

City Council Regular Meeting
Madison Heights, Michigan
April 28, 2025

A City Council Regular Meeting was held on Monday, April 28, 2025 at 7:30 PM at City Hall
- Council Chambers, 300 W. 13 Mile Rd.

PRESENT

Mayor Roslyn Grafstein
Mayor Pro Tem Mark Bliss
Councilman Sean Fleming
Councilman William Mier
Councilor Emily Rohrbach
Councilman David Soltis
Councilor Quinn Wright

ALSO PRESENT

City Manager Melissa Marsh
City Attorney Larry Sherman
Deputy City Manager/City Clerk Cheryl Rottmann

Councilman Mier gave the invocation and the Pledge of Allegiance followed.

Due to technical difficulties and without objection, Mayor Grafstein moved Presentations to after Reports on the agenda.

MEETING OPEN TO THE PUBLIC:

Martha Covert, resident, thanked City Manager Marsh and the DPS for the great job the city is doing and for the help she recently received from the Water Department.

Joe Ryker, City Manager of Clawson, spoke in support of the Equalization Resolution being considered this evening.

CM-25-58. Consent Agenda.

Motion to approve the Consent Agenda, as read.

Motion made by Mayor Pro Tem Bliss, Seconded by Councilman Mier.

Voting Yea: Mayor Grafstein, Mayor Pro Tem Bliss, Councilman Fleming,
Councilman Mier, Councilor Rohrbach, Councilman Soltis, Councilor
Wright

Motion carried.

CM-25-59. 2025 Older Michiganian Day Resolution.

Motion to approve the 2025 Older Michiganian Day Resolution, as follows:

RESOLUTION SUPPORTING OLDER MICHIGANIANS DAY 2025

WHEREAS, Older Michiganians Day is an important annual event that celebrates the contributions and addresses the needs of Michigan's older adult population; and

WHEREAS, the Madison Heights Active Adult Center (AAC), in partnership with Councilman David Soltis, is organizing a bus trip to Lansing on May 7, 2025, to participate in advocacy efforts during Senior Action Week, May 5-9, 2025, with a particular focus on Older Michiganians Day; and

WHEREAS, Older Michiganians Day provides an opportunity to bring attention to the critical needs of older adults across Michigan and advocate for legislative action to address those needs, including support for key programs and services that help older adults live independently and thrive in their communities; and

WHEREAS, the Area Agencies on Aging Association of Michigan and its partners are advocating for the following actions in the Michigan Fiscal Year 2026 budget to improve the lives of older adults in Michigan:

- Expand Access to the MI Choice Waiver Program by rebalancing state expenditures between Home and Community-Based Services (HCBS) and institutional care, and fully funding the risk pool with an appropriation from the Medicaid HCBS budget line;
- Increase Access to Home and Community-Based Services (HCBS) by supporting the Silver Key Coalition's request for an \$8 million increase for ACLS Bureau in-home services, and a \$2 million increase for home-delivered meals;
- Assist Family and Informal Caregivers by supporting a permanent \$5 million appropriation to area agencies on aging (AAAs) for the development of Caregiver Resource Centers, and by passing the Caring for MI Family Tax Credit to provide tax relief of up to \$5,000 per year for family caregivers;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the City of Madison Heights officially supports Older Michiganians Day on May 7, 2025, and joins with the Active Adult Center, Councilman David Soltis, and senior advocates in urging the Michigan Legislature to take action in the 2026 state budget to ensure the funding of the above critical supports and services for Michigan's older adults; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the City of Madison Heights encourages all residents, senior citizens, caregivers, and advocates to participate in this important advocacy event and to show their support for Michigan's older adult population and their continued ability to live independently with dignity.

Motion made by Mayor Pro Tem Bliss, Seconded by Councilman Mier.

Voting Yea: Mayor Grafstein, Mayor Pro Tem Bliss, Councilman Fleming,
Councilman Mier, Councilor Rohrbach, Councilman Soltis, Councilor
Wright

Motion carried.

CM-25-60. Historical Commission - Updated Park/Facility Naming Policy.

Motion to approve the update to the Park/Facility Naming Policy as recommended by the Historical Commission.

Motion made by Mayor Pro Tem Bliss, Seconded by Councilman Mier.

