



CITY COUNCIL REGULAR MEETING July 27, 2026

The City Council met to have a Regular Council Meeting at City Hall at 6:30 p.m.
102 Butler St., Saugatuck, MI 49453.

Call to Order:

The meeting was called to order by Councilmember Stanton at 6:30 p.m.

Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

Attendance:

Present: Councilmembers Dean, Gardner, Muncey, Peterson and Stanton.

Absent: Mayor Anderson and Mayor Pro-Tem Clark.

Motion by Dean, second by Peterson to excuse Mayor Anderson and Mayor Pro-Tem Clark from the meeting. Via roll call vote, motion carried 5-0.

Others Present: City Manager Cummins, DPW Director Ondersma, Attorney Witte and Clerk Wolters.

Mayor's Comments: None.

City Manager Comments:

City Manager Ryan Cummins reported that Maple Street construction is progressing well and is currently on or slightly ahead of schedule. The water main installation is complete, and crews are now working on tie-ins at intersecting streets and on service connections to homes and businesses. Stormwater improvements are underway, including installation of a larger system at Mason and Maple. Sidewalk grading and some concrete work on Maple have already begun, and once the underground work is finished—anticipated in late August or early September—the above-ground work is expected to move much faster. He also reviewed the status of lead service lines in the city. There are 203 known lead service lines, 198 galvanized lines that were previously connected to lead, and 229 service lines whose material is still unknown. Because replacement costs are significant, the city has applied for approximately \$1.7 million in state funding. About 10% of that would be a grant and the remainder a 0% interest loan. In the initial scoring round, the city fell just outside the funding range, largely because it did not receive certain points it was eligible for. After discussions with EGLE, the city has been told those points should be awarded in the next scoring round, improving the likelihood of receiving funding. If awarded, the city would need to execute a large, fast-moving replacement project under tight timelines. Cummins noted that substantial work had been done on the comprehensive Master Plan in the previous month and indicated that Councilmember Gardner would speak to that in greater detail during his committee report. He also highlighted a significant environmental grant: the county successfully secured a \$1 million EGLE grant to help clean up contamination at 640 Water Street, caused by old storage tanks. This is a partnership between the county, the developer, and the city, aimed at remediating contamination and

preparing the site for reuse and redevelopment. A formal press release with more information will be issued later.

Agenda Changes:

Motion by Gardner, second by Muncey to add Allegan County Commissioner Brad Lubbers as guest speaker. Via voice vote, motion carried 5-0.

Guest Speakers:

County Commissioner Brad Lubbers reported that the county is actively supporting local brownfield categories. He updated council on Consumers Energy's attempt to sell its hydroelectric dams, noting that the case is before the Public Service Commission and that Consumers has proposed a \$270 million dam safety fund in escrow for the prospective buyer to support required infrastructure upgrades. He reviewed ballot items, including the upcoming senior millage renewal in August (a straight renewal with no changes) and a conservation district millage on the November ballot that would continue funding for invasive species control, habitat work, parks support, and agricultural programs. Lubbers also described federal disaster relief related to last spring's tornadoes: President Trump approved \$32 million for state disaster relief, with FEMA administering distribution, and a local FEMA office is operating at the Gun Plain Township Fire Department for residents and municipalities seeking assistance over the next month and a half. He announced a meeting with Representative Andrews, the road commission, sheriff, fire departments, and other stakeholders to address safety concerns along the Blue Star Corridor—including issues raised by cyclists and pedestrians—and to discuss a safety grant for a feasibility study of the corridor that could involve changes that may require state law changes. Finally, he noted that the Gun Lake Casino is marking its 15th year and has distributed about \$226 million in revenue sharing over that time to local communities and the county for parks, infrastructure, and public safety, announced the upcoming dedication of Sunset Park, and strongly encouraged all residents to vote in upcoming elections, regardless of their choices.

Public Comment on Agenda Item Only: None.

Consent Agenda:

- A. Approval of City Council Workshop Minutes – July 22, 2026.
- B. Approval of City Council Closed Session Minutes – July 22, 2026.
- C. Special Event – Movie in the Park.
- D. Reappointments to Boards and Commissions
 - Historic District Commission Member: Leah Root with a term ending 8/1/2029.
 - Historic District Commission Member: John Cannarsa with a term ending 8/1/2029.

Motion by Peterson, second by Dean to approve the consent agenda as presented. Via roll call vote, motion carried 5-0.

Approval of Accounts Payable:

Motion by Gardner, second by Peterson to approve the accounts payable in the amount of \$720,950.46. Via roll call, motion carried 5-0.

Public Hearing: None.

Unfinished Business: None.

