

**Donovan Smith, AICP**  
Chairperson  
**Rachel M. Udabe**  
Vice Chair/Secretary

**Marcell R. Todd, Jr.**  
Director  
**Christopher Gulock, AICP**  
Deputy Director

**City of Detroit**  
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**Adrian-Keith Bennett**  
**Kenneth R. Daniels**  
**David Esparza, AIA, LEED**  
**Ritchie Harrison**  
**Gwendolyn Lewis, MBA**  
**Frederick E. Russell, Jr.**

## **City Planning Commission Meeting**

**MINUTES**  
**July 17, 2025**  
**5:00 P.M.**

### **I. Opening**

**A.** Call to Order – Chairperson Donovan Smith called the meeting to order at 5:23 p.m.

**B.** Roll Call

Attendees: Adrian-Keith Bennett, Kenneth Daniels, David Esparza, Ritchie Harrison, Gwen Lewis, Frederick Russell (arrive 6:08 pm), Donovan Smith, and Rachel Udabe (depart 9:43 pm)

A quorum was present.

**C.** Amendments to and approval of agenda

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

### **II. Meeting minutes**

Meeting minutes will be provided at the next meeting.

### **III. Public Hearings, Discussions and Presentations**

**A.** **5:15 PM ELECTION OF OFFICERS** – Annual election of officers including the filling of the vacated office of Vice-Chair Secretary **15 min**

Director Marcell Todd conducted an election to fill the vacancy of Vice Chair/Secretary, he explained that it is necessary to have the annual elections early.

**Commissioner Kenneth Daniels nominated Donovan Smith for Chairperson of the City Planning Commission, and Commissioner David Esparza seconded the nomination.**

*Commissioner Donovan Smith accepted the nomination of Chairperson of the City Planning Commission.*

**Commissioner Kenneth Daniels nominated Commissioner Rachel Udabe to fill the position of Vice Chairperson/Secretary of the City Planning Commission, and Commissioner David Esparza seconded the nomination.**

*Commissioner Rachel Udabe accepted the nomination of Vice Chairperson / Secretary of the City Planning Commission.*

Therefore, the CPC election results were as follows:

- **Commissioner Donovan Smith will serve as Chairperson.**
- **Commissioner Rachel Udabe will serve as Vice Chairperson/Secretary.**

**B. 5:30 PM PRESENTATION – Plan Detroit Project update status report on the ongoing effort to revise the Detroit Master Plan of Policies (PDD Deputy Director Dara O’Byrne)**

Deputy Director Dara O’Byrne of Planning and Development Department presented a quarterly update on the Master Plan of Policies (Master Plan). She defined the City’s Master Plan as a roadmap for future development and change, and recommendations will concentrate on land use policy, transportation, economy, and housing. She reviewed the project’s completed phases and community engagement. The project is in the draft policies phase. Deputy Director Dara O’Byrne explained that after Master Plan Advisory Group feedback and discussion the Master Plan’s value and vision statement was revised. Also, the Master Plan project team promoted extensive engagement by the skillful use of possibilities cards at its planned policy workshops. There were approximately 472 residents that attended the policy workshops especially on theme of housing and neighborhoods (photo shown).

Detroit’s youth residents were invited to attend a two-day youth summit held at the Henry Ford Health Detroit Pistons Performance Center. Deputy Director O’Byrne described the youth summit as a school bus field trip in a fun interactive environment. There was a music disc jockey (DJ) and a few paid youth facilitators. It was attended by 141 high school students from 18 City schools. The youths were taught civic engagement, and the project team listened to the youth’s viewpoints about Detroit. The summit enlightened the Master Plan project team on youth’s concerns on reducing violence and crime and increasing neighborhood safety and cleanliness.

Deputy Director O’Byrne summarized that the Master Plan project team will now utilize compiled feedback, technical work, and engagement findings as guides to develop policies, make land use recommendations, and land use map. She announced that more community engagement district by district will continue. She encouraged all to subscribe to the Plan Detroit monthly newsletter subscription and access information on the website [plandetroit.com](http://plandetroit.com) or social media.

