



CITY COUNCIL REGULAR MEETING
August 11, 2025

The City Council met to have a Regular Council Meeting at City Hall.
102 Butler St., Saugatuck, MI 49453.

The meeting was called to order by Mayor Anderson at 6:30 p.m.

Pledge of Allegiance.

Attendance:

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

Absent: None.

Others Present: City Manager Cummins, Deputy Clerk Williams.

Mayor's Comments:

Mayor Anderson shared that she had just returned from a 12-day trip to Whidbey Island near Seattle. She described visiting towns similar to Saugatuck and observing them with a new perspective due to her role in city government, paying attention to their infrastructure and businesses. Anderson expressed that, while those places were interesting, returning home made her appreciate Saugatuck even more, calling it "the coolest place" and stating how grateful she is to live here.

City Manager Comments:

City Manager Ryan Cummins welcomed Mayor Anderson back and shared that he would be providing highlights from his report rather than reading it in full.

- He recognized the Department of Public Works Department for their work on the Blue Star sign, noting that instead of just moving the sign, they repaired and improved it, including painting and adding wood filler, to ensure it looked good as an entrance to the City. He mentioned ongoing work on lighting, grass, and landscaping around the sign.
- He updated the council on the Blue Star Trail, mentioning that the Friends of the Blue Star Trail were holding a fundraiser that evening. He noted that there was an agenda item to extend a grant for the trail, as construction had not yet started. A tribal site assessment was scheduled for later in the month, and both he and Daniel DeFranco (Saugatuck Township Supervisor) were invited to attend, which he saw as a positive sign of the city's relationship with tribal partners.
- Cummins discussed the Park Street project, reminding the council that a grant application for pedestrian improvements had been submitted in December. The application had advanced to federal review, which was promising, though not a final decision. The grant would cover about half of the \$40,000 project cost.

- He reported on Village Square, saying he had met with a grant coordinator on site to review needs and was assured that the program also considered rehabilitation of existing facilities, not just new projects. He expected to hear initial scoring on the grant application in the next month or two.
- On the AT&T Lease, Cummins said negotiations had resumed, with AT&T now willing to provide the one-time capital contribution the council had requested. The city had sent a clean copy of the lease to AT&T and was awaiting their formal response.
- He announced that a new Director of Planning and Zoning, Grayson Moore, would start on September 2. Grayson comes from a consulting planning firm and has a master's in urban and regional planning from Wayne State University. Ryan praised the strong pool of candidates and expressed excitement for Grayson joining the team.
- Cummins noted that the planning and zoning department was busy with enforcement, permits, and short-term rentals, but he is managing until the new Director of Planning and Zoning starts.
- He discussed staff reports, explaining that the frequency of staff reports to council would be reduced from twice a month to once a month to free up staff time for other work. He will continue to provide the City Manager report every couple of weeks.
- He mentioned that applications for the parking improvements task force were still being accepted until the end of the week and encouraged council members to spread the word.
- Cummins concluded by saying he wanted to cover these updates publicly for those who might not read the meeting packet, as there had been a lot of progress on various projects.

Agenda Changes: None.

Guest Speakers: None.

Public Comment on Agenda Item Only: None.

Consent Agenda:

- A. Approval of Workshop Meeting Minutes for August 6, 2025.
- B. Resolution 250811-A Authorizing the Implementation of a Section 125 Premium Only Plan with Health Savings Account Feature.
- C. Resolution 250811-B Approving the Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund Agreement Amendment for the Blue Star Non-Motorized Trail.
- D. Special Event Application – Annual Sidewalk Sales.
- E. Special Event Application – Saugatuck Film Festival Signage Request.

Motion by Muncey, second by Stanton to pass the consent agenda for August 11, 2025. Via roll call vote, motion carried unanimously.

Staff Reports, Boards, Commissions & Committees:

The City Manager, Treasurer, Clerk, Director of Planning & Zoning, Department of Public Works, Police and Engineer submitted status reports on current activities since the last regular council meeting for their respective departments.

