



PARKS AND PUBLIC WORKS COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES

June 25, 2024

The Parks and Public Works Committee met for a Committee Meeting at 10:00 a.m.

Saugatuck City Hall

102 Butler St., Saugatuck, MI 49453.

Call to Order:

The meeting was called to order by Chair Baldwin at 10:00 a.m.

Attendance:

Present: Chair Baldwin, Committee members Charak, Kimble, Hoffman, Johnson, Roche.

Absent: Committee member Kimble.

Others Present: City Manager Cummins, DPW Superintendent Herbert, Deputy Clerk Williams.

Approval of Agenda:

Motion by Hoffman, second by Charak, to approve the agenda for June 25, 2024. Via voice vote, motion carried 4-0.

Approval of Minutes:

Motion by Johnson, second by Charak to approve the May 28, 2024, regular meeting minutes as presented. Via voice vote, motion carried 4-0.

Public Comments (agenda items only): None.

Review/Discussion:

A. Department of Public Works Updates:

DPW Superintendent Herbert provided updates on road maintenance and construction projects in the City including asphalt patching on Maple Street and the roundabout construction. Baldwin asked for an update on the roundabout construction, and Herbert expects it to be completed towards the end of July. They are providing quite a bit of assistance with special events and a large portion of their energy is going towards Oval Beach.

B. Study Group Updates:

1. Invasive Species:

Committee member Chark said that he didn't have much of an update as it is summer and there is really not much that they are taking care of right now. Baldwin said that milfoil treatment took place a few weeks ago, which was round one of two. Roche asked if the video for the DNR presentation on invasive species that was presented to the Planning Commission was available. She is meeting with the principal of the middle school about a fundraiser/service project for the fall and the eighth graders would love to help with invasive species again. She wanted to ensure she was working with the right entities so she could reach out to see if they would be interested. City Manager Cummins said that the Department of Environment Great Lakes and Energy (EGLE) presented some potential grant opportunities to the Planning Commission through one of their programs for things such as vegetation and habitat restoration. He said that he put the Mount Baldy area on their radar but said that their application period doesn't open until the fall. He doesn't know if there is the continued invasives issue, but more of since they created invasives, eight to ten years ago, that it's the erosion issues and lack of success in restoring vegetation that has been a concern. It is on the Rotary Club's radar, and they have expressed some interest in raising funds to potentially help them gather dollars to help restore that area and he is glad to hear that others may be able to help out too. Hoffman added that they know what invasive species that they have now but questioned whether they could take a more proactive approach and contact Michigan State and see what invasive species will look like five years from now and if there are things happening outside of the community that are coming their way that they can get ahead of. He thinks it is better to be prepared and the Committee agreed. Roche added that she is part of the Michigan State extension through the Master Gardener program and is happy to reach out to them because that is something that they specifically work on in this area.

Cummins said that there are long term challenges with invasives, and they continue to be threats. There was a lot of treatment done last year with the conservation district leading that process, but it is not a forever treatment, and it will be ongoing for a few years. You have to get right back to it and stay on it. Herbert agreed and said that prevention has to be the goal in terms of invasives. They are widening the shoulders and excavating for paving on Bridge Street, and it is riddled with Japanese Knotweed. He said that when the material is moved you introduce it to wherever it's deposited. They are lucky to have an educated Public Works staff in the City of Saugatuck who are familiar with invasives and while they are doing their brush and leaf collection, they can see some of these things and identify them where they can potentially manage it better when they dispose of the materials.

2. Airport Property:

City Manager Cummins says that the City Council approved moving forward with the project contingent upon receiving donated funds, and the donors have sent the funds. He has been in touch with the Outdoor Discovery Center to discuss the next steps, including the conservation easement, and has received maps from EGLE indicating potential wetland and a

regulated floodplain areas on the property. Chair Baldwin emphasized the importance of protecting the watershed and wetlands. Cummins updated the committee on testing done at the landfill property and shared the engineering proposal with the township to evaluate the landfill for trails. Cummins is hoping to formalize an agreement or something that at least outlines the responsibilities and then move that forward, but he wanted to let everyone know it is still being worked on. Baldwin emphasized the importance of natural beauty and potential economic benefits of the trail expansion.

Committee member Charak discussed bird migration patterns and species diversity in the area. He identified various bird species in a flyaway, including woodpeckers, cranes, and kinglets. Charak used a report from the Outdoor Discovery Network to highlight the carbon sink potential of this large track of forest with over 20,000 metric tons of carbon stored and a social cost of \$900,000 annually. He said that someone spoke at a Council Workshop or the Planning Commission meeting and said that once you remove the money aspect out of it, it has a quality of life aspect that you gain from the property.

