



CITY COUNCIL WORKSHOP MEETING MINUTES
October 8, 2025

The City Council met for a Workshop Meeting at 4:00 p.m.
City Hall
102 Butler St., Saugatuck, MI 49453.

Call to Order:

The meeting was called to order by Mayor Anderson at 4:00 p.m.

Attendance:

Present: Mayor Anderson, Mayor Pro-Tem Stanton and Councilmembers Clark, Gardner, and Muncey.
Absent: Dean, Peterson.

Motion by Gardner, second by Muncey to excuse Councilmembers Dean and Peterson from today's meeting. Via voice vote, motion carried 5-0.

Others Present: City Manager Cummins, DPW Superintendent Herbert, Attorney Witte, Treasurer Bredeweg and Clerk Wolters.

Agenda Changes: None.

Public Comment on Agenda Items Only: None.

Approval of Minutes:

Regular city council meeting minutes – September 22, 2025.

Motion by Gardner, second by Stanton to approve the minutes from the regular city council meeting from September 22, 2025. Via voice vote, motion carried 5-0.

Discussion Items:

Road and Parking Lot Resurfacing Bid:

DPW Superintendent Scott Herbert presented the annual road and parking lot resurfacing project, focusing on mill and overlay work for roads without major underground utility needs.

- Roads identified for resurfacing include a section of Lucy Street (between Butler and Holland), the Wick's Park parking lot, and Hoffman Street west of Water Street. These areas were chosen based on condition assessments and minimal utility conflicts.
- The Wick's Park parking lot was highlighted due to damage from high water levels in 2020, resulting in a saturated and settled base layer.
- Mary Street was considered but deferred to spring to combine with the Maple Street project, due to additional catch basin and concrete work needed for ADA compliance.
- The city received one bid from A-1 Asphalt Inc., a previously used and MDOT-prequalified contractor, for \$57,208.10. With contingencies and administrative costs, the total project is estimated at \$67,000.

- The work is targeted for completion by mid-November, before asphalt plants close for the season. The Department of Public Works will handle repainting after resurfacing.
- Temporary traffic control (signage, flaggers, detours) is included in the bid.
- Funding will come from both major and local street funds, depending on the street classification.
- Council members asked about project timing, specific locations, ADA compliance, and the impact on the city's pavement condition rating (Pacer). The project will improve the city's Pacer score, which is updated every 2–5 years.

Water Distribution System Materials Inventory:

City Manager Ryan Cummins introduced the topic, noting the city received a \$221,000 grant from EGLE in 2024 to complete a final inventory of water service line materials, focusing on identifying lead and galvanized lines.

- The contractor completed the work, and the city submitted a report to the state. The findings were:
 - 6 confirmed lead service lines
 - 127 galvanized lines previously connected to lead
 - 440 non-lead lines
 - 391 lines with unknown status
- The inventory currently includes 964 lines, but this may change as more are discovered or clarified.
- Cummins emphasized that the presence of a lead or galvanized line does not necessarily mean lead is present in the drinking water, but there is a risk, and replacement is required over time at the city's expense.
- Recently notification letters, based on a state template, were sent to all properties with unknown or lead/galvanized lines. The City will send out mailings as part of an annual requirement until all lines are confirmed non-lead.
- The city is developing a formal plan to replace the necessary lines over the next several years, with some replacements scheduled as part of the Maple Street project and future water main work.
- There are two regulatory deadlines: the state's 2040 deadline and a federal guideline requiring completion within 10 years (by 2034–2035). The city is planning for the earlier federal deadline.
- The grant significantly reduced the number of unknowns, but about 400 remain. Future road projects will include more thorough investigations of service lines.
- The city has a cost-sharing policy for residents who want to replace their lines sooner, typically splitting the cost 50/50.
- Council members discussed the importance of clear public communication, especially regarding the language in notification letters and the city's responsibility for water safety.
- The city is working on FAQs and additional information for residents, including guidance on private testing and how to identify service line materials.

Proposed Cost Sharing Agreement for 720 N Maple Water Service Line Replacement and Installation of 8" Water Main Stub:

The topic concerns 720 North Maple, where the property's water service line is improperly connected to a main at the Old Mill Apartments instead of the main along Maple Street.

