An electronic meeting was held through Zoom due to the Wayne County Public Health Order and to continue decreasing the spread of COVID-19.

The meeting was called to order by Mayor Denner and opened with the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag.

The following were electronically present: Councilmembers Relan, Read, Hodges, Robson, McConnell, and Fluitt, and Mayor Denner.

Also electronically present: Nick Sizeland, City Manager, Jane M. Blahut, Finance Director/Clerk, Jake Howlett, City Attorney, Jim Bostock, Interim Public Safety Director/Lieutenant, and Leah Smith, Assistant to the City Manager.

Mayor Denner called for a moment of silence to honor long time Mayor and Grosse Pointe Woods resident Robert Novitke who passed away on March 14th.

APPROVAL OF CONSENT AGENDA

Mayor Denner presented the consent agenda for approval.

Motion by Councilmember Read, supported by Councilmember Hodges, to approve the consent agenda as presented.

AYES: Councilmembers Relan, Read, Hodges, Robson, McConnell, and Fluitt and Mayor Denner

NAYS: None

APPROVAL OF REGULAR AGENDA

Mayor Denner presented the regular agenda for approval.

Motion by Councilmember McConnell, supported by Councilmember Hodges, to approve the regular agenda as presented.

AYES: Councilmembers Relan, Read, Hodges, Robson, McConnell, and Fluitt and Mayor Denner

NAYS: None

APPROVAL OF MARCH 8TH MEETING MINUTES

Mayor Denner presented the March 8th meeting minutes for approval and stated that they were removed from the consent agenda at the request of Councilmember Fluitt.

Motion by Councilmember Hodges, supported by Councilmember Read, to approve the meeting minutes as presented.
Amendment by Councilmember Fluitt, supported by Councilmember Relan, to add the following language to page two under Public Comment – Agenda Items: Councilmember Fluitt read into the record a letter for public comment received from State Senator Adam Hollier.

Vote on Amendment

AYES: Councilmembers Relan, Read, Hodges, Robson, McConnell, and Fluitt and Mayor Denner

NAYS: None

Vote on Original Motion

AYES: Councilmembers Relan, Read, Hodges, Robson, McConnell, and Fluitt and Mayor Denner

NAYS: None

PUBLIC COMMENT (AGENDA ITEMS)

City Manager Sizeland read one written comment submitted by one resident.

No residents made public comments.

MANAGERS REPORT

City Manager Sizeland presented a brief overview of the status of issues since the last meeting:

- COVID Vaccination Event
- Communicator
- TIFA COVID Support Program
- DDA COVID Support Program
- DTE
- Public Works Building
- City Hall Building
- 2021-2022 Budget
- Master Plan Update
- Public Safety Director Position
- Drinking Water Revolving Fund

COMMITTEE AND COMMISSION REPORTS

Beautification Commission
Councilmember Relan stated that the Beautification Commission met on February 10th and March 3rd. The Commission has been working on organizing the spring plant exchange that will be held on May 8th and the fourth grade Arbor Day poster contest. The winners of the poster contest will be selected at the next meeting, which is scheduled for April 22nd.
Recreation Commission – Marina Subcommittee
Councilmember Read stated that the Marina Subcommittee met on March 10th. The committee continues to review the marina’s financials with administration. Administration is having an overall engineering assessment of the marina which will allow the committee, and ultimately, city administration to be strategic in planning for marina repairs, maintenance, and upgrades. Repairs and upgrades for this year include painting well numbers and rub rail repairs. The subcommittee’s next meeting will be on April 13, 2021 at 7 PM.

Recreation Commission
Councilmember Read stated that the Recreation Commission held a special meeting on March 25. The commission discussed and offered revisions to the dog park rules proposed by the Parks & Recreation director who is incorporating those changes into the final rules. The next meeting is scheduled for May 5th at 7 PM.