3. Blue Star Multimodal Path (Lake Street):

City Manager Cummins said that C2AE is still planning on working through some environmental approvals that are required, still planning on a fall bidding schedule, to get bids and begin the work in winter-spring. The Historic District Commission reviewed the intersection improvements at the Lake and Blue Star intersection that you had previously recommended to City Council and Council moved forward and the Historic District Commission approved those. They are still finalizing some of the spec details related to that, but they have the intersection laid out and consistent with the rendering that Fleis & VandenBrink had previously done, and then the pallet sign renderings that you reviewed. They did apply for that grant opportunity that Roche brought forward, and he appreciates that. He said that it is getting a little competitive as there is limited amount of grant money and a lot of folks that are applying, but Cummins said they are confident in their application. He is hoping that the grant will pay for the traffic signal with that piece. They also want to finalize some of the delineation specs as you go over the bridge and the wave, the new features that you reviewed at the last meeting are still being looked at as well.

4. Village Square:

DPW Superintendent Herbert said that the park project is almost complete, with only minor tasks remaining of pouring concrete pads, replacing broken sections of sidewalk, laying sod, planting trees, and installing signs. The Committee discussed installation of a shield to prevent people from climbing on top of the slide, which was previously installed without a shield. The Committee discussed the recent ribbon-cutting ceremony, and Baldwin mentioned the need for more celebratory events.

5. Park Street & Mount Baldhead Improvements & AT&T Status:

Committee Member Johnson said there wasn't much new, but there is lots of development happening, and lots of utility and electrical poles going up. She discussed the maintenance for the History Museum and suggested that they reach out to the museum to ask for help in keeping it looking nice. Herbert mentioned that their lease agreement states that they're responsible for the maintenance.

City Manager Cummins said that he heard from Consumers Power recently and they are still planning on burying the power lines in the northern section of Park Street and they are moving ahead and will be starting soon. City Council did approve next fiscal year's budget, which includes a further evaluation of Park Street and making it more pedestrian friendly and taking that next step in studies. Cummins mentioned that he had some people reach out this morning and say that the Mount Baldhead steps need some work. DPW is aware and will take care of the repairs. Cummins said that AT&T continues working to try to get through the State Historic Preservation Office approvals and he has a meeting scheduled at the end of the week for some additional follow-up questions to help their consultants prepare a response.

6. Maple Street:

Cummins said that Joe asked him to indicate that they had an engineering proposal to move to the next steps and City Council recently approved moving forward with engineering work to get that two and a half million-dollar project underway. It is going to be a long project with several steps involved and that work is kicking off. He hopes that the new roundabout takes some of the pressure off of the construction on Maple Street.

Baldwin raised concerns about lack of policy for street easements and the maintenance of city property, including the installation of brick pavers and drainage issues. She said that the topic was not on the agenda but wanted to mention it for further discussion at an upcoming meeting. The Committee debated on who should be responsible for the maintaining city property between DPW and private property owners. They discussed potential uniformity and policy implications for streetscapes and noted that maintenance and repair of different materials is a concern in the Historic District.

C. Update on Saugatuck Harbor Natural Area:

Committee member Roche discussed an endowment fund for the Saugatuck Harbor Natural Area that was created in 2010 but has not been updated since. They are still trying to track down all of the endowers were that purchased the property. The property is fully under conservation and managed by the Land Conservancy of Michigan. They found out about the endowment in December of 2023, while at a separate meeting. The fund is held by the Community Foundation of Holland & Zeeland and initially started with \$450,000 and has now reached almost \$790,000. There was a management plan that was formed at the time that the fund started and is out of compliance and needs to be updated every five years. It was never re-initiated in terms of updating it and handing it over to the Community Foundation so that they can continue to withdraw funds. Prior Councils have done a little bit of work on the land through the last

withdrawal date in 2015. They have done a great job stewarding the money in this account. They have just under \$200,000 that is available at this point to use on that particular piece of property. Roche said that she and Baldwin had a phone call with Colleen Hill who is the one that has been stewarding the money at the Community Foundation. To their understanding, there is no known end date or penalty for them being non-compliant. She says that the plan is beautifully written, and they have been trying to track down community members so that they can give them more information about it. The management plan also states that there needs to be a board to manage this and that it very loosely states what they would like the makeup of the board to be. Baldwin used staff at City Hall to help track down an ordinance that was put in place back in 2012 when City Council signed off on it and that one states that there does need to be a board. They are trying to go through City records and go further back and figure out exactly who was a part of that board because right now they don't have any information on that. They did find old minutes from City Council showing who approved the initial plan but not the actual board that wrote the plan. Around the same time the land transferred to the City, the City Manager was working on the language to give the city a little more flexibility in the future if they wanted to make some changes as it related to the need for a board. They were able to find an email that said that the Land Conservancy was agreeable to that, and we have not been able to find where the board dropped off and why. Instead of our IT department doing some of our email searches for FOIA's, the City Clerk now has that capability. He said that he has asked her to search back to certain terms to see if there's any more clues as it relates to that. If they can't find any more clues there, then they will have to have their legal review what they need to do to make sure they are in compliance going forward and form a new board or designate DPW or the City Council or whoever that is going to be, have a board and get the plan updated so they can access the grant. Roche said that she and Baldwin have taken a stab at updating the management plan just to what they would say are things that are the priorities moving forward. Obviously, they would hand that off the whoever becomes part of this board. Johnson questioned where the management plan was and whether they would be able to read the plan, and Roche said that they will email it to them. She said in the meantime, they have been putting feelers out to the community. They met with the Coastal Alliance because they work with a lot of people in the area. There are two scientists that have done a lot of work in the critical dune area, one from Hope College and another from Western Michigan College, and they have been in contact with them to see what kind of information they can get from them. Everything is out of date as far as invasive species, endangered, and at risk where all done back in 2010-2012, and will need to be redone because it has not been maintained based on the fact that they have been out of compliance.