**C. 6:00 PM PRESENTATION – Informational presentation of proposed amendments to Chapter 50 of the 2019 Detroit City Code, Zoning as prepared by the Office of the Chief Operating Officer (Deputy COO Andrea Taverna) 45 min**

Present: Deputy COO Andrea Taverna, BSEED Director David Bell, DON Deputy Director Joshua Roberson, and PDD Deputy Director Dara O’Byrne

CPC Director Marcell Todd introduced this matter and explained that this is a collective

effort of the Mayor's Administration and CPC Staff to address the City's housing crisis, and it is relative to the Zone Detroit project. He announced that this matter's public hearing will be held on July 31, 2025, at 5:15 p.m.

Andrea Taverna, Deputy Chief Operating Officer, presented via PowerPoint an informational proposal on the text amendment regarding development in R2. Ms. Taverna mentioned that this collaborative process is to provide affordable housing to keep up with Detroit's growing population and avoid high rent or high housing prices. She explained that the Administration's office recognizes Detroit's growing population and estimates that 1100 new housing units are needed each year to match the increase. Therefore, this may substantiate an accelerating urgency to promote more affordable housing. She shared comparisons of other metropolitan cities addressing the U.S. housing crisis by rezoning reform or zoning changes, and these have resulted in lower rent for residents, i.e., Minneapolis, MN. She explained the slides on the text amendment emphasizing the following three key areas:

1) Building more housing by expanding the types of housing that can be built in R2

Ms. Taverna discussed R2 zones which consists of 22% of the lots in the City (map shown). It is proposed to change the current ordinance that in R2 zones where only single-family or duplex homes are permitted, to include these types, and add permitting constructing tri-homes or quad-homes from conditional to by-right. This revision would make building easier and eliminate the task to submit a request, pay \$1200 fees, and undergo a three-month process at Buildings Safety Engineering Department - Special Land Use (BSEED – SLU). Also, the proposal is to change the 8-unit limit and increase it to 12-unit limit (SLU required). Any new homes constructed will maintain the same height limit as in all R2 existing buildings.

2) Easier to rebuild homes on vacant lots by allowing the same size and spacing as in preexisting homes in R2

Ms. Taverna discussed the proposal that applies to building on vacant lots that are below the minimum size of 5,000 square feet, and 50 feet wide. She explained the goal is make provisions more feasible and concise for developers to understand and utilize all of what can be done on vacant lots. This proposal will be most impactful in R2 – R6 neighborhoods. Ms. Taverna noted that the Historic District Commission (HDC) will continue to review the external aspects of a home when it is within a locally-designated historic district.

Further, Ms. Taverna explained that the main concept of this proposal is leaving a policy that only allows building a single-family home to allow any type of housing permissible in R2 district, whether it is a duplex or a townhouse (pictures displayed of current and proposed homes shown).

3) Giving projects more flexibility on parking lot size in targeted special circumstances

Ms. Taverna discussed the suggestion that an amendment to parking would reduce builders' obstacles to provide large parking incurring high costs, large space and recouping funds from end users. This proposed provision will alleviate the issue that some land may not be developed due to the City's challenging requirement for parking and developers being unable to fit the development with the necessary parking. The proposal will give projects the choice of the size of their parking lots.

The proposal provides flexibility of parking around major transit areas. She explained details to proposed parking amendments in 1) small building flexibilities 2) near frequent transit areas 3) more feasible to present more parking plans. Ms. Taverna mentioned that Administration presumes that relieving developers of parking requirements may outcome in more housing, more small or commercial businesses, better commercial corridors and boost redevelopment and revitalization, i.e. , Eastern Market and Midtown as successful examples.

Ms. Taverna stated that this proposal was a part of Zone Detroit's extensive community engagement from April 2019. Also, Ms. Taverna referred to the Administration team research stating, "Reviewed 21 framework plans and found that 100% of participating residents want more housing, affordability and density." There will be more community meetings in the districts in August 2025.

