



CITY COUNCIL REGULAR MEETING

June 22, 2026

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.

Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

Attendance:

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

Absent: Peterson

Motion by Muncey, second by Gardner to excuse Chris Peterson from the meeting. Via roll call vote, motion carried 6-0.

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

Mayor's Comments:

Mayor Holly Anderson opened by addressing recent community concerns about sidewalk chalking in the downtown area. She acknowledged that some business owners feel the chalking may cause limited disruption or annoyance to shopping, but emphasized that despite cool and rainy weather, business in Saugatuck is as strong or stronger than a year ago. She then shifted to what she described as a more serious threat to tourism: LGBTQ hate being spread on social media. Citing a recent Facebook post on the popular Sauglasville site who shared photos of Jan Cohen chalking and prompted others to attack Jan for her sexual orientation and gender expression—she noted that the post and its comments were removed by the next morning. Mayor Anderson made two main points: first, that she will vigorously defend everyone's First Amendment right to free speech, even when that speech targets members of her own community, while still finding the hateful comments deplorable; and second, that the LGBTQ community will not tolerate bullying, and that decades of work building Saugatuck's reputation as a welcoming top tourist destination should not be undone by hate. Quoting Warren Buffett, she reminded the council that "it takes 20 years to build a reputation and five minutes to destroy it," and urged the community not to let LGBTQ hate damage Saugatuck. She closed by thanking Birdie Holley for her efforts to promote kindness and for carefully moderating the Sauglasville site.

City Manager Comments:

City Manager Ryan Cummins opened by providing an update on the Maple Street construction project. He explained that council members are invited to an on-site visit after their workshop on the 8th to see the active construction and "boots on the ground" progress. The water main installation is a little over halfway complete, and a recent tie-in at Allegan and Maple triggered a temporary water advisory for a small group of directly notified residents. He noted that as different sections of the main are pressurized and tested, similar advisories and monitoring periods will continue. Ryan also raised safety concerns about non-local drivers

ignoring “local traffic only” signs and using the project area as a cut-through, which has led to close calls with heavy equipment and some hostile interactions with construction workers. In response, the city is increasing Sheriff’s Department presence and asking the public to respect detours for everyone’s safety. He concluded by flagging that at the next workshop the engineers will present Elizabeth Street project options for next summer’s major construction, anticipating a “robust discussion” to guide design and keep that project moving forward.

Agenda Changes:

Motion by Muncey, second by Stanton to add Ingrid Boyer from the Saugatuck Douglas District Library as guest speaker. Via voice vote, motion carried 6-0.

Guest Speakers:

Director Ingrid Boyer from the Saugatuck Douglas District Library gave a brief presentation on the Saugatuck-Douglas District Library’s operating millage renewal that will appear on the August 4 ballot. She explained that the last operating millage was approved in August 2021, shortly after the library moved into its new building in October 2020, when they had very little real data on operating costs, so the five-year rate then was essentially an educated estimate. She outlined that the current 2025 operating rate of 0.4284 mills is actually made up of two separate millages: one in perpetuity (rolled back to 0.1888 mills) and a second 0.2352-mill levy that expired in December. For the upcoming ballot, the library is not changing the in-perpetuity portion but is seeking a renewal with Headlee recovery and a slight increase on the second millage to 0.3 mills, which would bring the combined authorized operating rate to 0.4886 mills. However, the board does not intend to levy the full amount: because none of the full-time staff currently require health insurance—a major cost savings—the library plans to levy only 0.2750 mills next year if the proposal passes, and will continue its practice of levying less than the authorized maximum when actual needs allow. She then translated the millage numbers into taxpayer impact, noting that for a \$300,000 home (SEV \$150,000), the annual operating tax would rise from roughly \$64.26 to \$73.29 (about a \$9.03 increase at the full authorized rate, and closer to \$5.31 with the planned lower levy), with proportionate changes for \$600,000 and \$1 million homes. Ingrid explained the drivers of the increase: higher staff salaries to maintain livable wages and a more professional workforce; a large expansion in hours, programs, and attendance since moving into the new building (from 68 programs/511 attendees to 270 programs/3,500+ attendees); and especially the steep and growing costs of electronic materials such as ebooks and e-audiobooks, which can cost roughly \$90 per copy with time or circulation limits, compared to about \$20 for a print book the library owns indefinitely. She also cited a continuing decline in penal fine revenue (about a 20% drop in five years) and uncertainty in state and federal library funding as additional long-term concerns. Ingrid closed by reiterating the library’s commitment to fiscal responsibility, emphasizing that the 0.3-mill request is a 10-year ceiling, but annual levies will be based on actual need, as demonstrated by the library’s past practice of levying below its authorized rate, and she invited questions from council members.

