

HHA BOARD OF DIRECTORS MARCH

- ☒ Bryan Cody
- ☒ Suzanne De Haan
- ☒ Carolyn Ferrari
- ☒ James Scozzari (7:02pm)
- ☒ Liz Bracken
- ☒ Denise Cook
- ☒ Jeremy Czubko
- ☒ Rebecca Klesmith (via zoom, left meeting at 7:12pm)
- ☒ Abigail Larimer
- ☒ Kimberly Lucas
- ☒ Jim McClurg
- ☒ Jennifer Meeks
- ☒ Wayne Norlin (via zoom)
- ☒ Jeff Phillips

Staff Present: Barbara Draughon, Laska Nygaard, and Maria Zache Starkey

Neighbors: There were several neighbors in attendance.

- 1) **Call to Order:** Bryan Cody called the meeting to order at 7pm.
- 2) **Meeting Minutes:** Carolyn Ferrari recommended that that “the committee” be added to “shopping for CD rates.” The Board agreed. Carolyn Ferrari made a motion to approve the February minutes, which was seconded by Suzanne De Haan, and unanimously approved.
- 3) **Public Comment:** Bryan Cody asked if there were any comments from the neighborhood. Kara Philips expressed gratitude to all for the efforts displayed at last night’s City Commission meeting and commended the neighborhood’s presentation. Patrick Tischler sought clarity on the board's actions regarding zoning and suggested reinforcing enforcement measures alongside zoning regulations to safeguard neighborhoods. Doug Meeks noted the significance of community involvement, citing approximately 825 signatures on a petition, urging for more time to engage and consider the ordinance changes. He urged those in attendance to sign the petition if they have not yet done so to help influence the Commission effectively. Doug emphasized concerns about the proximity of emergency shelters to residential areas, proposing a minimum distance of 1,200 to 1,500 feet to prevent neighborhood saturation.
- 4) **President’s Report:** Bryan Cody announced that his report would be discussed in an executive session following the meeting.
- 5) **Action Items:** Bryan Cody explained the change in the meeting order due to time constraints and the need to ratify two new chairs promptly. Bios for recommended new chairs for Finance and Land Use Committees were passed around. Carolyn Ferrari resigned from finance committee chair due to other commitments. Appreciation was expressed to Carolyn for her work as Treasurer. Liz Bracken, a former banker, and CFO was nominated by Bryan Cody as HHA Board Treasurer. Jim McClurg moved to approve her nomination, and Kim Lucas seconded. Her

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appointment was unanimously approved. Jay Fowler was nominated by Bryan Cody to replace Matthew Smith as Land Use Committee Chair. Jay has been a member of the Committee for the past 10 years. He also has a 34-year background in working for the City of Grand Rapids. Liz Bracken moved to approve his nomination, and Abigail Larimer seconded. His appointment was unanimously approved.

- 6) **Memory of Matthew Smith, HHA Board Member:** A moment of silence was observed in honor of Matthew, who recently passed away. Board members shared memories of working with Matthew, highlighting his dedication and impressive character. Attendees expressed gratitude for Matthew's service and remembered his selfless dedication to community improvement. Laska Nygaard recalled interviewing Matthew for a project and was struck by his altruistic aspirations for the city and its residents. Matthew's commitment to service and his pursuit of further education were noted. The Heritage Hill Association purchased five trees in memory of Matthew, which will be planted in a Michigan State Forest.

7) **Committee Reports**

- a. **Finance:** Carolyn Ferrari reported that there have been no significant changes since last month, and revenue from the home tour tickets is expected to start coming in around late March or early April.
- b. **Land Use (LU):** Jay Fowler updated the Board on recent committee activity. City commissioners advised the Heritage Hill Association (HHA) to provide strategic and constructive feedback. At the most recent LU committee meeting, members focused on identifying items with the greatest impact on the neighborhood. Topics discussed included accessory dwelling units (ADUs) and group living provisions. Concerns were raised about the ownership requirement for ADUs and proposed changes to allow them in two-family dwellings. Other concerns include large homes potentially being converted into single-room occupancy or emergency shelters, as well as the proposed increase in unrelated occupants from 4 to 6 in similar large homes. The arbitrary nature of occupancy limits was highlighted, suggesting that requirements should be related to square footage of the space being occupied. Parking regulations were also discussed, with suggestions for a market-based approach rather than arbitrary city-imposed requirements. The LU Committee drafted a statement, which was read at the City Commission public hearing, outlining concerns, and stating that HHA's specific recommendations were forthcoming. Approximately 38 people spoke at the public hearing, with about half estimated to be Heritage Hill residents, demonstrating strong representation from the neighborhood. The LU Committee's progress was acknowledged, and Jay Fowler invited input from board members on specific concerns or recommendations. Barbara Draughon noted that the City Commission had delayed consideration of the amendments until the end of April. The importance of submitting recommendations before the City Commission's discussion on April 9th was emphasized. Jeff Phillips expressed concerns about understanding the proposed zoning changes and their layered impact, particularly regarding small-scale residential infill. Uncertainty remained about the final document of proposed changes. Bryan Cody inquired about

