is not benefiting from the new project in any way, and introducing this use will chip away at an already fragile neighborhood. He stated GLWA is attempting to finesse a façade. He displayed photos of other metropolitan cities' pump stations including ones with a linear park behind it,

stainless steel rails, or a plaza. The photos of a City of Grosse Pointe Farms pump station that resembles a Victorian style house. Other photos showed that GLWA is already doing work to vacate the street, and they need permission to build on the land. He asked that CPC reject the request to rezone the site. He mentioned the Jefferson WATER Project has accumulated 225 signatures on continued circulating petition.

IV. Public Comment –

Matthew Eurich commented support for the Southwest Fight Club. He stated fitness is a stress reliver and he expressed gratitude and admiration of what the owner has done positively for the youth of the community.

Caller named “no eminent domain” solar farms commented her pleasure in hearing Jay Juergensen’s presentation. She mentioned her viewpoint on how infrastructure should be well-thought-out and inclusive of the neighborhood. Also, she mentioned her concerns on the Master Plan and the Master Plan Advisory meetings.

Madeline of District 6 commented her support for the rezoning for the Southwest Fight Club and that she attended their open house.

V. Unfinished Business –

- A.** Consideration of the request of Ronald Hatmaker and the Detroit City Planning Commission as a co-petitioner to rezone the properties located at 4344 McGraw, 4338 McGraw, 4332 McGraw, 4324 McGraw Street, 4320 McGraw Street, 4314 McGraw Street, 4306 McGraw Street, and 4302 McGraw Street from a R2 (Two-Family Residential) zoning classification to SD1 (Special Development District, Small-Scale, Mixed-Use) zoning classification. **(DP) (ACTION REQUESTED RECOMMENDING APPROVAL)**

Petitioners: William Parker and Ronald Hatmaker

Timarie Szwed presented via PowerPoint the rezoning from R2 to SD1. The proposed rezoning site is located in District 6, and according to the CPC Staff report dated January 14, 2024, it is bounded by an alley to the north, Hartford Street to the east, McGraw to the south, and John E. Hunter Street to the west (zoning maps and aerial views displayed). CPC is a co-petitioner to extend the rezoning to include the entire block. It was noted on record that 4332 McGraw (vacant land) is privately owned by Temple of Peace Church, and the parcels at 4338 and 4334 McGraw are owned by the Detroit Land Bank Authority (DLBA). She stated that both owners received notice of the public hearing regarding this rezoning. The petitioners acquired the building in 2020 to operate as the Southwest Fight Club an MMA, boxing and fitness facility. During renovations the petitioners discovered that the R2 zoning does not permit these uses. Therefore, they are requesting a rezoning to SD1. Ms. Szwed described the surrounding area’s zoning, and the future land use map shows low medium density residential. The Planning and Development Department (PDD) provided an interpretation that it is generally consistent with the Master Plan. It is not anticipated to have any adverse impact on the environment, and it is a suitable classification for the uses not creating a spot zone.

She discussed that at the December 5, 2025, public hearing there were four public

comments concerning a lack of engagement with community. One comment questioned if a boxing facility will align with the vision and character of the neighborhood. After research, CPC Staff concludes that there are no specific requirements for outdoor accessory operations for the outdoor boxing ring in response to CPC's public hearing question. There were six letters of support including a letter from Steps 2 Change. Seven letters came in after the hearing. Additionally, one letter was received from the United Block Club with concerns of traffic increase and lack of community engagement. There is a petition with 24 signatures collected. The petitioners sponsored an open house in lieu of community engagement on December 21, 2025. The open house was attended by approximately 20-40 persons, including Eva Torres District 6 Manager, members of Burnette Baptist Church, Hilmer Kenty (former world champion boxer), and CPC Staff. Many community concerns were addressed and satisfied at the open house.

Ms. Szwed stated CPC Staff recommends approval of the rezoning from R2 to SD1.

Commissioner Daniels moved to approve the rezoning from R2 to SD1, seconded by Commissioner Lewis. Motion Approved.

B. Consideration of the proposed Capital Agenda FY 2026-2030 (Staff) 60 mins

Director Marcell Todd requested that due to circumstances this matter is postponed to the next meeting. Additionally, he discussed that Staff will be providing them with the CPC Staff report and the latest fiscal analysis report from Renee Short of Legislative Policy Division, which includes updates of CPC recommendations. The report was provided to City Council.

Commissioner Udabe moved to postponed Item B under Unfinished Business the Capital Agenda to the next meeting, seconded by Commissioner Bennett. Motion Approved.

VI. New Business – There was no new business.

VII. Committee Reports – Director Marcell Todd announced that Staff has an upcoming opportunity to meet with the Housing Revitalization Department (HRD). Thereafter, Staff will schedule a committee meeting to discuss regarding Citizens Research Council (CRC).

VIII. Staff Report – There was no Staff Report.

IX. Member Report – There were no Member Reports.

X. Communications – There were no Communications.

XI. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 9:40 p.m.