



PARKS AND PUBLIC WORKS COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES

October 22, 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 Hoffman, Kimble, Roche, Thiel.

Absent: Charak.

Others Present: City Manager Cummins, DPW Equipment Operator Kerridge, Deputy Clerk Williams.

Approval of Agenda:

Motion by Hoffman, second by Roche, to approve the agenda for October 22, 2024. Via voice vote, motion carried 4-0.

Approval of Minutes:

Motion by Roche, second by Hoffman, to approve the September 24, 2024, regular meeting minutes as amended. Via voice vote, motion carried 4-0.

Public Comments (agenda items only): None.

Review/Discussion:

A. Department of Public Works Updates by DPW Equipment Operator Kerridge:

- Street sweeping increased from two days per week to 5 days to keep the storm drains cleaner and ensure that storm drains are free of obstructions and flowing properly.
- Slowly uninstalling seasonal items from Oval Beach such as the boardwalk, trash barrels, seasonal signage, speed bumps, and picnic tables.

- Staff started installing the erosion-controlling fence. Restrooms will remain open until temperatures start dipping into their 30's.
- New equipment operator hired: Scott Morrow.
- Staff graded and added more gravel to the parking lot at Mount Baldhead to fill some sizable potholes.
- Two dead trees were removed, one at 102 Butler Street and the other was located at 149 Lucy. Both trees will be replaced. Crews have also been trimming trees in the road right-of-way to improve site distances and maintaining visibility of street signs.
- There was some vandalism at the restrooms at Village Square and Wicks Park on September 27. There was graffiti that had to be painted over. Police assisted by making a report of the incident.
- Fall decorations have started going up around town. Public Works assisted with placing the decorations at key locations and Gregory Muncey kept tradition alive by collecting donations, organizing volunteers, and setting up decorations. A big thanks to Gregory for his work on this.
- Helped set-up for the homecoming parade for Saugatuck High School.
- Public Works has been doing concrete work around town. The bench pads are being installed at Village Square Park for the benches. They are also installing a concrete pad at Mount Baldhead for a new bike rack that will be installed.
- They have begun to winterize the city restrooms and irrigation. They will be blowing out all of the sprinklers and getting ready for the freezing temps.
- Heavy Brush and Leaf collection is coming up, so they will be doing that and also some road resurfacing work this week around Griffith Street and Francis Street, from Holland to Elizabeth that will be getting milled up and that should be taken care of this week.

B. MI Green Communities:

The committee discussed the Michigan Green Communities program, which offers sustainability funding for small municipalities. Roche introduced the program and suggested the committee take it on as a project. The program involves an Excel spreadsheet with seven categories to choose from, with goals to be achieved by January 1. There was discussion about the feasibility of the program and the need for council approval to allocate staff time. It is suggested to bring the program to the council's strategic planning session for further discussion.

C. Saugatuck Harbor Natural Area:

City Manager Cummins discussed the Saugatuck Harbor Natural Area's management plan update, necessary to access endowment funds held by the Holland Zeeland Community Foundation. The update process includes evaluating the property, reviewing trails, and integrating recommendations from the Land Conservancy of West Michigan. These recommendations, which include managing invasive species and improving signage and trails, are detailed in a report provided to the committee. The Land Conservancy will continue to play a role in providing expert recommendations and guidance, particularly regarding invasive species control, but will no longer hold the responsibility for managing the funds. City Council will ultimately review and approve the updated plan. The committee wanted to ensure that the management of the natural area and the allocation of funds remain a priority for City Council, avoiding past lapses in oversight.

D. Study Group and Other Staff Updates:

1. Invasive Species:

The Committee is working on a project to educate the community about invasive and native plant species. Hoffman has gathered photographs and information, including scientific and local names, to create a comprehensive list. Kimble, a knowledgeable resource on native species, and Charak, who coordinate with the local school for potential student assistance, are both contributing to this effort. The goal is to compile everything into a Google document for easy access. They aim to launch this resource on the city website by spring to encourage residents to remove invasive species and plant native alternatives. Additionally, they raised concerns about the continued sale of invasive species and hope to increase community awareness on this issue.

2. Airport Property:

The City is progressing on the airport property project, particularly regarding the conservation easement. Chair Baldwin said that a redline contract for the easement has been prepared with ODC and is set for review at the City Council Workshop on Wednesday, October 23. If all goes well, a vote will occur on Monday, October 28 at the City Council regular meeting. In addition to the easement, there is interest in naming the airport property. City Manager Cummins indicated that the City Council should decide on the naming process, as no current policy exists for naming parks or similar properties. There was a suggestion to bring this to the Council's attention, as it falls under their purview.

3. Blue Star Multimodal Path:

Committee Member Kimble reminded the committee that the project needed a tribal review. MDOT recently informed them that they did receive a concern related to this review and are working on mitigation. MDOT is handling this process, and it appears the City does not need to be involved. Kimble said that she has some board members that have inquired about more details. Cummins said that there may be an opportunity to request an update from MDOT, while remaining sensitive to the review process.

Additionally, C2AE held an inspection meeting to discuss the overall engineering plans. Jared has been working on the next steps and has sent Cummins the forms to start applying for soil erosion permits with Allegan County. He is also in communication with grant coordinators regarding the TAP grant and potential additional funding. An update from Jared with more details is expected soon.