New Business:

Proposal for Design Engineering Services for Elizabeth Street Improvements:

Motion by Peterson, second by Muncey to approve design engineering services for Elizabeth Street improvements from Fleis & VandenBrink in the amount of \$122,700. Via roll call vote, motion carried 5-0.

Historic District Signage Design & Quotes.:

Motion by Muncey, second by Gardner to approve the design submitted by Concept A Creative Studio and the quote from Lake Shore Industries for the fabrication of three (3) single-faced cast aluminum signs with raised lettering and borders, each measuring 24" x 36" and mounted on 8-foot posts, in the total amount of \$7,048.80. Via roll call vote, motion carried 5-0.

Consent Agreement for Sanitary Sewer Service.:

Motion by Peterson, second by Gardner to approve the consent agreement for sanitary sewer service between the City of Saugatuck and Saugatuck Township to provide sanitary sewer service to Parcel 20-010-029-10 via the Maple Street sewer main. Via roll call vote, motion carried 5-0.

Staff Reports, Boards, Commissions & Committees:

Monthly department activity reports were provided by the City Manager along with the following board and committees:

Fire District Administration Board:

Dan Fox reported that the fire district continues to manage a high volume of inspections and calls, including 45 short-term rental inspections, 40 hours of plan review, 7 driveway inspections, and 3 food truck inspections in the last month. June saw 116 calls (477 year-to-date), with 37% overlapping incidents, which strains staffing when multiple calls occur simultaneously. Cost recovery efforts are improving, with roughly 74% of billed amounts collected this year (about \$47,000). Progress on the new Wiley Road station is on track: the district and township received a strong AA bond rating, bond funds are expected by August 27, and the project completion target is April 27. A firefighter-developed redesign of the station is being favorably received, and legal work on property purchase and a sewer connection is nearly complete. The district is also advancing a state-level effort to designate a memorial highway segment honoring fallen Hamilton Fire Chief Dave Haverdink.

Interurban Board:

Councilmember Gregory Muncey reported another record-breaking month for the Interurban in June, with 10,757 passenger trips—an increase of 833 rides (7.75%) over the prior June. Programs such as free Senior Mondays (172 free rides) and \$5 “destination trips” to wineries, Felt Mansion, and the state park are performing well, along with the partnership with the Allegan County Commission on Aging, which provided 65 medical trips. Summer operations include the free parking shuttle for Music in the Park and weekend shuttles, supplemented by on-demand “park anywhere, call Interurban” service. Late-night Friday and Saturday fares were raised to \$3 to boost revenue as state and federal funding declines. Three new advertisers have been added, three new service contracts signed, and five seasonal drivers hired, bringing staff to 24. The millage renewal proposal seeks to return to a 1.0 mill (from 0.5, which has been in place for about 40 years) to match current demand and service levels.

Kalamazoo Lake Sewer & Water Authority:

Barry Johnson reported that KLSWA approved bills totaling approximately \$255,000 and is moving forward with a major expansion project under the Clean Water State Revolving Fund, involving a \$4.1 million bond for plant upgrades—particularly to address sludge ponds before future regulatory changes make disposal dramatically more expensive. The authority has engaged HydroCorp to manage state-required cross-connection control, since preventing contamination of potable water from irrigation or other systems is increasingly complex. Routine testing continues to show favorable results. Maple Street water main installation from Blue Star to just south of North Street is complete, with tie-ins proceeding, and subsequent phases toward wells 4 and 5 are underway. Policy work included new procedures for denied meter access and past-due accounts, along with an incentive for paperless billing to reduce processing costs. A new finance director has joined the authority.

Kalamazoo Lake Harbor Authority:

Councilmember Chris Peterson reported on the Vetter Consulting Group's phase-one work examining the harbor's economic role and the consequences if dredging were to stop. The report describes, in qualitative terms, how different sectors—such as tourism, second homes, and local businesses—would be affected but does not yet include detailed dollar-value estimates; that financial quantification would come in a second phase if councils choose to proceed. The Harbor Authority discussed its own role and structure, including whether it should remain largely advisory to the three municipalities or evolve toward a more independent entity with greater authority (and possibly taxing power), noting the tradeoffs in local control. Vetter outlined a 10-year roadmap: years 1–3 focus on governance, capacity, and initial funding; years 4–7 on environmental, recreational, and resilience work; and years 8–10 on modernization and long-term stability. Further council discussion—likely in a workshop format—will be needed to decide how aggressively to pursue this roadmap, including how dredging and harbor management should be funded and governed.

Zoning Board of Appeals: None. Zoning Board of Appeals (ZBA)

Councilmember Scott Dean noted that the next meeting is scheduled for August 6, at 6:00 p.m.

