

MINUTES OF THE COMMITTEE-OF-THE-WHOLE OF THE CITY OF GROSSE POINTE WOODS HELD ON MONDAY, FEBRUARY 23, 2026, IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBERS/COURTROOM OF THE ROBERT E. NOVITKE MUNICIPAL CENTER, 20025 MACK PLAZA DRIVE, GROSSE POINTE WOODS, MICHIGAN.

Mayor Bryant called the meeting to order at 6:35 p.m.

PRESENT: Mayor Bryant  
Council Members: Brown, Granger, Koester, McConaghy, Motschall  
ABSENT: Gafa

Also Present: City Manager Como  
City Attorney Walling  
City Clerk Antolin  
City Treasurer/Comptroller Schmidt  
Director of Public Services Kowalski  
GPW Foundation Member Peter Ahee  
GPW Foundation Member Dan Mulder  
GPW Foundation Member Michelle Billingsley

**Motion** by Motschall, seconded by Granger, that Councilmember Gafa be excused from tonight's meeting.

Motion carried by the following vote:

Yes: Brown, Bryant, Granger, Koester, McConaghy, Motschall  
No: None  
Absent: Gafa

**Motion** by Granger, seconded by Koester, that all items on tonight's agenda be received, placed on file, and taken in order of appearance.

Motion carried by the following vote:

Yes: Brown, Bryant, Granger, Koester, McConaghy, Motschall  
No: None  
Absent: Gafa

The purpose of tonight's meeting was regarding the **City Hall Front Lawn Improvements**. City Manager Como recalled a previous discussion about possibly placing a fireplace in front of city hall, along with a memorial tree and dedication pavers as part of the project. Members of the

Grosse Pointe Woods Foundation were in attendance to discuss securing grant funds for the project. A commitment to the project from Council will allow the Foundation to begin working on the grant requests and Administration to begin planning the budget.

The Foundation stated that they needed Council's authorization to move forward and submit a funding request. The initial fund request efforts are aimed at the larger organizations that can fund such a costly project, however as deadlines are nearing, the opportunities are also narrowing. It may be more difficult to get adequate funds from the small organizations.

Mayor Bryant commented that tonight's meeting is to ensure that Council is in agreement of the project before moving forward. He stated that the fireplace could be placed in the south side of the front lawn where a memorial tree and dedicated pavers, for the memorial trees that were removed, are placed strategically within the area.

Councilmember Motschall asked if the fireplace, memorial tree, and dedicated pavers are all inclusive with the project. City Manager Como stated that the fireplace is the priority for the funding request, but the memorial tree and pavers will be included with the plans. She mentioned that during a Committee-of-the-Whole meeting in February of last year, renderings of the Front Lawn included a fireplace, memorial tree, dedication pavers, and an amphitheater. However, the focus of the grant request was for the fireplace only.

During discussion, Councilmember Koester inquired when the amphitheater got nixed from the original front lawn plan. He felt that the amphitheater had more value than the fireplace. City Manager Como stated that it was not necessarily nixed from the project but will be revisited at another time. The reasoning to reconsider the amphitheater concept was that it will require staff to schedule and maintain it and that the current soundstage is in very good condition.

Councilmember Brown commented that when the front lawn project was first proposed, it was presented as a whole plan. Although not opposed, she felt focusing on the fireplace first promotes the thought of this project being piecemealed. She also addressed the utilization, benefits and liabilities of a fireplace.

Councilmember Granger confirmed with Director of Public Services Kowalski that there were 55 dedicated bricks to be placed and was supportive of the idea of encouraging residents to purchase honor or memorial bricks to help raise funds. She agrees that it would be better to have the project move forward as a whole but feels if there's an opportunity to get funded for some portions, we should take advantage of it. She also addressed other fireplaces in other communities.

Councilmember McConaghy stated he was not opposed to pursuing grant money but was disappointed that the project was not proposed in its entirety. He was supportive of securing funds for the project but does not want to walk away from the plan as a whole.

City Manager Como clarified that the amphitheater was not cancelled out of the plan, rather, the opportunity to get funding for a portion of the project (fireplace) presented itself and The

Foundation wanted to take advantage of it. Mayor Bryant commented that another reason the amphitheater concept may be reconsidered was because of the push back received from residents.

Councilmember Brown stated that the topics that need to be addressed are seating capacity, general costs and the timing of the project. Mayor Bryant suggested reaching out to other communities with a fireplace. Councilmember Granger commented on the placement of the fireplace. Councilmember Koester offered the idea of a water fountain versus a fireplace and stated a concern of a disjointed plan.

**Motion** by Granger, seconded by Motschall, that the City Council move forward to potentially put a fireplace in the south front lawn of city hall.

Motion failed by the following vote:

Yes: Bryant, Granger  
No: Brown, Koester, McConaghy, Motschall  
Absent: Gafa

**Motion** by Koester, Seconded by McConaghy, that the City Council recommends Administration to bring back this proposal with a more unified plan.

Councilmember Koester suggested bringing this topic back for discussion in 6 weeks or a reasonable timeframe for Administration to review. Councilmember Brown requested cost estimates of the project be provided when revisiting this matter.

The Foundation discussed deadlines and confirmed that if funds are awarded and the project does not go through, the funds will be refunded.

Motion carried by the following vote:

Yes: Brown, Granger, Koester, McConaghy, Motschall  
No: Bryant  
Absent: Gafa

Under New Business, no one wished to be heard.

Under Public Comment, the following individuals were heard:

1. Margaret Potter, 1834 Allard Ave. – Commented on the suggested location of the fireplace relative to the location of the Fire Department and its training activities.

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2. Glenn McCullough, 1930 Country Club Dr. – Addressed the road conditions by his house on Jackson Rd. He provided pictures of road conditions and requested the road be repaired.
3. Lynne Aldrich, 1501 Oxford Rd. – Appreciated the thoroughness and clarity of the open discussion during the COW meeting.
4. Shirley Hartert, 1930 Lancaster St., Member of Historical Commission and Fox Creek Quester Group – Addressed Cook School restoration projects.

**Motion** by Granger, seconded by Koester, that the meeting of the Committee-of-the-Whole be adjourned at 7:24 p.m. PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

Respectfully submitted,

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Paul P. Antolin  
City Clerk

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Arthur W. Bryant  
Mayor