Voting Yea: Mayor Grafstein, Mayor Pro Tem Bliss, Councilman Fleming,
Councilman Mier, Councilor Rohrbach, Councilman Soltis, Councilor
Wright

Motion carried.

CM-25-61. 2025 Drinking Water Week Proclamation.

Motion to approve the 2025 Drinking Water Week Proclamation, as follows:

PROCLAMATION

WHEREAS, water is our most valuable natural resource; and

WHEREAS, drinking water serves a vital role in daily life, serving an essential purpose to health, hydration and hygiene needs for the quality of life our citizens enjoy; and

WHEREAS, tap water delivers public health protection, fire protection, support for our economy and the quality of life we enjoy; and

WHEREAS, the hard work performed by the entire water sector, designing capital projects, operators ensuring the safety and quality of drinking water or a member of a pipe crew maintaining the infrastructure communities rely on to transport high quality drinking water from its source to consumers' taps; and

WHEREAS, the coronavirus pandemic has shone a light on the importance of drinking water for health, hydration and hygiene needs; and

WHEREAS, we are all stewards of the water infrastructure upon which current and future generations depend; and

WHEREAS, the citizens of our city are called upon to help protect our source waters from pollution, practice water conservation and get involved with their water by familiarizing themselves with it;

NOW, THEREFORE, be it resolved that by virtue of the authority vested in me as Mayor of our City, I do hereby proclaim May 4-10, 2025, as Drinking Water Week in the City of Madison Heights.

Motion made by Mayor Pro Tem Bliss, Seconded by Councilman Mier.

Voting Yea: Mayor Grafstein, Mayor Pro Tem Bliss, Councilman Fleming,
Councilman Mier, Councilor Rohrbach, Councilman Soltis, Councilor
Wright

Motion carried.

CM-25-62. Professional Municipal Clerk's Week Proclamation.

Motion to approve the Profession Municipal Clerk's Week Proclamation, as follows:

PROFESSIONAL MUNICIPAL CLERKS WEEK PROCLAMATION

May 4 - 10, 2025

Whereas, The Office of the Professional Municipal Clerk, a time honored and essential component of local government; and

WHEREAS, The Office of the Professional Municipal Clerk is the oldest roles among public servants; and

WHEREAS, Professional Municipal Clerks serve as a vital link between citizens, local governing bodies, and other levels of government, and

WHEREAS, Professional Municipal Clerks uphold the principal of neutrality and impartiality, providing equal service to all members of the public; and

WHEREAS, The Office of the Professional Municipal Clerk acts as an information hub for local government and community functions, with responsibilities that include conducting elections, issuing licenses, maintaining boards and commissions, and preserving and providing access to vital records; and

WHEREAS, Professional Municipal Clerks are committed to excellence and continuous improvement through ongoing education, training, and active participation in local, regional, national and international professional organizations; and

WHEREAS, It is both fitting and proper to recognize the significant contributions and accomplishments of the Office of the Professional Municipal Clerk.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, Roslyn Grafstein, Mayor of the City of Madison Heights, do recognize the week of May 4 through 10, 2025, as Professional Municipal Clerks Week, and extend my sincere appreciation to our Professional Municipal Clerk staff for their vital services and exemplary dedication to the citizens of the City of Madison Heights.

Motion made by Mayor Pro Tem Bliss, Seconded by Councilman Mier.

Voting Yea: Mayor Grafstein, Mayor Pro Tem Bliss, Councilman Fleming,
Councilman Mier, Councilor Rohrbach, Councilman Soltis, Councilor
Wright

Motion carried.

CM-25-63. Kevin's Song Charitable Gaming License Resolution.

Motion to approve the required Local Governing Body Resolution for Charitable Gaming Licenses for Kevin's Song, as follows:

**LOCAL GOVERNING BODY RESOLUTION FOR CHARITABLE GAMING
LICENSES**

That the request from Kevin's Song of Madison Heights, County of Oakland, asking that they be recognized as a nonprofit organization operating in the community for the purpose of obtaining charitable gaming licenses, be considered for APPROVAL.

Motion made by Mayor Pro Tem Bliss, Seconded by Councilman Mier.

Voting Yea: Mayor Grafstein, Mayor Pro Tem Bliss, Councilman Fleming,
Councilman Mier, Councilor Rohrbach, Councilman Soltis, Councilor
Wright

Motion carried.