Director Todd stated that CPC Staff has concerns around the aggressive implementation of parking issues and project timeline, but all involved are working together to get it done right. Also, Staff wants to add to enhancements of the ordinance. He encouraged Commissioners to contribute their feedback and concerns to incorporate in this process.

Commissioner Smith stated his concern with reducing parking. He asked the project team to consider how this proposal will balance neighborhoods becoming more dense and commercial corridors having less parking? Also, what are the drawbacks in ten years? He emphasized the need to mitigate risks while reducing parking.

Commissioner Lewis discussed her concerns with promoting the premise that with these proposed amendments the average Detroiter will be able to afford a house or their rent will become lower. She emphasized the supply of housing may change, but the construction costs will be higher.

Commissioner Smith expressed concerns with new construction on vacant lots and accessibility to residents desiring to build on vacant lots.

Director Joshua Roberson responded that some nonprofit experienced developers, such as Habitat for Humanity and Central Detroit Christian are organizations capable to offer affordable housing through this proposed process. Also, Mr. Roberson responded to Commissioner Lewis that the message conveyed to the community during engagement is not that residents' rents will decrease, but that this is a tool in the process. It is hopeful that residents' salaries are increasing too.

Commissioner Smith stated concerns with this proposal corresponding with the City's Master Plan's value of equity. He admonished the need for officials to offer provisions that place residents at the forefront to benefit from this type of amendment. He advised that the City should provide equity in land ownership which may include DLBA's removal of deed restrictions, and provisions that permit an average citizen buyer to build on their side lots.

Commissioner Esparza asked for more comparable cities including Grand Rapids, MI, that have been researched and financial results. Also, he requested information on accessory dwelling units (ADUs), and the private sector's opinion on this proposed text amendment.

Commissioner Bennett requested that Administration offer resources to assist residents in building. He gave an example of South Bend, IN, providing pre-approved building plans.

If a resident wants to build on a side lot they have available suggested viable building plans to select and use for development. Also, a provision offering preparation recommendations for residents with unexpected construction challenges and helping residents to navigate, not just making it easier for established developers.

Commissioner Daniels asked how does this proposal make the development process shorter?

Director David Bell responded that BSEED has set up metrics to expedite plan reviews, so that an initial plan review is done within 20 days. The second round of plan review is within 10 days. Also, there will be concierges working to help people to get to the finish line.

During discussion of this proposal multiple Commissioners requested that Detroit Land Bank Authority (DLBA) representatives appear pertaining to this text amendment. There were questions regarding its vacant lots, proposal's affect on residents that own or would opt to buy land, so that they can take advantage of the new amendment.

Director Todd responded that he will request that a DLBA representative appear before CPC regarding this matter.

Commissioner Udabe stated concerns that additional development will lead to gentrification. She stated the housing market rate will increase. Also, she suggested that 10-year moratorium on Detroit residents who can take advantage of these provided changes for 10 years and then open the offer to developers.

Director Todd agreed with the request that Commissioners are provided a copy of Staff's comprehensive lists of concerns with these ordinance amendments.

#### **IV. Public Comment –**

Mr. Ernestine Hawkins commented that she is a property owner on Waverly Street, and she has concerns with Garden Bug customers parking in the alley and blocking access to her property. She explained that Ms. Castleberry made minor adjustments, but they are insufficient.

Ms. Allison Knight commented on the GLWA project and the suggested rezoning conditions. She stated her concerns on wanting more community involvement, being misled, and zoning changes impacting future plans for her home.

Later, Mr. Fazzini of CPC Staff explained that residents will not be in the PD zoning.

*Chairperson Commissioner Smith read the following written public comment from Annabella Vidrio on the record:* “Will this new development be considered for Section 8 housing? B/C truly who can afford this? I encourage the commission to really consider this housing “solution.” I don’t believe residents will be able to afford these new units. All this does – without guaranteed affordability guidelines, aka Section 8 – is bringing in non-Detroit residents into the City and since they can afford it, are likely more wealthy and raising cost of living.”

T. Thomas (partially inaudible) commented regarding GLWA proposed pumping station, misleading site plans, and truck traffic. GLWA has not provided a schedule of events for the project.