Fire District Administration:

Dan fox reported on the fire district's recent activities. He described a recent challenging fire at Darling Ingredients that required multiple departments and resulted in several firefighters being hospitalized

(all released). He discussed ongoing board discussions about funding the South Station project, noting the fire district lacks bonding authority and is working with Saugatuck Township, which does have it. Fox reviewed recent fire and EMS statistics, highlighting high call volumes and stable response times. He explained the types of incidents handled, including medical calls and cardiac arrests, and shared data on personnel activity. Dan also addressed the challenges of organizing National Night Out, citing timing conflicts and the need for a sponsor, and noted the fire district's efforts to reduce special event costs.

Interurban Board:

Councilmember Gregory Muncey reported that the next Interurban Board meeting would be on August 19 and noted ongoing increases in ridership. He emphasized persistent parking challenges in town, pointing out that some large parking lots are never full, suggesting underused parking resources. Muncey also mentioned that building projects are underway and that recent increases in parking rates on Friday and Saturday nights have not received any backlash. He highlighted the value and popularity of the Interurban service, referencing a recent article about its high usage and the need for continued funding or alternative solutions to maintain the service.

Kalamazoo Lake Sewer & Water Authority:

Councilmember Joe Clark reported that the city had revert to using Police and one of their licensed applicants to operate the plant after a previously identified candidate declined the role. There was a brief period when the plant operated without a licensed operator, which will be disclosed to the public in the next billing cycle. Clark noted that this situation is not unusual and there are no expected penalties, but there will be increased costs due to hiring Police for operations. The financial impact is not yet fully known, but it should not significantly affect the operating budget.

Kalamazoo Lake Harbor Authority:

Councilmember Chris Peterson's comments centered on whether the authority is still needed now that Douglas has its own harbor authority. City Manager Cummins explained that the original purpose was to funnel money, but this function may no longer be necessary. The group agreed it is a topic for future consideration, as the authority has not been actively used for its intended purpose.

Zoning Board of Appeals: None.

Historic District Commission:

Councilmember Russ Gardner reported that the Historic District Commission held a special session on July 31 to review a modified proposal for 234 Spear Street, which was quickly approved by the commission. He expressed satisfaction with the applicant's response to previous concerns and noted that the next meeting scheduled is on September 4.

Planning Commission: None.

Parks & Public Works Committee:

Mayor Pro-Tem Stanton reported that the Parks and Public Works Committee had not met since the last City Council meeting, so there were no new updates. She did mention that Saugatuck Wilds received positive media coverage, including an article in MLive and a story by Spectrum News, which brought additional positive attention to the park.

Tri-Community Non-Motorized Trail Study Committee:

The discussion on the Tri-Community Non-Motorized Trail Study Committee was brief. Holly Anderson noted that Ryan Cummins had already covered most updates related to the committee in his City Manager comments at the beginning of the meeting.

Water Systems Operations Contract Advisory Committee: None.

Wildlife Management Committee:

The discussion on the Wildlife Management Committee focused on an ordinance amendment to address deer management in town. Councilmember Scott Dean discussed the need for organized hunts to reduce the deer population and clarified that the new ordinance would allow for culling and, under certain conditions, archery hunting by private landowners with council approval. Councilmembers emphasized the importance of clear communication with the public about any actions taken and expressed appreciation for the committee's thorough work on this complex issue.

Approval of Accounts Payable:

Motion by Clark, second by Peterson to approve the accounts payable in the amount of \$398,901.06. Via roll call vote, motion carried unanimously.

Public Hearing: None.

Unfinished Business: None.

New Business:Holiday Lighting:

The discussion on holiday lighting focused on renewing a three-year contract with Chips Ground Cover for downtown holiday lights and expanding lighting to additional areas, specifically Water Street (from Culver to Mary) and Hoffman Street (from Water to Butler). The council reviewed costs for the renewal and expansion, discussed options for electrical work, and considered future possibilities for further expansion. They also talked about funding, including the potential for community fundraising and support from the Convention and Visitors Bureau.