Public Comment on Agenda Item Only: None.

Consent Agenda:

Motion by Dean, second by Clark to approve the consent agenda as presented. Via roll call vote, motion carried 6-0.

Approval of Accounts Payable:

Motion by Gardner, second by Dean to approve the accounts payable in the amount of \$622,303.12. Via roll call, motion carried 6-0.

Public Hearing: None.

Unfinished Business: None.

New Business:

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Employee Health Insurance Benefits for Fiscal Year 2026/2027:

Motion by Dean, second by Clark to approve the employee health insurance renewal as presented, and to increase the city's annual health savings account contribution for eligible employees enrolled in the high-deductible health plan from \$2,500 to \$2,600 for fiscal year 26-27. Via roll call vote, motion carried 6-0.

Property and Liability Insurance Renewal for 2026/2027:

Motion by Dean, second by Gardner to approve the renewal of the City's property and liability insurance coverage with the Michigan Municipal League Liability and Property Pool for the 2026-2027 coverage year, effective July 15, 2026, through July 15, 2027, in the amount of \$40,467, as presented. Via roll call vote, motion carried 6-0.

Resolution No. 260622-C To Amend the Terms of the City Manager's Employment Agreement:

Motion by Stanton, second by Clark to approve Resolution Number 260622-C to amend the terms of the City Manager's Employment Agreement. Via roll call vote, motion carried 4-2. Yes – Anderson, Clark, Dean, Stanton. No – Gardner, Muncey.

Staff Reports, Boards, Commissions & Committees:

Monthly department activity reports were provided by the City Manager along with the following board and committees:

Fire District Administration Board:

City of Saugatuck representative, Dan Fox reported that the Fire District Board held its public hearing on the upcoming fiscal year budget and, with no public comment, adopted it. The District recognized a small cost-recovery amount of \$252 and approved the sale of a Ford Expedition (unit 2173), now at the end of its useful life, to the Ganges Fire Department, which allows the vehicle to remain in mutual-aid service without the extra work of stripping emergency equipment. Dan gave a detailed update on the new fire station project at 415 Wiley Road in Douglas, describing how the Fire District will purchase a portion of the existing building, gain much-needed single-occupancy sleeping rooms and showers, and add a four-bay apparatus building connected by an enclosed corridor. Access and pavement upgrades are being coordinated with Douglas to accommodate heavy fire apparatus and future DPW use, including semi deliveries for salt. He shared that the Douglas Planning Commission has approved the site plan with minor contingencies, and the construction manager has produced a very detailed schedule projecting completion around April 26, earlier than originally hoped. Dan also reviewed incident statistics: May saw 89 calls, up from 61 in April, reflecting seasonal increases and more visitors unfamiliar with local roads. Calls remain dominated by medical incidents, with a notable number of motor vehicle crashes that appear largely tied to inattentive driving rather than impairment. He closed by noting his unanimous appointment as the first Fire Commissioner, expressing appreciation for the council's support and emphasizing the importance of continued public vigilance and safe driving.

Interurban Board:

Councilmember Gregory Muncey reported that the Interurban remains in a very strong financial position after eight months of the fiscal year, with expenses at about 60% of budget (slightly better than last year's 63%) and revenues at 64%, driven by higher fare revenue, property tax collections, and federal grant funding. He noted that some costs—wages, benefits, fuel, and materials—are higher due to expanded service levels, inflation, and increased usage, and that these will rise further as the fleet grows from 8 to 14 buses with six new vehicles arriving. Investment earnings have produced over \$33,600 this year, further strengthening reserves. Ridership continues to set records: in May, the launch of late-night service (Memorial Day–Labor Day) generated \$826 in revenue in its first two days, with popular stops including Super Valu, the Fennville Post Office, and Dollar General. App usage is growing rapidly; on one Saturday, 66% of rides were booked through the Interurban app, and 531 new rider profiles were added, contributing to an overall 18% year-over-year ridership increase. Under new business, the Director Review Committee completed its evaluation of Director and the board approved a 6.5% increase to her annual contract. For health insurance, keeping the current plan would have meant a 14.1% cost increase, so staff recommended a Priority Health plan with a higher deductible but only a 1.8%

premium increase; the Interurban will continue its HSA contributions (\$1,600 single / \$3,200 family) and, because the new cost exceeds the state contribution cap, the board voted to opt out of the cap for the 2026–27 benefit year as allowed by law.