CM-25-64. City Council Regular Meeting Minutes of April 15, 2025.

Motion to approve the City Council Regular Meeting Minutes of April 15, 2025, as printed.

Motion made by Mayor Pro Tem Bliss, Seconded by Councilman Mier.

Voting Yea: Mayor Grafstein, Mayor Pro Tem Bliss, Councilman Fleming,
Councilman Mier, Councilor Rohrbach, Councilman Soltis, Councilor
Wright

Motion carried.

CM-25-65. Resolution Urging the Oakland County Board of Commissioners to Reject the Proposed Increase in Equalization Service Costs to Local Communities.

Mayor Grafstein invited Oakland County Commission Chair David Woodward to address the Council regarding the proposed fee increase for equalization services.

Oakland County Commission Chair David Woodward and Oakland County Chief Financial Officer Brian Lefler were present. Discussion followed on how Oakland County arrived at the proposed increase. Mr. Woodward noted that the equalization contract is on a voluntary basis and the services assess every parcel in the City. It is a critical function that sets tax rates, and the information is used to send out tax bills. Mr. Woodward stated that the service costs Oakland County \$6.5 million and they currently collect \$3.8 million in revenue from the local units of government that use their services. He continued, Oakland County provides economy of scale and services that cannot be provided by private contractors for the same value. The increase is due to a combination of labor, health care, pension, and indirect costs - all the costs associated with delivering the service.

Discussion followed on a more detailed explanation of how the County arrived at the increase, what the 1% administration fee covers for the City as it pertains to tax collection, the lack of notification to the City on the increase, the City's budget process and how it was completed prior to any notification on specific fee increase amounts, the lack of collaboration between the County and local units of government on the fee increase, the history of how Madison Heights began contracting with the County for equalization services, what makes up indirect costs for the County, the City's position that indirect costs should not be included in the contracted costs since residents already pay general obligation taxes to the County, where the current subsidized money will be allocated once the new fees are collected; the lack of capacity in local government's budget to absorb this increase, the suggestion that Oakland County create a grant program to assist

disadvantaged communities with this contract cost, and what the County uses the resident's general obligation tax dollars for if not for indirect costs such as the County Executive's office.

Mayor Pro Tem Bliss stated that he is hoping Chair Woodward and CFO Lefler are hearing the challenges that Madison Heights and other local government units are experiencing. In the private sector, if a vendor used this math calculation and proposed this size increase, they wouldn't be considered for providing the service anymore. We as a city plan our budget five years in advance. We are doing the work that we can, and to be hit with this at the last minute is not okay. He asked for a reasonable increase in the upcoming year, somewhere in the 5-10% range and then a gradual phase in of the proposed increase so local governments can plan for it in their budgets appropriately.

In response to Councilman Fleming's question, Chair Woodward stated that the County's General Fund surplus of 50% is being allocated for future projected costs and to meet expenditures over the long term. He stated that Oakland County does not have money to subsidize municipalities in the long term and they need to be fiscally responsible.

Councilor Rohrbach stated that she hopes that they will take our message to fellow commissioners on the difficult position they have put the city in. She added that the March memo did not raise any red flags on what the potential increases could be so that appropriate planning could be done.

Councilor Wright stated that simple and easy are not the same and the city would appreciate better communication in the future.

In response to Mayor Grafstein, CFO Lefler stated that the per parcel rate will be the same for every community.

Mayor Grafstein invited anyone in the audience who wished to speak.

Manya DeZwaan, resident, stated that given the difference between some Oakland County communities, it doesn't seem equitable that they are all charged the same amount.

Motion to approve the Resolution Urging the Oakland County Board of Commissioners to Reject the Proposed Increase in Equalization Service Costs to Local Communities as follows:

CITY COUNCIL RESOLUTION URGING THE OAKLAND COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS TO REJECT THE PROPOSED INCREASE IN EQUALIZATION SERVICE COSTS TO LOCAL COMMUNITIES

WHEREAS, the City of Madison Heights, like many communities in Oakland County, is facing significant financial challenges, having already eliminated four full-time positions and over \$1 million in capital expenditures for the 2025-26 current fiscal year; and

