



CITY COUNCIL REGULAR MEETING October 14, 2025

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 Mayor Anderson at 6:30 p.m.

Attendance:

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

Absent: Dean.

Motion by Peterson, second by Clark to approve Dean's absence. Via voice vote, motion carried 5-0.

Stanton entered meeting at 6:36 p.m.

Others Present: City Manager Cummins, Attorney Witte, Zoning Director Moore and Clerk Wolters.

Mayor's Comments:

Mayor Anderson highlighted the success of the Flower World Celebration, praised the art and artists, and commended the strong collaboration within the community—recognizing the roles of the SCA, Convention and Visitors Bureau, and local participants. She noted the great turnout, the positive atmosphere during the early shoulder season, and expressed pride in the community's efforts.

City Manager Comments:

City Manager Ryan Cummins reported on the new restroom project at Mount Baldhead. The plumbing inspections passed, the floor has been poured, the road patched, and masonry work is starting. The project is on schedule, with substantial completion planned by late November/early December and final tasks in the spring. Cummins discussed the positive impact of the new state budget, highlighting increases in local road funding. The city will receive approximately \$64,900 more for roads this fiscal year - 33.4% increase, with larger increases expected in later years. He also noted significant increases in transit funding, which will help the local interurban transit system. He updated the council on the ongoing AT&T agreement related to city infrastructure. AT&T is still waiting for final federal approvals before the city can finalize the agreement. Cummins addressed ongoing efforts to support a homeless individual residing in Wick's Park. There have been difficulties with communication due to the individual's stolen phone, but the city is coordinating with case workers to provide support and explore permanent housing options.

Agenda Changes:

Motion by Peterson, second by Stanton to change the agenda to go into a closed session under agenda item #16. Via roll call vote, motion carried 6.0.

Guest Speakers: None.

Public Comment on Agenda Item Only: None.

Consent Agenda:

- A. Approval of City Council Workshop Meeting Minutes for October 8, 2025.
- B. Approval of City Council Closed Session Minutes for October 8, 2025.
- C. National Geographic Location Release Form.
- D. Palette Sign Design for Artsy Bike Rack.
- E. Library Board Appointment – Susan Blose with a term ending October 1, 2029.

Motion by Muncey, second by Clark to pass the consent agenda as listed in the October 14, 2025, meeting agenda. Via roll call vote, motion carried 6-0.

Staff Reports, Boards, Commissions & Committees:

Reports provided by city staff and board, commission & committee members.

Fire District Administration:

Dan Fox updated the council on the Fire District's activities over the past month, including the use of a live fire training facility built from shipping containers in cooperation with surrounding departments. This facility provides valuable and unique fire training resources for the area. Incident data was reviewed. He highlighted recent notable incidents, including an exploding E-bike battery, which caused a dumpster fire and could have been much worse if indoors. The report discussed fire risks from lithium batteries and stressed public awareness about safe charging/storage. He described a recent fire/rescue operation involving a boat taking on water, requiring a coordinated emergency response by the Saugatuck Fire District, Coast Guard, and others; this incident showed the importance and value of the district's fire and rescue vessels. He noted thanks to the Saugatuck Township Board for approving issuance of \$5.0 million in secured bonds to fund the STFD second station. He noted the Douglas DPW has fabricated a trailer to organize their crowd-control barricades.

Interurban Board:

Councilmember Muncey reported that the next board meeting is on the 21st. He highlighted record-breaking ridership for August (16,352 riders), including increased usage from Laketown (609 riders) and Fennville (321 riders), crediting recent community expansions. The Interurban is piloting a new software program, which will eventually include a rider app for tracking buses. Drivers and users are responding positively to the pilot, and after reviewing, the board will decide whether to fully purchase the new system. Preparations are underway for building expansion, with plans to add a new restroom and enlarge the garage for needed maintenance space. He mentioned ongoing communication with board members and community members, reflecting enthusiasm about transit's role and future improvements.

Kalamazoo Lake Sewer & Water Authority:

Councilmember Clark noted a job posting for a new general manager role was recently approved and should already be posted, to help address challenges from the previous manager's departure. The authority is running a consistent annual surplus of more than 10%. Although there were difficulties finding historical budget details, a review showed that previous budgets included some conservatism. Some capital expenses will not be needed so there's flexibility in the budget. No deferred projects are expected to impact this year's results. The financial position is strong for the current fiscal year, and a more detailed report will be available after the next regular meeting.

Kalamazoo Lake Harbor Authority: None.

Zoning Board of Appeals: None.

Historic District Commission:

Councilmember Gardner noted the Commission met on October 2nd and reviewed several administrative approvals, with main discussion focused on 439 Butler Street. The owners proposed replacing deteriorated 100-year-old tile roof caps with pressure-treated lumber and flashing. However, the commission cited the ordinance requiring "like-for-like" material replacement for historical renovations. The next Historic District Commission meeting is scheduled for November 6th at 6pm.

Planning Commission:

Councilmember Clark informed Council that the next meeting is scheduled for Thursday, and they will be discussing survey results and open house feedback. He thanked everyone who showed up for the open house, it was a really good turnout.