4. Village Square & Playground:

Chair Baldwin said that the main update for Village Square is that the concrete pads have been poured for the reinstallation of five benches, which are currently stored at the DPW garage and will soon be installed. Additionally, there has been recent discussion with a potential donor about resurfacing and repainting the courts. The engineers confirmed that the current court surfaces are in good condition, but an expansion of the basketball court would be recommended to meet standard dimensions. The engineers are preparing a proposal that aligns with the donor's potential contribution.

The committee also discussed the possibility of applying for DNR grants to leverage the donation, although the grant process is lengthy, highly competitive, and only partially funded. The next steps await the engineering proposal.

5. Park Street, Mt. Baldhead Improvements, & AT&T status:

Wi-Fi has been successfully activated at the beach and it works especially well in the front lots. Testing confirmed that Wi-Fi calling works, providing a safety feature where cell service is limited. Signage will be installed to inform visitors about Wi-Fi availability and usage for calling, and educational information might be included on daily passes. Additionally, Allegan County's 911 system now accepts texts, allowing emergency texting over Wi-Fi as a backup.

Progress continues with AT&T addressing tribal and State Historic Preservation Office concerns by revising their plans to reduce ground disturbance. They have adjusted conduit placement and slab installation. Tribes have acknowledged receiving updates and are expected to respond soon.

The City received an engineering proposal to survey Park Street for potential trail additions or road widening. While this work has not started, a budget is allocated, and the City has shown interest in an EGLE grant to help fund this evaluation. A webinar will be scheduled soon as part of the grant application process.

Updates were shared in Cummins's management report, noting that Ferry Street will remain closed with a projected reopening around Memorial Day.

6. Maple Street:

The City is progressing on the Maple Street improvement project following feedback from an open house and input from the fire department. Engineers are preparing conceptual options, high-level cost estimates, and potential impact for presentation to City Council. Formal discussions with Council will determine the final project scope and enable more detailed engineering. They are focused on enhancing walkability and bikeability through options like sidewalks, widening shoulders, or separated paths. They are balancing connectivity improvements with considerations like cost, tree removal, and property impacts.

Coordination has been ongoing with Saugatuck Township, particularly since the north side of Maple Street falls under township jurisdiction. Community input is critical, as areas like Maple Street serve a population with children and limited existing pedestrian infrastructure. The project aligns with the mission of the five-year parks plan, emphasizing connectivity between downtown, schools, parks, and trails. The survey and scope of services include assessments of tree impacts and stormwater management, and infrastructure needs, such as water and sewer lines. Some of the challenges include the space constraints on Maple Street and the need to coordinate with township authorities. Determining whether assessments for sidewalks would apply to township residents, complicating funding discussions. The next steps will be for the engineers to deliver a comprehensive survey report, cost estimates, and conceptual layouts for review by City Council.

Public Comments (Limit 3 mins): None.

Correspondence: None.

Member Closing Comments:

- Kimble – She expressed enthusiasm about ongoing projects and collaboration, specifically mentioning working with Brian on invasive species. She mentioned that she would be on an extended trip until mid-November.
- Roche – She thanked the Department of Public Works and City Manager Cummins for including a management report in the packet. She praised the city's Facebook posts, encouraging continued use of the platform for sharing information, especially about invasive species and historical references. Roche recognized Baldwin's significant contributions to multiple initiatives. She listed the committee's achievements over the past two years which include:
 1. Completion of an incredible playground benefiting children and families.
 2. Progress on the airport property, which is fully endowed and moving towards a conservation easement.
 3. Advancements on the Saugatuck Harbor Natural Area, nearing the completion of a management plan.
 4. Mount Baldhead improvements currently under council review.
 5. Increased the parks budget, partly due to Oval Beach increase in pricing for 2024.
 6. Introduction of Wi-Fi at Oval Beach.
 7. Completion of a detailed five-year parks plan.
 8. Design decisions for the Blue Star Trail intersection.

She highlighted the tangible impact of these efforts such as improved public spaces and facilities, and the joy they bring to the community. Roche concluded with gratitude for the collective hard work and the positive developments that were achieved.

- Hoffman – He thanked Chair Baldwin and said he hopes that they can keep this going for a few more years. He loves being on the committee and thinks it was a great meeting. He thanked City Manager Cummins for coming in completely prepared for each meeting.

- Thiel – She reflected on the substantial work detailed in the packet, expressing appreciation for the efforts of everyone involved. Although relatively new and not directly involved in most projects, she emphasized their eagerness to contribute and encouraged others to reach out for assistance. She expressed anticipation for the coming year, particularly in understanding the master plan and its connection to the committee’s agenda, while also expressing optimism about Baldwin’s potential re-election and continued progress.
- Chair Baldwin – Baldwin thanked committee member Roche for compiling a list and reflected on how quickly the past two years have passed. She acknowledged the possibility that this might be her last meeting and expressed gratitude for the opportunity to work with the group.

Adjournment:

*Motion by Roche, second by Hoffman, to approve adjournment of the meeting.
Via voice vote, motion carried 4-0. Chair Baldwin adjourned at 11:04 a.m.*

Respectfully Submitted,

Sara Williams, City Deputy Clerk & DPW Admin. Assistant