

GPA Meeting Minutes

Meeting #: G10

Date: 1/18/26

Time: 4:00 pm

Location: Room 209, Eastman School of Music

Type of Meeting: General Scheduled

Participants: (see attached)

Speaker & Discussion: Senator Jeremy Cooney, State Senator, 56th senatorial district Chairman of the Senate Transportation Committee, as well as memberships on numerous other committees

Senator Cooney shared that being at the meeting was personal because it was his own neighborhood. He was joined by Rose Bonnick, a colleague in the Senate office and member of the Monroe County Legislature. He described the 56th Senate District, covering the majority of the city of Rochester, the inner ring suburbs, and approximately 370,000 residents.

Senator Cooney emphasized the state's focus on standing up for New Yorkers and fighting for resources to offset changes coming from the federal government. He cited the example of the Inner Loop North project, which received a proposed one hundred million dollars (\$100M) in federal funding under the Biden administration but that money was pulled back by the Trump administration. This has halted the project's development and planning phases. The total cost of the Inner Loop North project is around two hundred twenty-five million dollars (\$225M), which includes one hundred million (\$100M) from the state government. The shortfall is one hundred twenty-five million dollars (\$125). The Senator announced that he has requested one hundred million (\$100M) in the state budget to compensate, with the intent that the state be paid back when the federal money comes through.

The Senator informed the group that the state legislative cycle runs from January to June, with a major focus on the budget, which they aim to finalize by April 1st. Senator Cooney shared that he and his wife are committed to seeing Grove Place and the neighborhood continue to thrive.

Senator Cooney shared key upcoming information, noting that the Governor recently gave her State of the State address laying out priorities, and her budget detailing how those plans will be funded is due soon. A main priority is the commitment to high-quality, affordable childcare, including expanding universal pre-K for three- and four-year-olds. Monroe County is one of three counties receiving a \$20 million pilot grant from the State to help figure out how to get more three-year-olds into quality care, addressing challenges like a lack of infrastructure and workforce.

To address affordability, the Governor has proposed tort reforms regarding car insurance, as New York has the highest car insurance rates in the country, largely driven by fraud and high litigation costs. In healthcare, the focus is on Medicaid reimbursement rates for systems like University of Rochester Medical and Rochester Regional Health and ensuring that those with insurance under the Affordable Care Act can actually afford to use it for preventative care, reducing reliance on emergency departments as primary care units.

Senator Cooney, as an RCSD graduate, expressed his passion for urban education and highlighted past successes in raising classroom funds and modernizing schools, including School #58. He stated that the Governor also proposed updating the state mathematics curriculum, subsequent to the state's previous work on reading comprehension. Regarding public safety, the Governor has proposed a buffer zone around houses of worship to protect religious freedom while allowing peaceful protest. Furthermore, the governor proposed a civil action under state law that would hold ICE officers accountable for bad behavior, in response to frustrations over federal immigration enforcement.

Senator Cooney encouraged residents to reach out to his office with any concerns, emphasizing his dedication to high quality of life factors in the neighborhood. The Senator shared his dream of making Gibbs Street a fully

pedestrian street year-round, envisioning it as a gathering space to complement any possible new development on Block F and the old Metro Center YMCA. He reported that Dean Sheeran of the Eastman School of Music is also excited about making Gibbs Street pedestrian. Senator Cooney announced securing one million dollars (\$1M) for technical upgrades to Kodak Hall at Eastman Theater to modernize the facility and allow for more programming, such as film scores.

Regarding transportation, Senator Cooney noted a push for sidewalks and bike infrastructure to make up for reduced federal resources in this area, citing his personal commitment to improving sidewalks. A more controversial item is the Governor's proposal for authorizing self-driving cars (autonomous vehicles) for hire in upstate New York, with companies like Waymo (Google subsidiary) and Zoox (Amazon subsidiary) being the big players. Senator Cooney mentioned that twenty-five (25) cities across the U.S. already utilize this technology, and proponents contend that autonomous vehicles are generally ten times safer than human drivers.

