



CITY COUNCIL REGULAR MEETING MINUTES

March 10, 2025

The City Council met to have a Regular Council Meeting at City Hall.
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.

Attendance:

Present: Mayor Anderson, Councilmembers Clark, Dean, Muncey, Peterson and Gardner.

Absent: Stanton.

Motion by Gardner, second by Muncey to excuse Gardner from tonight's meeting. Via voice vote, motion carried 6-0.

Others Present: City Manager Cummins, Sherrif Haas and Deputy Clerk Williams.

Mayor Comments:

Mayor Holly Anderson shared a positive experience speaking to Cub Scouts, aged 5 to 10, alongside longtime Scout Barry Johnson. She appreciated the opportunity to teach them about local government and commended the role of youth organizations in developing leadership and community engagement. Reflecting on her time as mayor, she acknowledged the challenges but found joy in such interactions. She also praised Barry for his long-term dedication to scouting.

City Manager Comments:

City Manager Ryan Cummins highlighted that Oval Beach received a prestigious accolade from TripAdvisor, ranking among the top 25 beaches in the U.S. and the only one in Michigan to achieve this distinction. He credited the city staff for their efforts in maintaining the beach's excellence. Additionally, he provided an update on the recently approved ethics policy, noting that it has been widely distributed to board and commission members, staff, and the public through various channels, including media coverage, newsletters, and the city's website.

Agenda Changes:

Motion by Gardner, Second by Dean to add guest speaker Brand Lubbers. Via voice vote, motion carried 6-0.

Guest Speakers:

Sgt. Ben Haas – Allegan County Sheriff's Office provided an overview of the local sheriff's team, highlighting the roles and specialties of deputies serving the community. He reported that in the past year, the sheriff's office handled 27,357 complaints countywide, with 11,127 within the city, along with 743 traffic stops and 181 documented school visits. Reserve deputies contributed 537 hours, primarily assisting with special events and patrols. Regarding response times, the average time from a call being received to an officer's arrival was 15 minutes, with emergency calls receiving much faster responses—some within 3 to 5 minutes. He emphasized the department's commitment to timely responses and effective law enforcement in the community.

Brad Lubbers, Allegan County Commissioner, echoed praise for Oval Beach's recent recognition, highlighting its positive impact on tourism. He shared details about upcoming county-wide hazardous waste and tire collection events, open to all Allegan County residents. He also discussed efforts to address transportation gaps between the city and surrounding areas, particularly in connecting to buses in Holland and South Haven. Additionally, he updated on changes to the county commission's meeting schedule, now consolidated into a single 9 a.m. session on the second and fourth Thursdays of each month, advising residents to adjust accordingly.

Public Comment on Agenda Item Only: None.

Consent Agenda:

A. Regular Meeting Minutes – February 10, 2025

B. Right of Way Signage Request – Mountainfilm on Tour

C. Right of Way Signage Request – Saugatuck Second Line

D. Proposal for Professional Services for the Preparation of a MDNR Passport Grant Application for the Village Square Courts

E. Board and Commission Appointments:

a. Leah Root to the Historic District Commission

b. Kathleen Quick to the Board of Review

c. Mark Bekken, Diana Decker, and Kathleen Quick to the Compensation Commission

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

Staff Reports, Boards, Commissions & Committees:

The City Manager, Treasurer, City Clerk, Director of Planning & Zoning, Department of Public Works, Engineer and Police submitted status reports of current activities since the last regular council meeting on February 10, 2025, for their respective departments.

Fire District Administration Board, Dan Fox:

Dan Fox, city representative for the Saugatuck Township Fire Department, provided an update from the January 17 meeting. Key points included:

- The next full board meeting is on March 17.
- He detailed a recent accident on I-196 near the Kalamazoo River Bridge caused by strong winds. Emergency responders initially considered using a helicopter but successfully rescued the driver without it.
- There has been a significant increase in accidents on I-196, leading to multiple road closures and high emergency response costs. Efforts to recover these costs from insurance and trucking companies have mixed results.

- MDOT has installed flashing warning signs, but concerns remain about their response time to hazardous conditions, such as ice buildup. Fox and others questioned why MDOT has not taken stronger preventative measures. Frequent highway closures divert traffic through local communities, creating additional safety issues. Officials discussed the need for a collective push to get MDOT to address the recurring problems.
- The district has maintained reasonable emergency response times, though the increase in incidents is a concern. The relocation of an ambulance to the fire station is expected to improve response efficiency.
- The fire district closely tracks incidents, response times, and accident patterns, using detailed graphics. The meeting emphasized the need for better coordination with MDOT and potential advocacy from local government to improve highway safety and reduce emergency service strain.

Interurban Board, Councilmember Muncey:

Councilmember Muncey reported continued growth in public transportation ridership, with a January increase of 335 riders compared to the previous year, totaling 3,551 riders. Services such as the two-way Holland route and food order deliveries remain active. Progress is being made on a new facility addition, with two contractors secured and construction set to begin in the spring. The 2024 audit process is underway, with the final review expected in March. A new driver who has a business management degree and accounting certification, will also assist with accounting duties. Discussions are ongoing regarding a potential bus stop in Fennville as part of its park redevelopment. Additionally, a budget adjustment was made due to funding cuts, revising projected income to \$1,356,000 and expenses to \$1,324,000, ensuring financial stability for the remainder of the year

Kalamazoo Lake Sewer & Water Authority:

Councilmember Clark highlighted several key updates. A new vacuum truck, costing approximately \$750,000, is now in operation and expected to improve efficiency while reducing outsourcing costs. Concerns were raised regarding warranty-related issues with newly installed generators, including fluid leaks in all units, prompting legal notification to track potential systemic manufacturing problems. A recent inspection of the Open Hill reservoir found no major issues. This inspection, required every 5–8 years, was conducted using an ROV to reduce costs. However, the next inspection will require a diver, necessitating a two-week reservoir shutdown, which previously led to water main breaks due to pressure fluctuations. To mitigate risks, the fire department will be advised to limit water usage to emergencies during this period. Additionally, hydro flow testing is scheduled for April to achieve ISO compliance, which impacts municipal insurance ratings.