Roche said there is another person in this group, Lynn, who was the Midwest Director for the National Parks Conservation. She has a lot of contacts with grant writers and people that are involved in conservation work. There are a lot of state and federal funds, that she believes could potentially tap into beyond what is already in the endowment for this whole area and work collaboratively with Holland and all the way down the coast. Lynn is compiling that information and she just wanted to mention it to the committee as it is a project that they need to continue moving forward to make sure they are complying with what needs to be done at City Hall. They

can also reach out to some of the other municipalities along the lake and look at some bigger funds, bigger projects that they can really move it forward in terms of taking care of that land.

D. Michigan Green Communities:

Committee Member Roche had a small presentation for the committee on the Michigan Green Communities program which provides sustainability benchmarks and free technical assistance for small communities like Saugatuck. The program offers collaboration with DPW and City hall with the goal of enhancing Michigan's livability and economic competitiveness. She explained how the program works, including categories and points system. The program offers free resources to municipalities that reach silver, gold, and platinum levels. Baldwin asked about the time and effort required for council to consider the program and mentioned Grand Haven as an example. Cummins explained that in Grand Haven, they have a separate sustainability and energy committee that is there to advise the City Manager, not the City Council directly. Grand Haven has been a part of the program for 2-3 years and moved from bronze to silver status and they are very happy with the progress. He suggested involving DPW Superintendent Herbert in reducing the carbon footprint. The committee member discussed potential costs and partnership for the initiative.

E. Recycling Bin Pilot:

DPW Superintendent Herbert discussed the new recycling bin pilot program implementation. He talked about contamination rates and the importance of strategically placing the recycling bins. Educational pieces on receptacles were considered but ultimately decided against, with a focus on simply getting them out and evaluating their effectiveness. He mentioned challenges with identifying and enforcing proper disposal methods. The committee discussed the use of recycled materials in construction projects, with a focus on sustainability and environmental impact.

F. Oval Beach:

The Allegan County Health Department notified beach management and staff of high E. Coli reading on Tuesday, June 18th, advising no swimming or body contact. Additional testing was conducted on Thursday June 20th, and on Friday, June 21st, the health department lifted the advisory.

Review Next Steps: Chair Baldwin requested to remove this item from the agenda.

Public Comments (Limit 3 mins): None.

Correspondence: None.

Member Closing Comments:

- Johnson – Johnson said that she is very impressed by Kelly and her research and thanked her for everything she has been working on. She is proud of the steps that they have taken, the steps they have succeeded in, and the steps they will continue to move forward with.

- Charak – Charak thanked the guys that pick up the garbage in town. He thinks that the Committee has gotten some work done and he thanked Kelly for the work that she has done.
- Hoffman – Hoffman said that he will get with Charak and start looking into invasive species.
- Roche – Roche thanked the Department of Public Works and Superintendent Scott Herbert for all that his team is doing. She is really excited about the recycling, said that it has been a long time coming. She thinks that the ribbon cutting for the playground grand opening was a joyful day. She has received feedback from members of the community, and they are thrilled and having fun. She wanted to reiterate all of the work that has gone into the airport property with the different processes that were followed in order for that to be where it is with Council today. She said that all of the work and the processes were followed properly. Roche highlighted the importance of maintaining the 170 acres of green space, which is a unique and special piece of land.
- Chair Baldwin – Baldwin says that there are creators in this world and there are destroyers, and the Committee has work to do at the airport property. It's hard when you hear the pushback, and she says that it is easy to focus on the negatives but encourages persistence in the face of challenges. She says that everything that has happened, someone had to bust their butt to make sure it happens, and it came through the right way. She told the Committee when they get discouraged, just remember everything that has come before them and remember that they are here to build something.

Adjournment:

Motion by Charak, second by Roche, to approve adjournment of the meeting. Via voice vote, motion carried 4-0. Chair Baldwin adjourned at 11:14 a.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Sara Williams, City Deputy Clerk & DPW Administrative Assistant