Tax Increment Finance Authority (TIFA) Board
City Manager Sizeland stated that the TIFA Board met on April 6th. The agenda included an update on the DPW facility, an update on the second round and approval of a third round for the COVID grant program, approval of a budget reallocation, and a discussion about parking. The TIFA Board is planning on holding a special meeting to review the proposed budget in May.

Michigan Municipal League CAPCON
Councilmember Flutti stated that as the MML representative, she attended the virtual CAPCON conference March 16th and March 17th. The most helpful presentation was regarding the American Rescue Plan, which explained what local governments can utilize funding for including infrastructure projects.

SEMCOG
Councilmember Read stated that the SEMCOG general assembly met virtually on March 18th. The pre-meeting workshops offered Industry and Stakeholder Response to Increasing Shared Prosperity and Government Response to Implementing Increased Shared Prosperity. The workshops were followed by the General Assembly which included election of officers, approval of the economic development strategy, and approval of SEMCOG’s 2021-22 budget and work program summary.

Eastside Community Network
Councilmember Hodges stated that the ECN is responsible for overseeing the Mack Avenue Strategy Committee that includes reps from the Detroit, Mack Avenue adjacent Grosse Pointe communities, Wayne County, and others. The committee met in both March and April and highlights from those meeting include a rezoning effort led by the City of Grosse Pointe, proposals for streetscape planning and improvements, potential creation of a corridor improvement authority, and a consultant has been hired to assist with beautification and branding along the corridor. The next committee meeting will be April 26th at 6pm and the ECN annual meeting will be April 22nd at 6pm.

NAACP
Interim Chief Bostock stated that the NAACP, Grosse Pointe, and Harper Woods group met in March. The topic for the meeting was police response to mental and behavioral health events. The group discussed the increase in these kinds of calls, the training needed, how to recognize people experiencing those kinds of events, and the tools officers can be given to safely handle those kinds of situations. The group will host a public webinar in May with more details to be released shortly.
UNFINISHED BUSINESS:
COUNCIL COMMENT

No council comment was presented.

NEW BUSINESS:
ARBOR DAY RESOLUTION

Mayor Denner presented the following resolution for council approval:

City of Grosse Pointe Park Proclamation in Recognition of Arbor Week

WHEREAS, Mayor Denner, City Council and Members of the Beautification Commission have established the day of April 30, 2021 as Arbor Day, and

WHEREAS, the Beautification Commission in recognition of Arbor Day has established an Arbor Day Poster Contest for area fourth grade students, and

WHEREAS, the purpose of the awards is to promote community awareness and involvement in Arbor Day by the students as well as an appreciation of the many benefits of trees, now, therefore, be it so

RESOLVED, that Mayor Denner, City Council, and Members of the Beautification Commission hereby recognize the day of April 30, 2021 as Arbor Day.

Motion by Councilmember Relan, supported by Councilmember Read, to approve the resolution as presented.

AYES: Councilmembers Relan, Read, Hodges, Robson, McConnell, and Fluitt and Mayor Denner

NAYS: None

NEW BUSINESS:
ZONING BOARD OF APPEALS

Mayor Denner stated that City Council would now sit as the Zoning Board of Appeals to hear two different variance requests.

ZONING BOARD OF APPEALS:
4 UNIT DEVELOPMENT WAYBURN

Mayor Denner asked City Administration to present the first variance request for council consideration.

Chief Building Official Supal stated that the petitioner wishes to erect a new four-unit dwelling on the vacant parcels of 1475-77 and 1481 Wayburn. The building will be a two-story building unit with attached garages and 1,385 sq ft of living space each. The new building will not meet the Article X Schedule of Regulations RD zoning requirements, which requires a side yard setback at 7’6” on each side. The new building will have a 9’ setback on one side and a zero-foot setback on the opposite side.
The zero-setback side does border the rear setback side of Huntington Bank located at 3180 Alter Road. Administration is recommending approval of the variance. If the variance is approved, the Planning Commission will also review for potential approval at their regular meeting scheduled for April 21st at 7pm.