WHEREAS, the Oakland County Finance Committee has proposed a substantial increase in the cost of equalization services provided to local municipalities, raising the City of Madison Heights' share from \$230,630 to \$410,060 in FY 2026, and then to \$449,107 in FY 2027—a total increase of 94.7%; and

WHEREAS, this increase was proposed without prior notice, consultation, or collaboration with the municipalities affected, contradicting principles of partnership and transparency, and undermining trust between the County and its local governments; and

WHEREAS, equalization services are a shared responsibility that benefits not only the municipalities receiving them, but the County as a whole, including the schools, libraries, public parks, and other County-funded programs that depend on equitable property tax assessments; and

WHEREAS, shifting such a disproportionate cost burden onto local communities, many of which, like Madison Heights, are already built-out and have limited capacity for new development or revenue growth, will cause further strain on local budgets and compromise critical public services; and

WHEREAS, Oakland County's motto, "Stronger Together," must be upheld not only in words but in action, especially when local governments are asked to make sacrifices for the good of the region.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the City Council of the City of Madison Heights hereby urges the Oakland County Board of Commissioners to reject the Finance Committee's proposed cost increase for equalization services and instead pursue a more collaborative and equitable funding model that reflects the shared value and responsibility of these services; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that copies of this resolution be forwarded to all members of the Oakland County Board of Commissioners and the County Executive, to formally convey the City of Madison Heights' opposition to the proposal.

Motion made by Councilman Fleming, Seconded by Mayor Pro Tem Bliss.

Voting Yea: Mayor Grafstein, Mayor Pro Tem Bliss, Councilman Fleming,
Councilman Mier, Councilor Rohrbach, Councilman Soltis, Councilor
Wright

Motion carried.

Madison Heights Community Coalition Presentation

Madison Heights Community Coalition Executive Director Kim Heisler thanked the students for staying at such a long meeting. She began the presentation by stating the MHCC works with the community, students, parents, teachers, and police officers to reduce substance abuse and to empower youth to make positive choices. She introduced their leadership team and gave statistics on youth marijuana use and their risk perception of marijuana use, as well as statistics on the mental health of our community's youth. Ms. Heisler introduced members of the Youth Wellness Council (YWC), noting it is a safe space for youth, committed to supporting mental wellness, and reducing substance misuse. Their key pillars are leadership, prevention, community and mental health. Participants of the YWC then gave an overview of their activities over the past year including fundraising, charitable donations, attendance at a leadership retreat, participation in Youth Dialogue Day, and attending CADCA.

COUNCIL COMMENTS:

Councilman Mier commented that fantastic things going on tonight on our Consent Agenda, including recognizing Older Michiganiaan Day, Drinking Water Week Proclamation, and

Municipal Clerk's Week. He wished Councilman Soltis good luck on his trip to Lansing for Older Michiganian Day. On May 5th you can make a picture frame pendant in the library, on May 6th is Toddler Story Time, May 7th is Movie Matinee with A Man Called Otto, and the library is closed on May 9th for training. The Friends of the Library Book Sale on May 17th and that is Little League Opening Day as well.

Mayor Pro Tem Bliss thanked the audience for bearing with us for this meeting. If you are as passionate about the proposed Oakland County equalization increase as this Council, please send an email to County Commissioner Ann Gault and Chair Woodward. Arts Board Gala tickets are still available, the event is May 16th at 6 p.m. and the cost is \$60. Proceeds support the Arts Board, and you get a nice night out. He has been gathering information on the upcoming trash contract and is having good dialogue with the DPS Director. He stated that he is having a hard time getting his head around the 96-gallon trash that may be required, noting they may be hard for seniors to use. While he recognizes progress needs to be made, progress also needs to have empathy. We cannot offer two tiers of carts, but you can add assistance as an additional paid option to your billing. He stated that he has a hard time with the large cart only option and is hoping for some solutions. Please reach out if this is a concern of yours.

Councilor Wright stated that he hopes going forward that we have better communication from Oakland County so that we are aware, and our residents are aware of potential changes. He stated that Saturday he had the privilege of participating in the 5K and commented that the Parks and Recreation Department did a great job on the event. He attended the ribbon cutting at Kim Nhung Superfood where there was a large crowd, and it was a cool experience. The HREC is having a Lantern Festival on May 31st and encouraged all to attend. Please be considerate and kind with our neighbors, we are what makes our community a great place to live. Please be a responsible dog owner and walk your dog on a leash.

