

CITY OF CHARLOTTE COUNCIL PROCEEDINGS
111 E. Lawrence Ave., Charlotte, MI 48813 (517) 543-2750
Regular Council Meeting 7:00 p.m. - Amended
July 28, 2025

CALL TO ORDER:

By Mayor Lewis on Monday, July 28, 2025 at 7:00 p.m.

ROLL CALL:

Mayor Lewis, Council members, Fullerton, Christensen, Scott and Chin. A quorum was met

City staff in attendance; City Clerk LaRocque, and City Manager Hillard. In the audience Community Development Director Benavidez

INVOCATION:

Pastor Pete Kroll of the First Baptist Church was not in attendance

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE:

Led by Lewis

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

- a. July 14, 2025 Regular Council Meeting Minutes

Motion by Chin supported by Scott to approve July 14, 2025 Regular Council Meeting Minutes. Carried; Yea 5; Nay 0; Absent 2

ABSENCE OF COUNCIL MEMBERS:

Mayor Pro-Tem Duweck, Council member Rodriguez

Motion by Christensen supported by Chin to excuse the absence of members Duweck and Rodriguez. Carried; Yea 5; Nay 0; Absent 2

PUBLIC HEARING:

- a. Ordinance 2025-07 Domestic Animal and Fowl

The public hearing was opened at 7:01 p.m. and closed at 7:01 p.m. with no public comments given. A written public comment in favor of the ordinance was included in the packet.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

Jodee Pruden, via ZOOM, acknowledged Councilman Rodriguez's recent national championship, giving him kudos.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA:

Motion by Chin supported by Fullerton to approve the agenda as printed. Carried; Yea 5; Nay 0; Absent 2

COMMUNICATIONS AND COMMITTEE REPORTS:

- a. Manager Report

City Manager Hillard reported on changes to the reporting format, which has been divided into three areas: city services, community development, and neighborhood enrichment, with the connected departments and individuals listed for each goal.

He explained that department heads have been asked to focus their monthly reports on these areas to keep Council informed on items that may not be on the agenda.

Manager Hillard announced an organizational move involving Community Development Director Benavides, who is being relocated to the west side fire station. He noted this move would better connect the fire personnel with zoning and housing efforts, allowing for improved collaboration.

He also provided an update on the Rural Fire Association agreement and Carmel Township fire agreement, noting they are

still in preliminary stages but moving forward. He indicated future meetings would be held with partners and recommendations would eventually be brought to the Council for a decision.

b. Council member committee reports

Council member Chin reported on the Housing Committee's upcoming meetings, including their regular meeting and a meeting with developers and real estate agents scheduled for later in the week. He mentioned that the president of Community Bank had offered his services to coordinate bringing developers and real estate professionals to look at Charlotte. He noted that they have conducted "windshield tours" with some developers to show them different areas of the city, and they hope to maintain momentum and interest in Charlotte.

Council member Fullerton reported on the Park Board meeting, highlighting numerous ongoing projects. He mentioned that the board is exploring potential improvements to Bennett Park and that new park signs with historical information on the back are ready to be installed. He also noted that DPW Director Whitney has implemented a new mowing project at the disc golf course, cleaned up the area, and installed cameras at all park bathrooms. He praised Whitney's work, saying she has made a significant turnaround in the parks.

Council member Christensen reported that the Planning Commission and Camp Francis had no meetings in July. The next Planning Commission meeting is scheduled for August 5 at 7:00 PM, and the Camp Francis meeting will be August 12 at 6:30 PM at the cabin.

Council member Scott noted that CARC took July off and suggested the need to connect the (CARC and Park Board) organizations in some rational way.

Council member Chin inquired about the status of entrance signs being redone, including the Frontier Day sign, as he had been notified by an organization that he belongs to that they needed to replace their sign on those boards. City Manager Hillard confirmed they were aware of the work and that Whitney was working with the Frontier Committee, as they have traditionally managed this.