- Several years ago, the property owners (the Rodriguez family) discovered the issue when they lost water service and could not locate a shutoff at the street. The shutoff was found at the apartments, but it had been paved over.
- The city's engineers obtained quotes for correcting the connection, which initially ranged from \$18,000 to \$22,000. Now, with upcoming work in the area, the estimated cost is lower (\$7,000–\$11,000) if done as part of the larger project.
- The Rodriguez family also owns several adjacent, buildable lots and requested the city consider installing an 8-inch water line stub for potential future development.
- The proposed agreement is for a 50/50 cost split between the city and the property owner for correcting the water service line connection, while the owner would pay 100% of the cost for the development stub.

- Council members asked about the history of the improper connection, whether the city had approved it, and if similar situations had occurred elsewhere. Staff noted that while unusual, there have been other odd connections in the city, but this case is unique.

Selection of a Parking Consultant for Support of the Advisory Parking Improvements Task Force, Parking Study, and Solutions:

The city received three proposals in response to its RFP for a parking study and consulting services to support the advisory parking improvements task force.

- After reviewing proposals and conducting interviews, city staff and council members recommended Walker Consultants, who partnered with Fleis & VandenBrink (the city's longtime engineers), for their expertise and collaborative approach.
- Walker Consultants is recognized as an industry leader, with extensive experience in Michigan and nationwide. Their approach includes a comprehensive inventory of parking, utilization studies during both peak and off-peak seasons, and robust community and stakeholder engagement.
- The project will provide a menu of options and phased recommendations, focusing on practical solutions before considering expensive infrastructure like parking structures.
- Council members highlighted the importance of Walker's experience, the value of partnering with local engineers, and the need for a data-driven, community-informed process.
- Cost was discussed, with Walker Consultants, reducing their original proposal by about \$22,000 after discussions with the city.
- Questions were raised about deliverables and ownership of work products.
- Council members emphasized the need to learn from past studies, include all relevant parking areas in the analysis, and ensure the process is transparent and inclusive of both residents and business owners.
- The timeline for the final report is set for 2026 to allow for data collection during the busy summer season and thorough community engagement.

Artsy Bike Rack:

CVB Director Lisa Mize explained that funding for the artsy bike rack comes from a post-COVID grant awarded to the Michigan Association of CVBs, which also funded other local projects.

- The bike rack project was developed in collaboration with the local high school's industrial arts class, led by teacher Vince Heyser. Students submitted various designs, and the "palette" design was selected for its connection to the city's art heritage and branding as the "Art Coast of Michigan." The bike rack will be constructed at the high school.
- The chosen design is colorful, shaped like an artist's palette, and will be powder-coated in multiple colors. The student designer is Tessa Knapp.
- The intended location is Village Square Park, across from the playground.
- Council members expressed enthusiasm for the project, praising its creativity, community involvement, and the positive impact of Lisa Mize's work.

Oval Beach Season Recap:

Treasurer Nicole Bredeweg presented financial data for the 2025 season (Memorial Day through Labor Day).

- Expenses included an estimated bathroom cost for accuracy.
- The concession stand profit (\$19,000+) compared to the previous year (\$608).

DPW Superintendent Scott Herbert presented operations recap for the 2025 season.

- Herbert hired an experienced staff, especially returning manager Linda Boltman and concession lead Lexi Bosch.
- Operationally, the beach benefited from good weather, experienced returning staff, and improved cleanliness and maintenance. Public Works handled regular grooming, sand removal, and infrastructure upkeep.

- Challenges included staffing fluctuations, the need for consistent beach management, and technical issues with phone and credit card lines. The city is working to bring fiber internet to the beach for future improvements.
- There was discussion about the impact of beach management responsibilities on the Department of Public Works (DPW) and the potential benefits of leasing out the concession stand to reduce staff workload and allow DPW to focus on core tasks.
- Council members expressed appreciation for the staff's efforts, discussed the age and condition of concession facilities, and suggested a broader strategic review of Oval Beach operations and infrastructure.
- The recap highlighted the importance of Oval Beach as a community asset, the need for ongoing investment in facilities, and the value of experienced, consistent management for continued success.

Revenue/Expenses through 1st Quarter:

Treasurer Nicole Bredeweg presented the city's financial status for the first quarter, noting that most items are on track for this point in the year.

- Tax revenues have come in at 95–98%, and delinquent tax bills have been sent out, with some payments already received.
- Some variances were noted, such as higher telephone expenses due to new phones for city offices and the DPW, and a significant repair/capital outlay for public works.

Investment Update

Nikki reported that the city's investments are diversified across multiple banks and financial products to maximize safety and comply with FDIC insurance limits (\$250,000 per institution).