City Attorney Sherman had no comments this evening.

City Manager Marsh commented that Chair Woodward alluded to other companies that do provide equalization services, and she hopes to bring alternative options back to the Council. She added that private contractors may provide more robust services than we are currently receiving from Oakland County.

Deputy City Manager/City Clerk Rottmann noted that early voting for the Lamphere Special Election is currently taking place daily from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. at the Royal Oak Senior Center except for Thursday, May 1st, when the hours are 12 noon to 8:00 p.m. Precincts 5-9 will be open on Election Day for Lamphere School District voters from 7 a.m. to 8 p.m. Absentee ballots are available at the City Clerk's office until 4 p.m. on Monday, May 5th.

Councilor Rohrbach noted she will not be at the meetings in May. She addressed comments on concerns for seniors and the use of trash carts. She stated that seniors did participate in the public sessions and that they tried the proposed carts and weren't as difficult as presumed and easier than what they currently have. She also stated that if they only have a bag or two of garbage, they do not have to bring the cart to the curb every week. The lids stay on well and they prevent rodents and other animals from getting to the garbage. She continued that there are enormous benefits from using carts and modifications may be possible. Change is hard and a little scary, but she knows that the seniors that attended the public meetings and those that she has spoken to realize that it will be easier and more convenient with the new carts. She stated that she does not believe the use of the carts will be a significant burden and perhaps may turn out to be the opposite. If the

City chooses to contract for carts only, it will save significant money. The ECC native plant sale is on May 25th at City Hall from 2 p.m. to 5 p.m. Proceeds benefit the ECC and help fund projects such as the garden grants. At the 5K Run for the Health of It, the ECC celebrated Arbor Day and awarded 11 garden grants, including two middle schools and nine residents. The ECC is happy to give grants out and the native plant sales help replenish the funds for these grants.

Councilman Fleming stated at the last meeting he suggested a public session to brainstorm recreation programs and parks to better serve those with disabilities and noted that he was pleased to hear that the Recreation Master Plan sessions will have one focused on this topic. He is also pleased that the equalization resolution passed this evening; it sends a strong message to the County. He thanked staff for attending the Oakland County Finance Committee and for attending other meetings to defend the City's position and our residents. He encouraged the public to partake in these discussions by participating in a meeting, or emailing the Council or the Clerk to voice your concerns. The Co-responder program is a great asset and provides a great service. He would like to see if these referrals are being followed up on by recipients. If not, he would like to know whether we can address any needs they may, such as issues with transportation, that would prevent them from following up on a referral.

Councilman Soltis stated that he is looking forward to going to Lansing for Older Michiganiaan Day on May 7th with a group of Madison Heights seniors.

Mayor Grafstein stated that while the City provides a lot of services such as making sure your garbage is picked up, one of the Council's biggest jobs is to manage our funds. Like anyone that does a budget, you pay for what you need and what is left over is for wants. The issue is the rate of the increase. We are fighting for you. The equalization issue has taken a lot of time and brainstorming. She recognized the representative from Kevin's Song and thanked her for attending this evening and for all that they do. She stated that she appreciates representatives that came from Oakland County to discuss the equalization contract. The 5K was this past weekend and that signals Spring is here, and Summer is coming. Thank you to all that participated and to the event sponsors. She stated that she attended the ribbon cutting of Kim Nhung Super Foods and their space went from 5,000 to 25,000 square feet. It is great to see small entrepreneurs be able to grow and remain in the city. The next Council meeting will be May 12th, and we will be approving the budget. She also thanked Mayor Pro Tem Bliss for chairing the last meeting when she was sick.

Mayor Grafstein invited Kevin's Song Executive Director to make a comment on the organization.

Jennifer Margraf, Executive Director of Kevin's Song, stated the foundation was founded in 2013 and recently relocated to Madison Heights. They serve the seven counties of Southeastern Michigan. They are hosting the largest conference in the State on suicide and the resolution adopted this evening will allow them to obtain raffle licenses from the State of Michigan. Proceeds help sponsor their annual conference and she thanked the Council for their support.

ADJOURNMENT:

Having no further business, Mayor Grafstein adjourned the meeting at 9:18 p.m.