A pastor's wife of a nearby church, St. Hope Church of God and Christ, commented concerns on GLWA's project, and she expressed displeasure of the inconvenience of traffic restrictions, limited access of the street, being mistreated by GLWA, and frustrations with the current street construction.

Nicole Johnson commented that GLWA has started building. The neighborhood does not want this project, and she would like GLWA to find an alternative. She expressed displeasure with the streets being blocked off, uncleanliness of site, and traffic enforcement. She urged CPC to consider the residents and not the builders.

Greg Mangan of Southwest Detroit Business Association commented support of the proposed amendments to help build more affordable housing different types, and to build without the parking requirements.

## **V. Unfinished Business –**

- A.** Consideration of the request of Tina Castleberry to amend Article XVII, Section 50-17-60, District Map No. 58 of the 2019 Detroit City Code, Chapter 50, Zoning, to show a B2 (Local Business and Residential) zoning classification where a R3 (Low Density Residential) zoning classification is currently shown at 4213 and 4225 West Davison Avenue, generally bounded by West Davison Avenue to the north, Petoskey Avenue to the east, Waverly Avenue to the south, and Broadstreet Avenue to the west.  
**(RB) (RECOMMEND DENIAL) 30 min**

Dr. Rory Bolger presented via PowerPoint and based on CPC report dated July 17, 2025, the request to rezone 4213 and 4225 West Davison Avenue from R3 to B2. The site is in District 7 on Davison between Livernois and Dexter. The property was acquired from the Detroit Land Bank Authority (DLBA) in March of 2022, and it was awarded \$65,000 in Motor City Match and \$55,000 in public/private grants. Dr. Bolger provided a description of the surrounding zoning, and an in-depth comparison of uses of existing adjacent properties. The site received three BSEED blight violations dated January 31, 2025.

Dr. Bolger reviewed the public hearing held on March 6, 2025. There were two letters of opposition and one letter of support received by Staff. Additionally, there were four public comments with three in opposition and one in support. The current property owner adjacent to the site provided photos regarding the negative impact of the parking at the property's garden center retail business (Garden Bug). Further, Dr. Bolger explained that traffic congestion and safety concerns were discussed at the public hearing. Staff conducted research after Commissioner Daniels' inquiry, and they found that presently Ms. Tina Castleberry owns the property. The DLBA noted that the property must meet all the requirements of the zoning code by August 6, 2025, or it must be returned to the DLBA.

After the public hearing, an email was received from residents. Additionally, the Office of Ombudsman stated in a follow-up discussion that the Garden Bug continues to hinder access to the alley, and its displeasure that the City has not rectified the situation.

Thereafter, CPC Staff met with Detroit Public Works Department (DPW) DPW-Traffic Engineering division which advised that although Davison has three lanes and a center left turn lane the traffic congestion is 25,000 cars per day travel on one side, and there are still backups on Davison at different times. Also, Staff confirmed that parking is permitted on West Davison. Dr. Bolger stated that parking is provided at the Garden Bug, and Ms. Tina Castleberry submitted photos of available parking on the street.

CPC Staff proceeded with an in-depth analysis of the shallowness of the property noted as 53-55 feet deep as with other surrounding properties. There was a photo shown of shallowness of Davison lots. The property address 4225 has a two-family house, but it is not a part of the unauthorized use. After consulting with BSEED and PDD, the Garden Bug is best labeled as a mercado (open-air sales). He provided history of the establishment of the added width of Davison dating back from 1928. The frontages (approximately 50 feet) were reduced for highway traffic resulting in why it is shallow. PDD interpreted that the rezoning would be generally consistent with the Master Plan.

After CPC Staff's careful examination of the zoning criteria, especially criteria 7, its recommendation, Dr. Bolger stated, "It is staff's considered opinion . . . that the limited area and tightness of the subject site make this site more suitable for the kind of development allowed by the R3 zoning district than by the proposed B2 zoning district." Therefore, it is Staff's recommendation for denial of this rezoning request from R3 to B2.