Kalamazoo Lake Sewer & Water Authority:

Mayor Pro-Tem Clark reported the board meeting focused on ongoing technical and financial issues. The board continued discussions regarding the easement for a new force main along Old Allegan Road, including how that line crosses property Kal Lake purchased for potential future plant expansion. Engineers are still refining the preferred alignment and the implications for that parcel. The authority also received notice from the union to begin labor negotiations, which led to a closed session during the meeting. In addition, a new finance manager has been hired and will be coming on board soon; one of the early priorities is to develop a standardized set of financial reports so that all member municipalities receive consistent, clear information on the authority's finances.

Kalamazoo Lake Harbor Authority:

City Manager Ryan Cummins noted that the most recent meeting was cancelled and that staff are working on identifying and scheduling a new meeting date. No substantive Harbor Authority business was reported at this session.

Zoning Board of Appeals: None.

Historic District Commission:

Councilmember Scott Dean reported that the Historic District Commission's most notable recent case involved a prominently visible house at 821 Holland Street within the historic district. The new owner removed siding and came before the commission seeking permission to demolish the structure. Because of the property's historic district status and its high visibility, the commission requested an evaluation by a preservationist to determine whether the building can feasibly be saved or rehabilitated. The applicant will return with that assessment and more information before the commission makes a final decision on demolition. He also noted that the next Historic District Commission meeting is scheduled for July 2 at 6:00 p.m.

Planning Commission:

Councilmember Russ Gardner reported that the Planning Commission met and addressed several items. They approved a site plan for 150 Dune Grass Ridge, which had previously been reviewed and returned with final plans; it was approved unanimously. They also considered a request related to the Wickwood Inn, which came as a proposed text amendment to the zoning code to add a new definition of "boutique inn." The "boutique inn" concept, as proposed, would allow things like food and beverage service to the general public and events including non-registered guests, which go beyond the limitations currently applicable to bed-and-breakfast uses, and could significantly affect both Wickwood and other lodging establishments around town (e.g., porches on Mason and others that might seek similar treatment). The Planning Commission discussed whether it is appropriate to amend zoning definitions while the master plan is being updated, and they expressed concern about broader, possibly unintended impacts on other properties. As a result, they tabled the text amendment to allow more discussion, especially in light of the ongoing master plan process. Gardner added that progress on the master plan is taking longer than hoped, putting the original early-fall schedule at risk, and staff are exploring additional support for the consultant to keep the project on track, with more information expected at the July meeting.

Parks & Public Works Committee:

Councilmember Lauren Stanton reported that the PPW meeting on June 2 covered a range of topics. She highlighted the contributions of the Saugatuck High School Industrial Arts program, teacher and the CVB in creating the new artful pallet bike racks, with one placed in Saugatuck and another already installed in Douglas.

Committee members completed a field review and produced a detailed list of recommended wayfinding sign locations, which will become a resource once the new city logo and branding are finalized. Among those ideas is signage at the John Woolham Trail to promote it as a walking route to Oval Beach, encouraging visitors to take the chain ferry and then walk, easing vehicle congestion at the beach. Responding to survey feedback from residents who want more seating, the committee members identified potential sites for additional benches, picnic tables, and “game” tables, and PPW’s project manager Gibson will now work on pricing and specifications so these can be installed as funding or donations become available. Stanton also shared that, during times when there is a vehicle queue at the Oval Beach entrance, booth staff have been coordinating with Interurban and Saga Taco to briefly pause outbound traffic so the shuttle and food delivery e-bike can enter and exit more efficiently, which has been working well. Finally, she reported on the first “Crazy for the Kazoo” volunteer event: despite blustery weather, around 40 volunteers spread out through parks and along the river, collecting about 250 pounds of trash and removing 80 pounds of invasive species, and she noted the next PPW meeting is scheduled for 10:00 a.m. the following day.

Tri-Community Non-Motorized Trail Study Committee:

Councilmember Dean gave a brief update on the non-motorized trail project along the old railroad. He stated that engineering firm C2AE will be on site on July 7 to stake the proposed route, which is a necessary step before archaeologists conduct their cultural resources assessment. That assessment is required to ensure the project complies with applicable historic and environmental review standards as the trail planning advances.

Water System Operations Contract Advisory Committee:

Councilmember Gardner reported on the joint Water System Operations Contract Advisory Committee, which met on June 19 at Douglas City Hall. The meeting focused on the “nuts and bolts” of sewer capacity, treatment plant expansion, and associated costs, as the participating communities and Kal Lake work through the details of a long-term operating and capacity arrangement. Further financial analysis is needed to fully understand the cost-sharing and rate impacts, and staff is working to bring more detailed figures to the group. Gardner noted that the next meeting is set for July 8 at 11:00 a.m., that these meetings are open to the public, and he acknowledged the regular attendance of County Commissioner Brad Lubbers, Kal Lake Board member Barry Johnson, and others, which he appreciates.