Council member Scott commented on the effective use of two-sided signs in Dowagiac (Michigan), which provide directional and informational content throughout the town, suggesting it as a possible future project for the DDA.

Mayor Lewis mentioned previous discussions about placing signs outside the downtown area to help direct people (visiting travelers) who might not know where downtown is located.

CONSENT AGENDA:

- a. Approval of Claims and Expenditures totaling \$462,906.28
- b. Approval of Resolution 2025-35 To authorize the application of the ADA Infrastructure Grant for Polling Location Accessibility
- c. Approval of Physical Fitness Stipends – LOU's for POLC Sup and Non-Sup

Motion by Chin supported by Scott to approve Consent Agenda items a, b and c. Carried; Yea 5; Nay 0; Absent 2

BUSINESS AGENDA:

- a. Second reading and consider approval of ordinance 2025-07 Domestic Animals and Fowl

Motion by Scott supported by Fullerton to approve Ordinance 2025-07 Domestic Animals and Fowl. Carried; Yea 5; Nay 0; Absent 2

- b. Consider approval of Resolution 2025-36 To establish the number of permits and number of chickens per permit regarding the Domestic Animals and Fowl ordinance amendment.

Council member Christensen spoke about the city's history with chicken permits, noting there had been 10 permits available for years with no complaints or neighbor conflicts. He expressed faith in the citizens and suggested allowing an unlimited number of permits, with the understanding that the Council could revisit the issue if problems arose.

There was discussion about the number of chickens allowed per permit, with Council member Scott questioning whether increasing the number from 6 to 10 would require larger housing structures for the chickens.

Community Development Director Benavides explained that the current limit of 6 chickens per permit is set in the zoning ordinance, and while they were primarily focused on the number of permits allowed, they could explore the number of chickens as well. She noted that increasing the number would require considering the size of chicken dwellings, and that some cities base the allowed number on property size.

After discussion, Council decided to vote on separate amendments to the resolution:

Motion by Chin supported by Scott to establish 50 permits. Carried by roll call vote; Yea 4 Scott, Chin, Fullerton, Christensen; Nay 1 Lewis; Absent 2 Rodriguez, Duweck

Motion by Fullerton supported by Christensen to allow up to 10 chickens per permit. Carried by roll call vote; Yea 3 Scott, Fullerton, Christensen; Nay 2 Lewis, Chin; Absent 2 Rodriguez, Duweck

Motion to approve Resolution 2025-36 To establish 50 permits and 10 chickens per permit regarding the Domestic Animals and Fowl ordinance. Carried by roll call vote; 4 Scott, Chin, Fullerton, Christensen; Nay 1 Lewis; Absent 2 Rodriguez, Duweck

- c. Consider approval of DDA Bylaws

Mayor Lewis reported that he had received a call from Council member Rodriguez, who serves on the DDA committee and had concerns about the DDA bylaws that he wished to share with the Council directly.

Motion to TABLE until the next Council meeting by Chin supported by Scott, Carried by roll call vote: Yea 5 Lewis, Scott, Chin, Fullerton, Christensen; Nay 0; Absent 2 Rodriguez, Duweck

- d. Consider setting a public hearing on August 11, 2025 for CDBG

Motion by Chin supported by Fullerton to approve a public hearing on August 11, 2025 for CDBG. Carried; Yea 5; Nay 0; Absent 2

- e. Consider authorizing administration to move forward with plans to transfer the Building Department Services from Eaton County back to the City

Mayor Lewis shared his personal experience with building permit issues, noting the difficulties in having a deck installed due to dealing with Eaton County. He mentioned that builders consider whether to work in Charlotte based on such experiences.

Council member Fullerton expressed support for the move, highlighting the benefits of a "one-stop shop" where citizens could access community development, zoning, planning, and building services in one location. He noted that the new BSNA

system would allow permit payments to be made at the west side location and transferred electronically, saving residents time. He also suggested that city employees care more about the city and want to encourage building and improvements.