Mayor Denner asked the petitioner to present their project.

Mr. George Bailey, the project architect, Mr. David Bonjero, the project builder, Mr. Rich Inger, the applicant, were in attendance to present the project. Mr. Bailey stated that the project team has designed a two story, four town-house development that they would like to erect on the 1400 block of Wayburn in Grosse Pointe Park. He stated that the intention of the project is to infill the lot which has been vacant and unused for several years and to create more density in the lot and neighborhood. The northern end of the property does abut to the Huntington Bank property however, the physical structure will be approximately 140 feet away from the property line. They are trying to build the structure as far north as possible to provide additional space for the immediate neighbor to the south.

Mayor Denner asked if there were any residents wanting to make a comment on the variance request.

Three residents made verbal comments.

Numerous Councilmembers stated concern with the variance request being approved before the Planning Commission approves the proposed site plan.

City Attorney Howlett stated that the two approvals are contingent upon each other, but the order of the review does not matter.

Motion by Councilmember Hodges, supported by Councilmember Relan, to approve the variance request as presented.

City Attorney Howlett stated that the motion should include language that the variance approval is contingent on Planning Commission approval.

City Attorney Howlett stated that the motion should also include the following language: that the denial of the variance request would reasonably prevent the owner from using the property for the permitted purpose of this development and that granting the variance would provide justice for the applicant and to the other property owners in the District and the neighborhood and that this relief that is being granted meets with the spirit of the ordinance.

Councilmember Hodges and Councilmember Relan accepted the change. The motion reads as follows:

Motion by Councilmember Hodges, supported by Councilmember Relan, to approve the variance request as presented because the denial of the variance request would reasonably prevent the owner from using the property for the permitted purpose of this development and that granting the variance would provide justice for the applicant and to the other property owners in the District and the neighborhood and that this relief that is being granted meets with the spirit of the ordinance. This approval is contingent upon Planning Commission approval of the site plan.

AYES: Councilmembers Relan, Read, Hodges, Robson, McConnell, and Fluit and Mayor Denner
Mayor Denner asked City Administration to present the next variance for consideration and reminded the Zoning Board of Appeals that this is the third time this project has been presented for consideration to the Zoning Board of Appeals.

Chief Building Official Supal stated that the petitioner wishes to erect a 1417 sq ft addition to the existing 3005 sq ft home. The addition will be a single-story addition behind the garages and the details of the addition are not defined on the revised drawings. The new rendering will not meet the Article X Schedule of Regulations RA zoning requirements, which requires a rear yard setback of 30 feet and a side yard setback of 10” 8”. As proposed, the new addition will have a rear yard setback of 19’ and a side yard setback of 6’ 5” & 27’ 5 5/8” respectively. Administration recommends denying the variance request.

Mr. Richard Tepper, the petitioner, stated that he met with Chief Building Official Supal again to try and identify a second alternative plan to get his variance request approved following the initial and second denial. The most recent proposed addition is 33% smaller than the first request and the amount of space between the dwelling and the setback has been increased more. The layout includes about 750 square feet of living space and 530 square feet of garage space. All the feedback from the previous meetings have been considered and incorporated into this most recent request.

Mayor Denner stated that Council was in receipt of three emails from residents with all three against the project.

Mayor Denner asked if there were any residents wanting to make a comment on the variance request. Five residents made verbal comments.

Councilmember Read stated that the standard to grant this kind of variance is that there has to be a practical difficulty which would involve special or unique conditions and circumstances peculiar to the land, structure, or building involved and not generally applicable to other lands, structures, or buildings in the same district. She stated this proposed addition does not meet these conditions and that there is nothing unique about this request and that no special circumstance exist. Additionally, granting of this variance request could set a precedent and lead to similar variance requests regarding additions that do not meet the requirements in place. She also believes that the immediate neighbor behind the requestor’s property has shared concerns about the project including drainage issues and him not being able to enjoy his property and home like he currently does and that the board should consider what is already existing versus what is not existing. She encouraged the requestor to create a design that does not require a variance approval.