Historic District Commission:

Councilmember Scott Dean reported that the Historic District Commission has been focusing on signage for the historic district. The council approved a new sign design developed by Concept A Creative Studio and accepted a fabrication quote from Lakeshore Industries for three cast aluminum signs. The commission expects these new signs to replace the older ones installed when the district was first designated in 1982, and council members emphasized both longevity and secure installation given their quality and aesthetic appeal.

Planning Commission: Planning Commission

Councilmember Russ Gardner reported that the Planning Commission's July 16 meeting was devoted largely to the Comprehensive Master Plan update. Using data provided in the packet, the commission reviewed projected population changes across the three jurisdictions, noting a surprising estimated decline for the City of Saugatuck contrasted with projected growth in Douglas and Saugatuck Township. These projections raised questions that will require further verification and context. The commission also ranked community priorities to guide the master plan: (1) infrastructure capacity (water, sewer, and especially roads) to prepare for increased visitation and development pressure; (2) preservation of historic character, which underpins the community's appeal; and (3) downtown economic vitality, recognizing that tourism-driven businesses are the core economic engine. Gardner indicated that a more complete planning commission report and draft master plan directions will come to council in the fall, and Peterson suggested that harbor and dredging issues should also be integrated into long-term planning.

Parks & Public Works Committee:

Councilmember Lauren Stanton reported that the Parks & Public Works Committee is scheduled to meet the morning after this council session at 10:00 a.m.

Tri-Community Non-Motorized Trail Study Committee:

Councilmember Dean reported that work on the tri-community non-motorized trail continues. Planning and coordination among Saugatuck, Douglas, and Saugatuck Township are ongoing, and the project remains active, but there were no new major milestones or decisions to announce at this time.

Water System Operations Contract Advisory Committee:

Councilmember Gardner that the committee is in active negotiations among the three municipalities to update the long-term water operations agreement. A key focus for the City of Saugatuck is ensuring that the city's historic investments in infrastructure are appropriately recognized and protected under any new arrangements, particularly as the agreement will shape the next several decades. The next formal meeting has not yet been scheduled.

Logo and Branding Advisory Committee:

Councilmember Lauren Stanton reported that the Logo & Branding Advisory Committee has completed its deliberations and selected a single recommended logo/brand direction for the City of Saugatuck. The group narrowed an initial set of concepts down to three, then reached consensus on one final recommendation after multiple review meetings and refinements. The plan is to present this recommended logo, along with background and rationale, at a council workshop to seek council feedback and potential adoption. There is no plan to present multiple options at that stage; the committee will bring only its preferred design.

Parking Improvements Task Force:

Councilmember Gregory Muncey provided Gregory Muncey reported steady progress by the Parking Improvements Task Force, which is working with Walker Consultants to develop recommendations for downtown parking. A major conceptual discussion at the last meeting concerned converting Butler Street to one-way traffic with parallel parking on one side and angled parking on the other, which could yield roughly 60 additional spaces. This remains only a concept at this stage; the task force is carefully considering impacts on traffic flow, deliveries, emergency vehicle access, and pedestrian safety, and will seek input from public safety officials before any formal recommendation. Walker is also exploring similar concepts on Water and Elizabeth Streets, though Lucy Street appears too constrained for major gains (only about six potential additional spaces). Business outreach—about 72 downtown businesses—showed strong interest in being included in the process and highlighted that parking challenges often involve distribution and duration (where and how long people park) rather than just total supply. The task force is looking at employee parking strategies, expanded use of remote lots with Interurban shuttles, and better turnover management, while also addressing accessibility by identifying more 15-minute loading zones and additional accessible spaces near key destinations. Public engagement has included an in-person session at Music in the Park, where Walker, task force members, and the City Manager fielded questions and gathered feedback. Upcoming task force meetings on July 29 and August 25 will move toward final recommendations and deliverables from Walker.

Public Comment:

Barry Johnson provided comment.

Correspondence: None.**Council Comments:**

Councilmember Muncey reminded everyone that the annual sidewalk sale will take place on the third Wednesday of next month (the day before the usual third-Thursday timing), noting that this is a change from prior years when it was traditionally held on Thursday. He emphasized the importance of getting the word out to reduce confusion and briefly mentioned that Music in the Park continues as part of the busy summer season.

Councilmember Dean did not have comment.

Councilmember Gardner remarked that it has been a great summer so far, with generally good weather, and reflected that recent travel to other states underscored for him how special the community is. He expressed appreciation for being back in Saugatuck and implicitly for the town's unique character.

Councilmember Peterson did not have comment.

Councilmember Stanton did not have comment.

Adjournment:

Motion by Peterson, second by Dean to adjourn the meeting. Upon voice vote, motion carried unanimously. Councilmember Stanton adjourned at 8:01 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted

Jamie Wolters, City Clerk