**Commissioner Lewis moved to vote according to CPC Staff's recommendation to Deny this request, seconded by Commissioner Udabe.**

**Roll Call vote:**

**Bennett, Daniels, Esparza, Harrison, Lewis, Russell, Smith, and Udabe  
8 Yays/Unanimous Approval**

*After discussion of Commissioners' concerns on traffic safety on Davison Street, the following motion passed:*

**Commissioner Russell moved to ask Staff to investigate and bring together all the parties (agencies) to look at solving the traffic pattern along the Davison corridor in totality, seconded by Commissioner Daniels.**

- B.** Consideration of the request of the Great Lakes Water Authority (GLWA) to rezone land located 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 adjacent vacated Freud Street and public alleys located between Conner Street and Navahoe Street, from the current R2 (Two-Family Residential District) zoning classification to a R5 (Medium Density Residential District) or PD (Planned Development District) zoning classification.

**(EF) (RECOMMEND APPROVAL W/CONDITIONS)**

**30 min**

Present: Eric Fazzini, CPC Staff  
Navid Mehram, Chief Operating Officer and Paul Ransom, Life Cycle Project Manager, GLWA

Eric Fazzini presented via PowerPoint and based on CPC report dated June 25, 2025, and July 17, 2025, District 4, in the Jefferson-Chalmers neighborhood. The site location is the center of Freud Street to the south of East Jefferson Avenue. Mr. Fazzini stated that in 2024 City Council approved a Detroit Public Works Department (DPW) petition involving GLWA to reroute Freud Street to create a developable site (map shown), and it is currently under construction with utility work at the right of way.

He described the site details showing photos of adjacent homes to the north of Freud Street. One home owned by GLWA has been demolished, a church and a remaining house

are not impacted. The surrounding properties owned by GLWA at 235 Conner has an impending demolition, and 237 Conner disposition is unknown.

The Freud pump station constructed in 1954 is a major pumping station for GLWA managing sanitary and storm water. The main purpose of this new pump station is to allow GLWA to access two sewers that currently flow to the Freud pump station and service the existing older station with the new pumping station during dry weather in order to handle flow at that time. Also, involved are improvements along Navahoe Street to accommodate these operations.

Mr. Fazzini explained that although GLWA's request is to rezone to R5, CPC Staff acknowledges that PD zoning is a suitable option for the proposal. If PD zoning is used, it may be regulated as a public, civic, or institutional use, and there are allowances for this type of use in residential districts in the ordinance. He showed renderings of the proposed new pumping station, loading dock, gated parking lot, security fencing, storm water detention area, and concrete masonry wall. He stated that there have been changes to the elevations, such as on the building's height, 42 feet of the parapet screen for mechanical equipment, and modified brick façade. Notably, Staff will request that City Council offer direction on if the pump station is constructed what will happen to the new areas or new parcels surrounding ownership, maintenance, landscaping and sidewalk replacement in the long-term. Staff needs documentation for tracking the parcels after the road rework is complete. The rezoning for the pumping station does not cause spot zoning. He summarized a public policy brief that a rezoning is not a spot zone if it is consistent with the Master Plan, and denial would not prevent the land being developed for something else (Michigan State University Extension, et al., January 2004, *Removing Spot Zoning From the Fabric of Zoning Practice*).

Paul Ransom of GLWA presented via PowerPoint the benefits of constructing a new pump station. He explained that the existing Freud pump station handles 90% of all the storm water for that area, and it is key to the whole region and Jefferson-Chalmers area. Therefore, an isolation chamber is critical and beneficial allowing GLWA to maintain and clean the Freud storm pump station and keep flow moving. He explained that the Freud pump station handles 40% of storm flow, and 83%-90% of the flow is from the city of Detroit. Mr. Ransom explained a new pump station isolation chamber will ensure necessary maintenance on the existing Freud storm pump station is operating appropriately and reliably which is critical to protect the Jefferson-Chalmers area, a low lying area, prone to basement backups. This will allow GLWA to help with basement backups. Also, an isolation chamber is critical and keeping its location installed near the existing Freud pump station of the infiltration while they safely perform the work. He described the interceptors underneath Freud street. He showed photos and compared other local cities' pump stations that are located and operated within a residential neighborhood. He described the exterior design, landscaping, screening, and parking of the proposed facility. Mr. Ransom stated that GLWA wanted to make it clear that the proposed building will be 42 feet and possibly at 40 ½ feet which makes it shorter than the existing facility. He explained that although a small parking lot is planned, it is anticipated that parking will be temporary at this unmanned facility. Mr. Ransom displayed street view photos in response to Commissioner Harrison's previous request.