- The city currently holds certificates of deposit (CDs) at nine different institutions, a practice inherited from previous management and maintained for diversification and insurance purposes.
- Some funds are also placed in "First Class" accounts and a treasury bill to further diversify and optimize returns.
- Nikki is actively managing account balances to avoid exceeding FDIC limits, moving funds as CDs mature, and considering shifting more funds into First Class accounts if needed.
- The city is limited by state laws regarding where municipal funds can be invested, which restricts some investment options.
- Ryan Cummins emphasized that the city has built up strong fund balances and is investing those funds safely while preparing for significant upcoming capital projects (e.g., Maple Street, new bathrooms, Blue Star Trail). The larger budget this year reflects these planned projects, and the city is focused on using its savings for community improvements while maintaining financial security.

National Geographic Location Release Form

City Manager Ryan Cummins explained that National Geographic, in partnership with Pure Michigan, requested permission to film footage at Mount Baldhead for an upcoming project.

- The release form, reviewed by city legal counsel, includes standard provisions: National Geographic/Disney will indemnify the city against negligence or misconduct, return the property in its original condition, and will not require exclusive use or city services.
- National Geographic will retain all rights to the footage and images, and the city is restricted from publicizing the filming without their permission.

Use of Chalk on Sidewalk

The council discussed whether to regulate or prohibit the use of chalk on city sidewalks.

- Legal counsel explained that sidewalk chalking is a form of expression protected by the First Amendment, but the city could regulate it through content-neutral policies if desired. The current city code does not specifically address chalking.
- Three policy options were outlined: (1) do not regulate chalking, (2) prohibit it outright, or (3) implement a permitting scheme.

- Council members shared a range of perspectives:
 - Some expressed concerns about the aesthetics and potential for increased or disruptive chalking, but did not want to infringe on free speech or create administrative burdens.
 - Others emphasized the importance of First Amendment rights and the tradition of children and artists using chalk for positive expression.
 - There was discussion about the difference between spontaneous, individual chalking and organized events, and whether planned events should require notification or approval.
 - Some council members noted the potential for controversial or counter-messages and the need to be prepared for all viewpoints.
- No changes to ordinances or enforcement were recommended at this time.

Public Comments:

Jane Dickie commented on sidewalk chalking.

Bobbie Gaunt commented on the council meeting.

Closed Session:

Motion by Stanton, second by Muncey to enter into closed session pursuant to 15.243(h) to discuss material exempt from public discussion and disclosure under 16 USC 470hh. Via roll call vote, motion carried 5-0.

Council entered closed session at 6:30 p.m.

Motion by Gardner, second by Muncey to enter open session. Via roll call vote, motion carried 5-0.

Council entered open session at 7:14 p.m.

Council Comments:

Councilmember Russ Gardner expressed excitement about the upcoming Flower World installation and its kickoff event. He shared that the Singapore Yacht Club had inquired about Cook Park's deed restrictions, specifically whether development was allowed. Gardner clarified to the Yacht Club that the Flower World installation is temporary and will be removed in March of the following year. He emphasized the importance of clear communication with neighbors and community members regarding the temporary nature of such projects and thanked the city manager for assistance in addressing the inquiry.

Mayor Pro-Tem Lauren Stanton did not have comment.

Councilmember Gregory Muncey thanked the Department of Public Works (DPW) staff for their help with decorating the town for fall, including distributing straw bales, corn, and signage. He also thanked the businesses and volunteers who contributed materials and time, specifically mentioning Quaint Cottages, Better Homes and Gardens, Jim Babcock, Leah Root, and other community members. Muncey shared that he enjoyed his traditional lunch with the DPW crew after the decorating event. He expressed excitement for the upcoming Flower World exhibit.

Councilmember Joe Clark clarified that his earlier comments about parking were not intended to suggest that previous councils had done nothing about the issue. He expressed respect for past councils and noted that, after serving on the council himself, his respect for their work has only increased and thanked Councilmember Gardner for calling him out. Clark emphasized that parking is a recurring challenge for the city and that the current opportunity to develop a comprehensive plan could benefit both current and future councils.

Adjournment:

*Motion by Dean, second by Muncey to adjourn the meeting. Upon voice vote, motion carried 6-0.
Mayor Pro-Tem Stanton adjourned the meeting at 4:34 p.m.*

Respectfully Submitted

Jamie Wolters, City Clerk