



Planning Commission Meeting Minutes

The Planning Commission met for a Regular Committee Meeting, May 15, 2025, at
6:30 p.m. at City Hall,
102 Butler St., Saugatuck, MI 49453.

1. Call to Order/Attendance:

The meeting was called to order by Chair Manns at 6:30 p.m.

Present: Commission members: Bagierek, Baldwin, Clark, Gaunt, LaChey, & Manns.

Absent: Commissioner Marineau.

Others Present: Planning & Zoning Director Thompson, Deputy Clerk Williams, City Planning Consultant Jirousek (Horizon Planning).

2. Approval of Agenda:

Motion by Gaunt, second by LaChey, to approve the agenda for May 15, 2025. Upon voice vote, motion carried 6-0.

3. Approval of Minutes:

Motion Bagierek, second by Clark, to approve the minutes for the regular meeting held on March 20, 2025. Upon voice vote, motion carried 6-0.

4. Public Comment (Agenda Items Only): None.

5. Old Business: None.

6. New Business:

A. Master Plan Discussion.

The Commission discussed creating a new city-focused mast plan after the Tri-Community plan with Douglas and Saugatuck Township fell through.

Key points include:

1. They want to gather public input through community surveys, pop-up events, and open house events.
2. The commission will review the existing tri-community plan and Douglas's plan to identify applicable sections.

3. They plan to develop a survey and potentially hold a special meeting dedicated to the master plan.
4. The goal is to create a clear, concise plan that reflects the city's current needs and priorities.
5. They'll focus on educating the public about what a master plan is and why it's important.

The Commission aims to have a draft framework by June and move forward with public input over the summer.

B. Sign Regulation Amendments:

The Commission discussed updating sign regulations to be content-neutral and comply with Supreme Court guidelines.

Key Points include:

1. Consolidate current specific sign categories (like garage sale, political, real estate signs) into a single "temporary yard sign" category.
2. Standardize regulations across sign types focusing on:
 - Maximum height
 - Maximum size (potentially 4-6 square feet)
 - Maximum number of signs
 - Setbacks
 - No illumination
3. Remove content-based language from sign definitions.
4. Consider special provisions for:
 - Construction signs
 - Election season signage
 - On-premise vs. off-premise signs
5. Aim to create regulations that are easier to enforce and less likely to face legal challenges.

The goal is to draft a more consistent, content-neutral sign ordinance that can be reviewed and potentially adopted in the coming months.

C. 550 Dunegrass – Site Plan Review:

The Commission reviewed a retroactive site plan for 550 Dunegrass, which involved vegetation removal and a new driveway. The property owner had already cleared vegetation, removed trees, and regraded an area within the existing dune system without prior site plan approval. Adrian Peterson from Peterson and Vandenberg Environmental presented a restoration plan that includes:

- Removing fill piles.
- Planting six red maple trees.

- Adding three red oak dogwoods.
- Installing a drainage swale.
- Stabilizing the driveway with dune grass.

The EGLE staff have already issued a permit for the proposed activities. The Commission discussed concerns about the retroactive nature of the approval but ultimately viewed the plan as appropriate.

Motion LaChey, second by Bagierek, to approve the vegetation removal and restoration plan and the driveway site plan for 550 Dunegrass Circle Drive based on satisfaction of the site plan approval standards of Section 151.060 documented in the staff memo dated May 9, 2025. Approval is contingent upon the following:

1. *All proposed vegetation is installed during the 2025 planting season.*
2. *An easement is established on 500 Dunegrass Circle Drive for access from Dunegrass Circle Drive to 550 Dunegrass Circle Drive.*
3. *All applicable approvals are granted, including but not limited to:*
 - a) *Fire Department*
 - b) *City Engineer*
 - c) *EGLE*

Upon roll call vote, motion carried 6-0.

D. Commercial District Zoning District Review:

The Commission discussed consolidating and simplifying commercial zoning districts.

Key Points include:

1. Focus on reducing four commercial districts (C1 Water Street North, C1 Water Street South, C1 City Center, and C2 Water Street East) to potentially two districts.
2. Proposed changes:
 - Merge C2 Water Street South into C1 City Center
 - Potentially combine C1 Water Street North and C2 Water Street East into a single Water Street District
3. Standardize land use regulations by:
 - Creating more generalized use categories (like “retail” instead of multiple specific retail types)
 - Simplifying dimensional requirements
 - Establishing consistent lot coverage (potentially 60-65%)
 - Standardizing setbacks (potentially to 10 feet)
4. Maintain flexibility for existing non-conforming uses, such as the single-family home in Water Street South

5. Plan to draft detailed recommendations for the June meeting, with a potential public hearing in August to then send to City Council in September for approval

The overall goal is to create a more streamlined, easier-to-understand commercial zoning structure that reflects the current character of the city's commercial areas.

7. Communications: None.

8. Reports of Officers and Committees:

- A. Planning & Zoning Project Report April 14, 2025
- B. Planning & Zoning Project Report May 12, 2025

9. Public Comments: None.

10. Commissioner Comments:

- Gaunt – She was disappointed about the Tri-Community Master Plan not moving forward collaboratively with Douglas and the Township. Despite her disappointment, she noted overall it was a good meeting.
- Bagierek – He thought it was a good meeting.
- Clark – He agreed it was a good meeting, and appreciated all the work done to help navigate the complicated topics discussed. He is looking forward to getting the Master Plan update started. He shared Bobbie Gaunt's disappointment about the Tri-Community Master Plan not moving forward but looks forward to working on the city specific Master Plan.
- Manns – He was happy to see things continuing to move forward and is looking forward to receiving the draft documents. He reminded everyone to review the Master Plan and Douglas's Plan by June 3rd and provide additional comments and expressed readiness to see everyone at the June meeting.

11. Adjournment:

Motion by Clark, second by Bagierek, to approve adjournment of the meeting. Upon voice vote, motion carried unanimously. Chair Manns adjourned the meeting at 8:38 pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

Sara Williams, Deputy Clerk