Motion by Stanton, second by Muncey, to approve a three-year contract renewal with Chips Groundcover for holiday lighting with a display similar to previous seasons plus additional lighting added to Water Street from Culver Street to Mary Street and Hoffman Street from Water Street to Butler Street. Via roll call vote, motion carried unanimously.

Ordinance No. 250811-A: Amendment to City Code: An ordinance to amend the City of Saugatuck's Code of Ordinances, Chapter 135, to revise and update the City's regulations of weapons to align with applicable law and to provide an exception for the discharge of firearms within City limits as part of a City-sanctioned deer cull, to protect the public health, safety, and welfare.

The discussion on Ordinance No. 250811-A centered on amending the city code to update weapons regulations, specifically to address deer management. Council members expressed support for the ordinance, noting it allows for organized hunts to reduce the deer population and creates a narrow pathway for archery hunting by private landowners with Council approval. They emphasized the need for clear public communication about any actions taken and recognized the complexity of the issue. City Council appreciates the work the Wildlife Management Committee has done.

Motion by Dean, second by Peterson, to approve Ordinance No. 250811-A to amend Chapter

135 of the City Code. Via roll call vote, motion carried unanimously.

Public Comment: None.

Correspondance:

- A. Dan Fox
- B. Keith Ferguson
- C. Rakesh Madhava
- D. Barbara Muller
- E. Library Board of Trustees Notice for Applicants

Council Comments:

Councilmember Peterson commented on how busy the town has been, praised the Department of Public Works for their efforts, and noted the positive atmosphere with many happy people and families downtown. She remarked that August has been busier than usual, with more children around even though school has started for some, and expressed gratitude for living in such a vibrant community.

Councilmember Gardner emphasized the importance of formally responding to correspondence from Rakesh Madhava regarding short-term rental regulations, expressing concern that the current penalty (loss of license) seems disproportionate. He also mentioned community interest in adding shuffleboard courts near the tennis courts at Village Square, recalling their historical popularity and noting some residents have already offered funding. Additionally, he clarified a misconception that the entire Village Square would be fenced in ensuring the public that this is not the case.

Mayor Pro-Tem Stanton began by expressing condolences for the sudden passing of Brad Moorner, a local business owner, and offered support to his family. She also praised the ongoing “Saugatuck on Sundays” series for featuring council members, looked forward to upcoming sidewalk sales, and noted how busy and lively the town remains, with outdoor dining spots full despite the hot weather.

Councilmember Dean commented on how great it is to see the town busy and families and visitors echoing earlier remarks about the community’s family-friendly atmosphere. He highlighted a family playing croquet at the playground as an example of this. Dean also expressed strong support for city staff, acknowledging their hard work and the challenges they face, and assured them of his full backing.

Councilmember Muncey expressed condolences to Melanie Moorner and her family following her husband Brad’s passing, sharing that she had gotten to know them and appreciated their contributions to the community. He also invited Mayor Anderson and other council members to appear on his upcoming Sunday show, and humorously commented on the busy August season in Saugatuck, encouraging everyone to embrace it as a part of local life.

Councilmember Clark thanked Councilmember Muncey for inviting him to the show and for making him feel comfortable despite some stage fright. He also shared a positive story about attending a neighborhood seafood boil hosted by local residents, highlighting the strong sense of community and how much everyone enjoyed the event.

Mayor Anderson reflected on the strong sense of community in Saugatuck, sharing her appreciation for how neighbors know and support each other. She expressed pride and gratitude for the city staff, describing herself as fiercely protective of them and commending their dedication and representation of the city. She concluded by thanking the staff and expressing how lucky the community is to have them.

Adjournment:

Motion by Muncey second by Dean to adjourn the meeting. Upon voice vote, motion carried unanimously. Mayor Anderson adjourned at 7:31 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted

Sara Williams, Deputy Clerk