Commissioner Lewis discussed her concerns with the service areas of GLWA and the Freud pump station. She expressed displeasure in any ongoing preconstruction near the proposed site before approval of the rezoning.



Navid Mehram discussed that GLWA is not a developer, yet it is a water authority providing public health and safety through essential infrastructure for protecting public health and keeping water out of basements of local community and other member partners that GLWA services. He emphasized that in one way or another they have to be able to provide this service for this infrastructure or storm pump station. The local community depends on it.

Commissioner Harrison stated his concern that this project will greatly impact the residents in that area, and they feel uninformed with unanswered questions. He urged GLWA to further address residents and receive their concerns as serious.

Paul Ransom responded that GLWA held community meetings at the Eastlake Baptist Church. They have distributed flyers in the neighborhood. GLWA is trying to reach the community through public meetings or GLWA's website.

Mr. Ransom discussed that if the pump station is not constructed maintenance and cleaning is still necessary. The process will be disruptive due to GLWA going down 65 feet and pull out sanitary which will produce odors, unsightly views, and use large noisy generators. This was in response to Commissioner Smith's questions.

Commissioner Smith asked how often is maintenance completed and its forecast?

Mr. Ransom responded GLWA has not done wet well maintenance, since it is not permitted based on present safety standards and regulations to keep workers safe. He suggested maintenance may be done quarterly.

Mr. Ransom and Mr. Mehram stated that they have been listening to the community and have made adjustments based on feedback and concerns, i.e., traffic signage during construction (no thru traffic signs), building's lower height, screening, landscaping, and color of exterior façade.

Mr. Fazzini stated that if this rezoning is approved for a PD the preliminary and final site plan approval would be handled by CPC Staff. Also, CPC Staff advises that since this site does not meet a PD's requirement for two-acres, CPC would need to waive the two-acre minimum requirement. Earlier, he mentioned that during a recent site visit the area appears cleaner than previously, and there are construction / traffic signage.

Fazzini stated that CPC Staff recommend approval for the PD zoning classification with conditions, and with additional recommendation that City Council considers a resolution to address offsite areas.

1. That the building shall not exceed 42 feet in height inclusive of the parapet screen wall.
2. That rooftop mechanical equipment is screened from view in accordance with the zoning ordinance.
3. That any site and building-mounted lighting utilize full-cutoff fixtures to prevent glare as indicated in the July 2025 proposed plan set attached to this memo.
4. That the site is maintained in a neat and orderly fashion, managing dust and collecting and disposing of debris and rubbish, through all phases of construction of the pumping station in accordance with City regulations.
5. That final site plan, elevations, landscape plan, lighting plan, and stormwater management plan be submitted for review and approval by the City Planning Commission staff prior to application being made for applicable permits.

Commissioner Russell moved to waive the two acre requirement for the size of PD, seconded by Commissioner Bennett.

**Roll Call vote:** 4 Yays-Bennett, Daniels, Russell, and Smith — 3 Nays-Esparza, Harrison, and Lewis

**Motion Approved.**

Commissioner Bennett moved accept CPC Staff's recommendation for the Freud pump station with the conditions given, seconded by Commissioner Russell.

**Roll Call vote:** 4 Yays-Bennett, Daniels, Russell, and Smith — 3 Nays-Esparza, Harrison, and Lewis

**Motion Approved.**

**VI. New Business** – There was no New Business.

**VII. Staff Report** – There was no Staff Report.

**VIII. Member Report** – There were no Member Reports.

**IX. Communications** – There were no Communications.

**X. Adjournment** –

The meeting adjourned at 10:01 p.m.