A member asked Senator Cooney for an update on the land around School #58 regarding the Inner Loop North plans, which show two new playgrounds and green space. Senator Cooney expressed concern about adherence to the plan, fearing the school district might prioritize bus turnaround and parking. Nothing further is happening with Inner Loop North planning due to the pull-back in federal funding.

Senator Cooney identified energy as the biggest crisis impacting economic development and growth in upstate New York, noting a lack of power to support new housing or data centers like Micron. The Governor proposed an "all of the above" solution including renewables like wind and solar, and clean nuclear, though nuclear is a long-term plan. Battery storage was highlighted as a crucial part of the solution for storing power generated from hydro, wind, and solar, which would reduce the need to buy expensive fossil fuel-generated electricity from out-of-state sources. He informed the group that RG&E has proposed a rate increase, and he is one of the interveners pushing back on the rate increase, demanding that RG&E invest profits into the service territory rather than siphoning money to corporate profitability. On municipal power, the Senator acknowledged the proposal for a public power study before the Monroe County Legislature and Rochester City Council, to gather information, despite not knowing how the cost of buying RG&E's infrastructure could be afforded.

Approval of Minutes: Richard Rosen moved to approve the minutes of the 11/16/25 General Meeting; Roz Goldman seconded. Acceptance was unanimous.

Treasurer's Report: (see attached for details) The current checkbook balance is six thousand thirty-eight dollars and thirty-nine cents (\$6,038.39), with a three-dollar ninety cent (\$3.90) loss from the Holiday Party. Rick McGrath pointed out that we had a few commitments (RSVP's) for the Holiday Party who did not attend and who did not pay but based on their RSVP we included in the count for the food and beverages. His advice is to avoid this in the future by having invitees confirm with payment prior to the party.

Committee Reports:

Beautification: No report

Membership: Roz Goldman reported that there are a few membership possibilities.

Public Safety & Code Compliance: The public safety meeting with the Police Department scheduled in December was cancelled.

Nominating: The nominating committee, headed by James Tabbi is composed of members Trish Bhattacharya, Liz Chafik and Cat Kuo. They will be making a recommendation for the new GPA Executive Committee for the 2026-28 period, Bob DiPaola becomes the immediate past president on the committee. The nominating committee will present a slate of officers a couple of weeks before the April meeting, and any voting member can submit their own slate, signed by at least five (5) voting members, a week before the vote.

Action Items/Decisions:

- (G02-02) ROC Vision Zero Update: Sandy Mayer announced that the ROC Vision Zero committee is meeting this week. He also announced that ROC Vision Zero progress will be presented on Wednesday at a press conference at City Hall detailing progress and where we're going on this project next year. Sandy will report next month on this.

- (G02-03) Neighborhood bench refurbishment :Not discussed
- (G07-01) Initiatives for Exec Cmte: Not discussed
- (G09-01) Update on ‘Save the Green Space’ Committee: (The name of this committee is: ‘Keep East End Green’ Committee) Linda Reilly, chair of the Keep East End Green Committee, provided an update on the efforts to protect the park's green space. For background, the city had put out an RFP in September 2025 to build on the property and, with four proposals submitted for the development of the property, setting up a decision between green space or development. The committee held a meeting in December, gaining signatures and encouraging letters to legislators. Richard Rosen made a connection with Dawn Noto from Community Design Rochester, who attended their last meeting and is interested in studying the success or failure of the Inner Loop East fill-in. A reporter from Rochester Beacon is preparing an article about the grassroots efforts to protect the park. Linda Riley gave a shout-out to Liz and Jake Chafik for creating the committee's fabulous website which she displayed. (See below under New Business for more information.)
- (G09-02) Update on Buildings of Historic Value: Not discussed.