Parks & Public Works Committee:

Mayor Pro-Tem Lauren Stanton participated in a group tour with the Parks and Public Works Committee and others involved in the Kalamazoo River Greenway project, touring the Macatawa area Greenway. They looked at rain gardens filtering stormwater in urban and rural areas and discussed implementing similar ideas locally. Stanton mentioned a grant that will help homeowners create rain gardens on their properties to reduce invasive species in Kalamazoo Lake. She celebrated the Convention and Visitors Bureau's support for a new public art installation in Cook Park—currently temporary, offering off-season visual interest. She promoted the upcoming Dark Sky event at Oval Beach on October 21, an event focusing on "Dark Sky" community goals. The next Parks and Public Works meeting was scheduled for October 28 at 10am.

Tri-Community Non-Motorized Trail Study Committee:

City Manager Cummins noted The Friends of the Blue Star Trail recently held a successful "Harvest Ride," raising \$50,000 for the trail project. Meetings were held with MDOT (Michigan Department of Transportation) and tribal nations to discuss findings from historical records and next steps in the trail's development. Upcoming work includes required archaeological and survey work along the proposed trail route, in coordination with MDOT and the tribes. The goal is to determine requirements, scope the necessary survey work, and move forward with formal approvals and implementation.

Water Systems Operations Contract Advisory Committee:

Councilmember Gardner noted the next meeting is this coming Thursday.

Wildlife Management Committee: None.

Approval of Accounts Payable:

Motion by Muncey, second by Peterson to approve the accounts payable in the amount of \$398,383.92. Via roll call vote, motion carried 6-0.

Public Hearing: None.

Unfinished Business: None.

New Business:**A. Bid Award for Road and Parking Lot Repairs:**

Motion by Gardner, second by Peterson, to approve award to A-1 Asphalt Inc. in the amount of \$57,208.10 for asphalt repairs with a total project cost of \$67,000 and to allow the Mayor and City Clerk to sign associated contracts. Upon roll call vote, the motion carried 6-0.

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

Motion by Stanton, second by Muncey, to approve the proposal from Walker Consultants for consulting services to conduct a parking study and recommend solutions, in the amount of \$84,425. Upon roll call vote, the motion carried 6-0.

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

Motion by Muncey, second by Peterson, to approve the cost sharing agreement with Victor Rodriguez for a water service line replacement at 720 North Maple Street and installation of 8" water main stub. Via roll call vote, motion carried 6-0.

Public Comment:

Jan Cohen

Judith Schneider

Jerry Walsh

Jennifer Lamp

Closed Session:

Motion by Stanton, second by Peterson to go into closed session in accordance with MCL 15.26 8d, to consider the purchase or lease of real property. Via roll call vote, motion carried 6-0.

Council entered closed session at 8:11 p.m.

Motion by Gardner, second by Stanton to go back into open session. Via roll call vote, motion carried 6-0.

Council entered open session at 8:43 p.m.

Correspondence:

ODC Network

Tom & Maureen Smith, Nancy Schmitt, Barry Spengler & Patricia Cleland, Philippe Quentel

Council Comments:

Councilmember Chris Peterson acknowledged that the city is facing two complex and emotional issues: homelessness and freedom of speech. She admitted that the council was unprepared to address these topics and stressed the need for proactive solutions rather than postponing difficult discussions. Peterson suggested holding a workshop to develop protocols and options—specifically for handling homelessness and park property issues, noting a “slippery slope” from chalking to more permanent forms of marking. She concluded by affirming the importance of responding directly to emerging community issues, then briefly referenced missing a previous meeting because her car was stolen, and expressed appreciation for the evening’s productive discussions.

Councilmember Russ Gardner expressed strong support for free speech but emphasized the city's responsibility to protect taxpayer-supported assets like sidewalks and public buildings. He referenced the city's ordinance against defacing or marring property and noted the need to clarify these terms as situations arise. Gardner suggested discussing how best to handle such issues in the future.

Councilmember Lauren Stanton highlighted the recent success of local community events, including Oktoberfest, Flower World, and the chili cook-off, and expressed appreciation for organizations working to improve natural spaces and waterways. She encouraged the community to prioritize in-person interactions and reduce reliance on social media, emphasizing that direct personal connections foster a healthier and more positive community atmosphere.

Councilmember Gregory Muncey addressed concerns from public commenters about a recent protest interaction. He apologized to Jan Cohen for any perceived intimidation and clarified that it was never his intent to silence or threaten anyone. Muncey described his longstanding positive involvement in the community and reiterated his support for freedom of speech. He invited open dialogue with those who felt uncomfortable and emphasized that respectful conversation can help resolve misunderstandings.

Councilmember Joe Clark echoed the sentiment of appreciating recent local events and strongly encouraged people to engage in in-person dialogue rather than airing differences on social media, which he described as toxic. He praised community organizations and staff, especially the Convention and Visitors Bureau, and thanked planning commissioners and staff for their efforts during the recent open house, emphasizing the value of positivity and hard work in the community.

Mayor Holly Anderson praised the planning commission for their open house and survey efforts.

She noted that after a recent council workshop, there was a consensus to leave the current chalking ordinance unchanged. Mayor Anderson encouraged community members to engage in respectful, one-on-one conversations, especially with those they might disagree with—highlighting the value of open-minded dialogue during challenging times. She concluded by calling for a motion to adjourn.

Adjournment:

Motion by Stanton second by Muncey to adjourn the meeting. Upon voice vote, motion carried 6-0. Mayor Anderson adjourned at 8:55 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted

Jamie Wolters, City Clerk