Council member Chin mentioned his concerns about rate increases being implemented by the county and noted that developers have repeatedly cited difficulties in dealing with the county as a reason for their reluctance to work in Charlotte. He also reported on a meeting with the new head of the land bank, who was eager to work with the city on obtaining abandoned properties.

Motion by Fullerton supported by Christensen to authorize administration to move forward with plans to transfer the Building Department Services from Eaton County back to the City. Carried by roll call vote; Yea 5 Lewis, Fullerton, Scott, Christensen, Chin; Nay 0; Absent 2 Rodriguez, Duweck

- f. Designation of voting delegate – Michigan Municipal League annual meeting, September 17-19, 2025

Motion by Christensen supported by Scott to designate Chin as the voting delegate and Christensen as the alternate voting delegate at the Michigan Municipal League annual meeting. Carried; Yea 5; Nay 0; Absent 2

PUBLIC COMMENT:

John Laupp, a Charlotte resident, spoke in support of moving building department services back to the city from the county. He shared his negative experience when his permit was transferred from the city to the county during a building project, resulting in his permit being closed out and having to pay for a full second permit with the county. He expressed concern about how existing permits would be handled during the transition.

Jodee Pruden, a resident speaking via ZOOM, encouraged expediting the transfer of building inspections back to the city, noting that the service could be self-sufficient through fees. She criticized the county's recent rate increases and difficulty in working with people. She also praised the city departments for working together effectively, particularly highlighting Stephanie as the new DPW director and expressing optimism about what Ms. Benavides would accomplish.

STAFF COMMENTS:

Community Development Director Benavides mentioned that City Attorney Revore had recommended setting a penalty for violations of the chicken ordinance. She noted that this could be addressed in a separate resolution rather than on the fee schedule.

MAYOR AND COUNCIL COMMENTS:

Council member Christensen thanked those watching online and in attendance. He reported on the Charlotte Rising Bags and Brews tournament, which had to be moved to Beach Market due to weather but was still successful. He suggested that as the event grows, it might eventually require closing a street. He also shared a story about an 11-year-old girl with Down syndrome named Carly who held a birthday party at Bennett Park, which was well-attended by about 75 people. He noted that the fire department, which was training nearby, gave the children a tour of the fire truck and provided the birthday girl with a gift. He also mentioned new businesses in Charlotte, including Xcel Propane breaking ground on Packard and ~~Eating Meats~~ *Eaton Meat* opening downtown in the former Oriole ~~Hut~~ *Hutt* location.

Council member Scott thanked police officers for their community service at a dunk tank event at Walmart and

expressed appreciation for Selena and Stephanie's work, noting that it "feels like we're actually getting stuff done."

Council member Chin reported on attending a webinar for solar grants, meetings with the state senator's office about grant applications, a town hall with Senator Slotkin, and the Eaton County Food Council meeting. He mentioned an upcoming dinner at the senior citizen facility for Helping Hands on July 31 and congratulated Anthony (Rodriguez) on becoming a world champion with weapons. He also presented research on police budgets, comparing Charlotte's police budget to similarly sized cities across Michigan. He found that Charlotte's budget of \$3.2 million was not out of line with other cities and emphasized the time-consuming paperwork requirements that officers face, particularly when processing arrests at the county jail.

Mayor Lewis commended the city team for being highly operational, noting positive comments from the public and businesses about how city hall is being run compared to previous years. He praised the depth of talent in the staff, including the Community Development Director, Public Works director, Clerk's office, and Finance office, and thanked City Manager Hillard for his leadership.

ADJOURN:

Motion by Christensen supported by Fullerton to adjourn the meeting at 7:47 p.m. Carried; Yea 5; Nay 0; Absent 2

Respectfully submitted,
Mary LaRocque MiPMC, CMC
City Clerk