the solidification date of the proposed changes and highlighted the need for clarity and understanding before providing recommendations. Concerns were raised about interpreting the proposed changes, as well as the importance of getting the details right to avoid lasting negative implications. Questions were posed regarding the required public notice period before the City Commission vote and the publication of the final ordinance. Jim McClurg expressed the need for adjustments to align proposed changes with community concerns and emphasized the urgency of finalizing recommendations before spring break. Board members discussed preserving owner occupancy and preventing excessive subdivision of properties. Concerns were raised regarding potential overcrowding and inadequate square footage in multi-unit dwellings. Jeff Phillips proposed considering a per-occupant square footage requirement to address issues with single-room occupancy (SRO) and group housing. The concept of addressing floor area ratio with potential height limits was discussed. Questions were raised regarding building requirements and conforming to Historic Preservation Commission (HPC) standards. Concerns were expressed about parking congestion and potential fire safety hazards due to limited street access. Jim McClurg highlighted the issue of displacement resulting from institutional buyers converting properties into group living arrangements. He emphasized the economic and racial implications of housing policies and the need to consider broader community impacts. Jay Fowler mentioned discussions from the LU Committee regarding support for group homes but with considerations to prevent over-concentration in neighborhoods. Jeff Phillips stated that more clarification was needed regarding distinctions between group living, transitional housing, and emergency shelters, emphasizing the need for dispersal across the city. HHA Board members also discussed discrepancies in parking availability assessments, emphasizing the importance of accurate data in decision-making. The Mobile GR Commission generated a new report based on updated data to assess parking needs and potential solutions. Laska discussed the report's number of block faces qualifying for residential permits. HHA Board discussion emphasized the need for community education and outreach to address parking challenges effectively. Concerns were raised about the perception of permit parking as a negative solution, highlighting the need for mindset shifts and community support. Wayne Norlin highlighted the importance of ensuring that all of the new ordinance changes are enforceable. He emphasized the need for language in the ordinances holding the city accountable for enforcement. Kim Lucas brought up concerns about the readiness of infrastructure to accommodate increased density in certain areas. She mentioned issues such as sewage runoff, water demand, and electricity, urging consideration of these factors in planning. Jim McClurg emphasized the importance of representing the neighborhood's interests, especially those who may not be able to advocate for themselves effectively. He reflected on his own experiences as a student and tenant in the neighborhood. He expressed apprehension about excluding students from the definition of family, which could impact their access to affordable housing. Wayne Norlin mentioned the draft of a letter outlining specific HHA

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concerns, with general support for the template. It was emphasized that the letter needed to be prepared and reviewed promptly to align with the City Commission's timeline.

- c. Home Tour:** Suzanne De Haan provided an update on the home tour preparations, including the need for one more house captain, and details about volunteer sign-ups and incentives. Volunteers were encouraged to sign up for the home tour event on May 18 & 19.
- 8) Staff Reports:** Barbara Draughon and Laska Nygaard had no verbal additions to their written updates included in the board packet.
- 9) New/Old Business:**

 - a. Technology:** Kim Lucas provided an update on the Technology Committee's discussions about implementing a Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system and updating the website to improve communication and organization of events. Bryan Cody asked if a QR Code could be provided at Heritage Hill Neighborhood Happy Hours to help populate additional contacts in the CRM system.
 - b. Community Engagement:** Carolyn Ferrari shared a new events calendar. She wants to invite HHA Board members to the calendar. Barbara Draughon will follow-up on how to make the community engagement calendar more accessible for Board members.
 - c. Fundraising:** Denise Cook discussed fundraising ideas, including selling T-shirts at Home Tour. She solicited input on T-shirt designs and slogans from the board members. She is gathering information on the cost of production and will report back at the April meeting.
- 10) Adjournment:** The meeting adjourned at 8:24pm. Jeremy Czubko departed, with Wayne Norlin remaining on zoom, and other Board members staying for an executive session.