New Business:

- Linda Reilly highlighted the substantial community support for the East End green space, noting that they have over 500 signatures on a petition. There have also been many comments. She read several comments, with residents stressing the importance of quiet, nature, and a pause from construction, and others expressing concern about high housing density and the need for green space to maintain a healthy and sustainable city. She also emphasized that studies have shown that even small portions of undeveloped green space in a city can have a big impact on reducing harmful emissions. Green spaces are vital for various reasons. In demonstrating the committee's website, Linda introduced an "explore" that Jacob Chafik developed, which shows in minutes how long it takes to walk to a nearby green space. Linda informed attendees about a "Speak to Council" meeting on January 22nd, noting that several GPA members are planning to speak at that meeting. She also mentioned that "Speak to Council" happens at every City Council meeting every month and that representatives for the East End Green plan to participate.
- Sean Dunwoody and Suzanne Mayer from Hinge Neighbors noted that they were responding to the city's RFP for development, of 125 Charlotte Street and stated that they agreed with the need for green space but sought to implement affordable development if the city moves forward with building on the property. They presented their development proposal, "Living on the Loop" in response to the city's RFP. Their mission, developed over eight years of community engagement, is to create affordable home ownership opportunities with a focus on walkability, human-scale design, and pathways to ownership. Sean explained that their proposal aims to create creative mixed-income home ownership opportunities, targeting first-time home buyers, individuals aging in place, and the creative community. The design features townhomes affordable for those at 60% to 80% of Rochester's average median income (\$83,200) and includes fully accessible Accessory Dwelling Units (ADU) to support generational wealth, close the racial wealth gap, and provide options for in-laws, aging parents, or rental income. The affordability is supported by New York State HCR's "Block by Block" program, which provides funding to buy down project costs. The total proposal consists of 20 units, supporting long-term residency and expanding the tax base. The proposal includes 11 townhomes in three buildings facing Union, Charlotte and Pitkin Streets, with internal ADUs on the ground floor of nine of the units and two units having a garage or workshop. The estimated construction timeline is 12 to 18 months. The ADUs, which have a separate entrance, allow homeowners to subsidize their mortgage through renting, increasing accessibility to home ownership. The proposal also includes a small area of green space, potentially for a park or Homeowners Association use, and is intended to offer a visual break on Union Street. A member asked if this model of ADU on the ground floor within an affordable townhouse has worked in other communities. A secondary question concerned the size of the ADUs, which is 750 square feet. The member raised concerns about the small size and pointed out that the steps leading to the main townhomes preclude their ownership by people using wheelchairs., and that the small square footage would be difficult for wheelchair users to navigate. The speakers confirmed that the ADU model, where a unit is built into the home to be rented out or used by a family member, is an emerging concept, driven partly by the need for more housing. If you have this kind of financing, through HCR, you have to attend classes that instruct first-time homeowners what you need to know to own a house housing classes. And all the people who have ADUs would also have to go to classes to learn the ins and outs of being a landlord. The speakers announced that Hinge Neighbors were called back for an interview

by the city; a determination of who is awarded the contract is expected this month. City council has to approve the sale of the land, which is the focus of those seeking to keep it green space.

Open Discussion: N/A

Action Items/Decisions:

<u>What?</u>	<u>Who?</u>	<u>Deadline?</u>	<u>Status?</u>
G02-02 ROC Vision Zero Update	SMayer	ongoing	In Process
G02-03 Neighborhood bench refurbishment	BDiPaola	Spring 2026	Hold
G07-01 Initiatives for Exec Cmte	Members ongoing	Open	
G09-01 Update on Save the Green Space Committee	LReilly	ongoing	In Process
G09-02 Update on Bldgs. of Historic Value	RRosen	2/15/26	Open

Next Meeting: Sunday, February 15, 2026, 4:00pm, Eastman School of Music Rm. 209
Speaker: Mitch Gruber, City Councilmember

Adjournment Time: 5:37 pm

Respectfully Submitted:
Pam DiPaola
Secretary

Attachments: Participant Sign-In Sheet
Treasurer's Report