Logo and Branding Advisory Committee:

Mayor Anderson briefly spoke about what Stanton reported that the Logo and Branding Advisory Committee met on June 9, where the city’s design consultant presented five draft logo concepts. The committee was very pleased with the overall quality and decided that four of the five concepts were strong enough to carry forward. Members provided detailed feedback, including suggestions to combine elements from different drafts, refine certain visual components, and ensure flexibility for signage and digital use. The design team will revise the concepts accordingly and return on July 7 with updated options. Stanton expressed confidence that by then they will have logo concepts ready to refine and ultimately bring to the council, and she anticipates the council will be excited by the direction of the new branding.

Parking Improvements Task Force:

Councilmember Gregory Muncey provided summarized the work of the Parking Improvements Task Force, noting that the group has spent much of its time reviewing the results of the first parking occupancy study conducted on May 2. That study confirmed that the downtown core becomes very tight during busy periods, with off-street lots reaching about 92% occupancy and on-street spaces about 86%, which is roughly the point at which visitors perceive parking as “full.” However, areas outside the central business district—including neighborhoods on the hill and remote lots used by the Interurban and high school—retain meaningful capacity even during peak times, suggesting that better use of remote and peripheral parking, combined with shuttle service, is a key part of the solution. The task force also discussed future parking demand associated with new development along Blue Star Highway, estimating an additional 100–150 spaces may be needed as projects build out, reinforcing the value of improved transit and remote parking. Muncey said the group is exploring parking enforcement options for the existing three-hour limit downtown, including a

potential ambassador-style seasonal program focused on education and visitor assistance rather than strict ticketing, as well as dedicated employee parking solutions and permit concepts. They also examined a proposal to convert Butler Street to one-way, which could add roughly 60 spaces; while this has obvious capacity benefits, there are serious concerns about traffic circulation, pedestrian safety, and the impact of delivery trucks (which could block the single lane while unloading). Given these tradeoffs, that idea remains under study rather than recommended. Additional peak-season occupancy studies in July are planned, and the task force will continue to evaluate enforcement strategies, employee parking, tourism data, remote lots, and shuttle options before finalizing recommendations. Gregory noted that the consultant, Walker and Associates, will produce a set of deliverables to support council decision-making after the remaining meetings.

Public Comment:

None.

Correspondence:

None.

Council Comments:

Councilmember Stanton Lauren's closing comments focused on the recent passing of community member Dave Cernugal, whom she described as a dear friend to many. She noted that Dave had five children and was well known locally through his years working at The Guardian and more recently at The Mitten, and that his wife Colleen manages For the Love of Shoes, where two of their children also work; two more of Dave's children work for Stanton at The Red Dock. She highlighted the deep sense of loss in the community and urged everyone to support his family during this difficult time, noting that his funeral would be held Wednesday.

Councilmember Muncey indicated that he had no additional comments at the end of the meeting.

Councilmember Dean, congratulate City Manager Ryan Cummins on another successful year. He emphasized that taxpayers are fortunate to have Cummins serving as the city's "CEO" and expressed his appreciation for his continued leadership of the city's day-to-day operations.

Councilmember Clark was looking forward to serving the city staff at the upcoming event where councilmembers will celebrate staff, noting how much they do for the community. He also thanked the professionals supporting the city on the sewer negotiations and the voting home litigation, saying it is reassuring to know that highly capable people are backing the city and "have our back."

Councilmember Gardner no additional comments for the evening.

Mayor Holly Anderson closed by reflecting again on the recent loss of Dave Cernugal and the broader atmosphere in the community. She appreciated how Birdie Holley, in a recent Saugatuck post, contrasted the community's heavy heart over Dave's death with the harmful, hateful comments that have surfaced online, underscoring that while free speech is protected, the community should reject vitriol and hate. Holly stressed that residents have a choice in how they behave and speak, and that those who know people spreading hate should talk with them to help preserve what is good and right about Saugatuck. She emphasized fostering loving, supportive hearts and spirits so the community can help each other through hard times, thanked everyone for their service to the city and for attending.

Adjournment:

Motion by Muncey, second by Dean to adjourn the meeting. Upon voice vote, motion carried unanimously. Mayor Anderson adjourned at 7:59 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted

Jamie Wolters, City Clerk