

MINUTES OF THE COMMITTEE-OF-THE-WHOLE OF THE CITY OF GROSSE POINTE WOODS HELD ON MONDAY, AUGUST 4, 2025, 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 7:04 p.m.

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

Also Present: City Administrator Schulte  
Assistant City Administrator Como  
City Attorney Walling  
City Clerk Antolin  
City Treasurer/Comptroller Schmidt

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

Motion carried by the following vote:

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

**Motion** by McConaghy, seconded by Gafa, 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, Gafa, Koester, McConaghy, Motschall  
No: None  
Absent: Granger

**Motion** by Motschall, seconded by McConaghy, that the City Council receive and place on file the revised Milk River Generator Project presentation submitted by Russ Strassburg of Tetra Tech.

Motion carried by the following vote:

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

Tonight's meeting was regarding the **Milk River Generator Project**. City Administrator Schulte introduced Russ Strassburg of Tetra Tech to present the Milk River Generator Project and Pat McGow of Miller Canfield to discuss the tax levies. Mr. Schulte wanted to clarify that in the proposed scenario #3, the Milk River Intercounty Drain Drainage Board will utilize \$2 million of its \$4 Million fund balance to reduce the project cost from \$11.5 Million to \$9.5 Million, as stated on his memo dated, July 29, 2025.

Mr. Strassburg stated that the Milk River Intercounty Drain services Grosse Pointe Woods, Harper Woods and a portion of St. Clair Shores with more than 30,000 residents and 13,000 households. Currently, the area is powered by two aging utility feeds (DTE), which is the purpose of tonight's discussion.

Some background history was provided:

#### Facility Construction

- 1958 Original Pump Station
- 1960 Transformer #2 (65 Years)
- 1972 Transformer #1 (53 Years)

#### DTE Outages

- 2003 Complete Outage (Regional)
- 2003 Transformer outage
- 2019 Transformer #2 outage, (4 days)
- 2024 Underground cable failure (4 weeks)
- 2025 Underground cable failure (4 days)

#### 2018-2022 Upgrade

- DTE Transformers unchanged
- MR-owned Switchgear at Pump Station upgraded
- Service Cabling from existing transformers to PS replaced

A Standby Power Study was implemented with six tasks:

- Task 1: Alternative Power Sources (solar, wind, battery, etc.), Portable Standby Generators, Permanent Standby Generators
- Task 2: Engine Generator Sizing
- Task 3: Generator Quantities, Siting, Connections – fuel sources considered

- Task 4: Generator Fuel Sources and Economics
- Task 5: Generator Power Distribution and Management
- Task 6: Storm Pump Configurations

Mr. Strassburg answered questions from the Committee-of-the-Whole regarding concerns of overengineering, indefiniteness, and the uncertainty of the weather and its unpredictability. City Administrator Schulte commented that the storms are getting worse, hitting harder, faster and more frequent. This is a good insurance plan in the event other systems go down.

Discussion ensued regarding cost analysis and the comparison of reliability to cost. The storm pump configuration and cost breakdown were addressed and the data presented in the recommendation needed to be revisited as the Committee-of-the-Whole wanted more information to be collected.

There was a consensus of the Committee-of-the-Whole to bring this topic back to a future meeting after more data has been received.

Pat McGow provided an overview of the Milk River Drainage District financing.

The Milk River Drainage District is a Chapter 21 Drainage District created under Michigan's Drain Code, which governs drainage districts spanning one or more counties.

The District is the legal entity responsible for managing drainage-related projects and financing, including assigning benefit-based cost allocations to participating entities.

The cost of Milk River projects is divided among three cities and other public entities based on percentage of water flow:

- Grosse Pointe Woods (GPW): **63%**
- Harper Woods (HW): **36%**
- St. Clair Shores (SCS): **0.44%**
- Wayne County and MDOT also contribute based on their road-related runoff share.

The Drainage District issues assessments to public corporations (i.e., cities), not to individual properties. Each city determines how to pay its share by covering principal and interest on bonds issued to fund the project.

Drain Code, Chapter 21, authorizes cities to levy a special tax annually to cover drainage assessments.

- This tax:
  - Can be placed directly on the city tax roll
  - Is legally recognized as a “pre-Headlee” tax (in place before the 1978 Headlee Amendment)
  - Does not count against a city's charter millage cap
  - Does not require voter approval

The city has previously included Milk River line items on tax bills to cover debt service for drainage projects and ongoing operations and maintenance. As future assessments arise from the Drainage District, cities can adjust the tax levy without an election, due to the pre-Headlee status.

This method of financing has been used for over a decade and remains a reliable and legally supported mechanism for cities to fund their portion of Milk River Drainage District costs.

Under **New Business**, no one wished to be heard.

Under **Public Comment**, the following individuals were heard:

1. Nadia Davis, Anita St., addressed a neglected neighboring dog and a possible ordinance amendment regarding animal cruelty/abuse.
2. Jon Dougherty, 1665 S. Renaud, commented on not reciting the Pledge of Allegiance at the Committee-of-the-Whole. It was clarified that it is recited at the City Council meetings.

**Motion** by Motschall, seconded by Koester, that the meeting of the Committee-of-the-Whole be adjourned at 8:00 p.m. PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

Respectfully submitted,

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Paul P. Atolin  
City Clerk

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Arthur W. Bryant  
Mayor