



Historic District Commission

Meeting Minutes

June 4, 2026, at 6:00 P.M.

Saugatuck City Hall, 102 Butler St, Saugatuck, MI 49453

1. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 6:00 p.m. by Chair Straker.

2. Roll Call

Members Present: Baldwin, Dean, Lampen, Root (arrived at 6:03pm), Paterson, & Straker

Members Absent: Cannarsa

Staff Present: Director of Planning & Zoning Moore, Deputy Clerk Williams

Others Present: None

3. Agenda Changes/Additions/Deletions

None

4. Approval of Minutes

Motion by Baldwin, supported by Paterson, to approve the May 7, 2026, minutes as presented. Via voice vote, motion carried 5-0 (Root was not present for vote).

5. Public Comment

None

6. Unfinished Business

None

7. New Business

A. 439 Butler – Roof & Deck Modifications

The commission reviewed a proposal to reduce the rooftop deck from 30' x 30' to 20' by 30', replace the existing surface with a modular composite paver system, and install a black powder-coated metal railing. The applicant explained that the building had been a single large residence but is now three short-term rentals, making the existing deck oversized and expensive to

maintain for the one-bedroom unit it serves; the modular pavers will also allow easier roof repairs and possible future expansion. Commissioners noted that the change would reduce the visual prominence of the rooftop area and that the deck is largely not visible from the street, though visibility to uphill neighbors was acknowledged. Baldwin raised the prior stop-work order for lack of historic approval, and the applicant clarified his misunderstanding that even non-historic rear portions must be reviewed because the property lines within the historic district. The commission ultimately found the proposal consistent with Section §152.07 of the guidelines.

Motion by Peterson, supported by Root, to approve the applicant's request for a Historic District Permit for exterior improvements at 439 Butler Street, including replacement of the roof system, reconstruction of the rooftop deck, installation of a rooftop paver system, reduction of the deck area to 20' x 30', and installation of a black metal railing, as proposed, based on the application meeting the applicable Historic District Guidelines set forth in §152.07

Upon voice vote, motion carried 6-0.

B. 221 Culver – Exterior Renovations

The Commission considered an application to replace four second-story wood shutters, replace one west-elevation storm window, reconstruct the rear deck and railing, repair the shed roof, and replace four basement windows. A key discussion point was the owner's request to switch from existing louvered shutters to raised-panel wood shutters. Paterson initially questioned this because the guidelines generally favor like-for-like replacement in the historic district, but others noted the existing shutters likely were not original, probably added when aluminum siding went on in the 1970's. Baldwin and Straker emphasized that if the existing shutters aren't original, the board has more flexibility, and Straker felt raised panels could actually simplify and "clean up" the façade rather than make it fussier. The proposed glass block in the low, partially buried basement windows also prompted discussion: while glass block is usually disfavored on prominent original masonry, commissioners (especially Straker and Dean) were less concerned here because the windows are very low, largely screened by landscaping and adjacent development, and offer practical benefits for insulation and security. Overall, the commission appreciated the applicant's effort to maintain original wood storms and the general integrity of the house.

Motion by Baldwin, supported by Dean, to approve the applicant's request for a Historic District Permit for exterior improvements at 221 Culver Street,

including replacement of four second-story wood shutters, replacement of one west elevation storm window, repair of the shed roof, reconstruction of the rear deck and railing, and replacement of four basement windows, as proposed, based on the application meeting the applicable Historic District Guidelines set forth in §152.07. Upon voice vote, motion carried 6-0.

C. 821 Holland – Demolition & New Single-Family Home

The applicant, John Jenkins, requested demolition and replacement of a small contributing house he recently purchased next to his own home at 831 Holland, explaining that once he cleared hoarded contents he found severe deterioration (rotted structure, failing ceilings, long-term water damage) and believed the building beyond saving; he also obtained letters from three local builders supporting demolition. Several commissioners noted their long familiarity with the house and affection for its historic character and prominent location on Holland Street, with Commissioner Root citing Saugatuck-Douglas History Center information possibly dating it to the 1860s Singapore era. The commission emphasized that, under its demolition guidelines, demo is a last resort for a contributing structure and that anything can theoretically be repaired; they also stressed the need for independent, licensed expert reports – specifically a structural engineer’s assessment and a preservation-oriented rehabilitation and cost analysis – to determine whether the building can be reasonably stabilized and rehabilitated. While no one disputed that conditions are very poor, commissioners concluded they lacked sufficient, defensible documentation to justify demolition and that they also never approve demo without ultimately evaluating an acceptable replacement design.

Motion by Straker, supported by Dean, to table the application for 821 Holland based on a request that the applicant secure a rehabilitation cost analysis from a preservationist expert and an engineering study. Upon voice vote, motion carried 6-0.

8. Administrative Approvals & Updates

- A. 111 Water – Roof Repair
- B. 237 Butler – Step Replacement
- C. 329 Water – Rear Yard Patio
- D. 582 Water – Chain

9. Communication

None.

10. Public Comments

None.

11. Commission Comments

In closing, the commission discussed a request from Marker 14 to add a new garage door to a non-contributing building, agreeing this could not be staff-approved because it creates a new opening and thus requires a public meeting. They scheduled a special HDC meeting for Tuesday, June 9th at 1:00pm and arranged for proper public notice.

Commissioners then reflected more broadly on process, noting they are receiving increasing requests for site visits and special meetings and stressing that applicants should first watch past meetings, review guidelines, and understand historic-district requirements rather than approaching in a rush. They reiterated open-meeting limits (e.g., not visiting sites as a quorum) and discussed the value of a public educational presentation possibly in partnership with the Saugatuck-Douglas History Center and local real estate agents – on what it means to own property in the historic district, how decisions are made, and why some demolitions have been approved (with examples like Old Pike Cottages, the house across from SCA, and a Water Street building) While others are resisted. The group also touched on concerns about demolition by neglect noting the city’s dangerous-building ordinance and some “in-between” tools, and Planning and Zoning Director Moore mentioned the city already has a historic district brochure and that real-estate disclosures do include a historic-district check box, even if it is not always emphasized. The commissioners concluded that better public understanding of these processes could reduce conflicts like the 821 Holland case.

12. Adjournment

Motion by Dean, supported by Baldwin, to adjourn at 6:59 p.m. Via voice vote, motion carried 6-0.

Submitted by:
Sara Williams
Deputy Clerk
City of Saugatuck