Councilmember Relan asked to have the Administration recommendation restated.

City Manager Sizeland stated that the administration recommendation is to deny the variance request based on the City’s zoning requirements.
Mayor Denner stated that the principal variance issue expressed by the immediate neighbor in regard to the rear yard setback at 19 feet instead of the required 30 feet has remain unchanged in each variance request.

Motion by Councilmember Robson, supported by Councilmember McConnell to deny the variance request as presented based on Administration’s recommendation and the fact that the variance request does not demonstrate a unique or special circumstance.

AYES: Councilmembers Relan, Read, Hodges, Robson, McConnell, and Fluitt and Mayor Denner

NAYS: None

The applicant did not meet the legal standards required for a zoning variance and City Attorney Howlett will prepare a written opinion consistent with the Council’s decision.

Mayor Denner closed the Zoning Board of Appeals.

RUBBISH SERVICES CONTRACT

Mayor Denner asked City Manager Sizeland to present the next topic for council consideration.

City Manager Sizeland stated that the City has had a contract with Green for Life (GFL) for rubbish service since 2011 and the current contract expires in September of this year. GFL is proposing an extension of the current agreement for five years with an additional five-year option mutually agreed upon by both parties. In 2022, the City will pay a blended service fee of $7.67 per home per month, which is a slight increase compared to the current price of $7.43. The rate includes household solid waste, hazardous waste days, and yard waste collection. The contract will increase 2.25% annually on the contract anniversary dates years two through year five. The City could go out to bid for rubbish services. However, based on conversations with other communities who chose to take that route, GFL ended up securing the contract in all those communities at a much higher rate than if the communities would have negotiated a contract extension with GFL instead. As of June 30, 2020 -21 FY, the City has approximately $159,426 in fund reserves for the rubbish fund and the City is at the Headlee cap for millage rate. Administration is recommending approval of the contract extension with GFL.

Motion by Mayor Denner, supported by Councilmember Hodges, to accept administration’s recommendation and authorize the contract extension with GFL subject to review by the City Attorney.

AYES: Councilmembers Relan, Read, Hodges, Robson, McConnell, and Fluitt and Mayor Denner

NAYS: None

NEW BUSINESS:
COUNCIL COMMENT

Mayor Denner stated that City Council has been contacted by various residents concerning a survey. The survey is not endorsed by the City.
Councilmembers, Read, McConnell, Robson, and Hodges all made comments regarding the ongoing concerns and problems with the United States Postal Service.

Mayor Denner requested that the contact information for the USPS Detroit Postmaster be included on the website and that he will work with City Administration regarding next steps.

Councilmember Fluitt inquired on the status of the parking study proposal from MKSK.

City Manager Sizeland stated that the proposal has been received and the City is investigating next steps due to the higher then anticipated price.

Councilmember Relan stated that he will be requesting for the Diversity and Inclusion Committee to be added to the May meeting agenda for a discussion regarding transitioning it from an ad hoc committee to a real committee.

Mayor Denner stated that the advisory committees of City Council are created by the Mayor and the Mayor decides who sits on those committees and a full Council discussion may not be necessary at this point.

PUBLIC COMMENT (NON-AGENDA ITEMS)

City Manager Sizeland read four written comments submitted by four residents.

Five residents made verbal comments.

Motion by Councilmember Read, supported by Councilmember Fluitt, to adjourn the meeting.

AYES: Councilmembers Relan, Read, Hodges, Robson, and Fluitt, and Mayor Denner

NAYS: None

ABSENT: Councilmember McConnell who appears to have been experiencing technical difficulties at the end of the meeting.

With no further business, the meeting adjourned at 10:00 PM.