Kalamazoo Lake Harbor Authority, Councilmember Peterson:

Chris Peterson mentioned that a letter was sent requesting a board meeting, as the last quorum was in April. The goal is to schedule a meeting in March to discuss suggestions and address potential water level issues proactively rather than reacting to them unexpectedly.

Zoning Board of Appeals: None.

Historic District Commission, Councilmember Gardner:

Councilmember Gardner provided updates on the February 6 meeting, where four items were discussed and approved:

- Singapore Yacht Club (40 Butler Street) – Approval for replacing the pool fence after extensive discussion.
- 115 Butler Street – Approval for replacing a deteriorated window due to leaks.
- Gliks Storefront Doors – Approval for replacing front doors after a detailed discussion on their

historical significance and impact on the downtown streetscape.

- 340 Water Street – Approval for exterior renovations, with additional planning discussions pending. The mural on the north side of the building, though outside the Historic District Commission's authority, was highlighted as an important community and visitor attraction.

The next meeting is scheduled for Thursday, March 6, at 6 PM, welcoming new commissioner Leah Root.

Planning Commission, Councilmember Clark:

Councilmember Clark shared that the council has been discussing allowing accessory dwelling structures to be added to licensed bed and breakfasts, specifically on their floor. After thorough discussions, a recommendation has been finalized to allow up to two accessory structures per bed and breakfast. Each structure would be limited to three rooms and cannot exceed 50% of the main building's capacity, meaning the total number of rooms could be lower than six. This unanimous recommendation from the planning commission will soon be presented to the full council for further discussion.

Parks & Public Works Committee, Mayor Pro-Tem Stanton: Meet tomorrow.

Tri-Community Non-Motorized Trail Study Committee, Councilmember Dean: None.

Water System Operations Contract Advisory Committee, Councilmember Gardner and Councilmember Clark:

Councilmember Clark informed the council that the attorneys are working on a red line draft.

Wildlife Management Committee, Councilmember Dean: None.

Councilmember Dean mentioned that on March 5 at 6 pm, the council will review the results from the Tri-community area regarding the deer problem. The first action item will involve discussing potential calls for action, specifically looking at the ordinances in the three communities concerning the discharge of archery equipment or weapons. He also noted that Douglas police, including Sergeant Haas, will likely be present to participate in the discussion.

Approval of Accounts Payable:

Motion by Peterson, second by Gardner to approve the accounts payable in the amount of \$1,163,443.11. Via roll call vote, motion carried 6-0.

Public Hearing: None.

Unfinished Business: None.

New Business:

Saugatuck Harbor Natural Area Master Plan Update

Motion by Dean, second by Clark to the updated Saugatuck Harbor Natural Area Master Plan. Via roll call vote, motion carried 6-0.

Councilmember Gardner left the meeting at 7:45 p.m.

Public Comment:

Kathleen Quick, resident, thanked the council for their vote appointing her to the board of review and thanked DPW for their winter maintenance.

Correspondence:

Baitao Xia and Ping Wei submitted correspondence regarding the change of ownership of their home and how it relates to their short-term rental.

Council Comments:

Councilmember Clark echoed appreciation for community volunteers joining committees. He also shared that he attended his first board meeting with Kal Lake, where much of the time was spent recognizing Mark Bekken for his decades of service—over 35 years. Clark highlighted Bekken's contributions to the development of Bella and encouraged the community to thank him. The meeting included lighthearted banter, including a joking suggestion to name a retention pond after Bekken. Clark acknowledged the challenge of stepping into his new role, recognizing the big shoes he has to fill.

Councilmember Dean thanked the new members of boards and commissions for joining the city, it means a lot for those who volunteer their time.

Councilmember Muncey thanked Kate Quick and Leah Root for their volunteer efforts and involvement in the community. Muncey recalled meeting Leah when she moved to town and appreciated her eagerness to help out. He emphasized the importance of new residents engaging in the community. Additionally, he reiterated concerns about ongoing construction at the corner of Francis and Holland Street, which continues to block the sidewalk without proper permits. The Euchre tournament benefiting the athletic boosters will take place on Saturday, March 1, at the Ivy House. Tickets are still available and can be found on Facebook. He encouraged everyone to join in and play.

Councilmember Peterson gave a final acknowledgment, thanking Sergeant Haas for providing a valuable report on response times, emphasizing its importance for the community.

Mayor Holly Anderson thanked Sergeant Haas and his team for their service, as well as Commissioner Lubbers. She also praised the city manager, DPW, and the Land Conservancy for updating a plan that secures significant funding to help care for the city's valuable natural land. Anderson highlighted the importance of these resources and closed with a reminder to stay warm.

Adjournment:

Motion by Muncey, second by Dean to adjourn the meeting. Upon voice vote, motion carried unanimously. Mayor Anderson adjourned at 7:50 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted

Jamie Wolters, City Clerk