



Parks and Public Works Committee

Meeting Minutes - APPROVED

July 28, 2026, at 10:00 A.M.

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

1. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 10:00 by Chair Kimble.

2. Roll Call

Members Present: Charak, Kimble, Roche, Thiel

Members Absent: Hoffman, Stanton (*online*)

Staff Present: DPW Superintendent Ondersma, DPW Project Manager Gibson, Deputy Clerk Williams

Others Present: None

3. Approval of Agenda

Motion by Charak, supported by Thiel, to approve the agenda for the July 28, 2026, meeting. Via voice vote, motion carried 4-0.

4. Approval of Minutes

Motion by Thiel, supported by Charak, to approve the June 23, 2026, regular minutes as presented.

Motion carried 4-0.

5. Public Comment on Agenda Items

None.

6. Discussion

A. DPW Administrative Update:

Department of Public Works Superintendent Ondersma reported that a very busy month for the DPW, driven by major events including the Fourth of July parade and the Venetian Festival, praising full-time and seasonal staff for successful planning and cleanup that returned the town to normal quickly. He noted the team completed 126 work tasks since the last meeting, excluding event work, covering items like pothole repairs, tree trimming and branch pick-up,

City Hall facility requests, and miscellaneous calls for service. He explained their pothole strategy (building a list, buying about four tons of asphalt at a time, and following a set route similar to the brush/leaf pickup route, with special trips only for urgent locations). Preparations have also begun for the Mount Baldhead Challenge, with staff clearing and repairing trails. On Maple Street construction, he reported the water main is fully installed and tested, house service connections are underway, sidewalk prep has started, and paving is hoped for around October with final work into November; the project is currently ahead of schedule, though he cautioned that weather and subcontractor availability could change that. He added that Oval Beach remains very busy but is operating smoothly, with only typical traffic backups and generally cooperative visitors and he confirmed continued use and active management of Starlink internet at the beach to support credit card transactions and basic operations, with cell/Wi-Fi congestion during peak use being the main limitation.

B. SHNA Trail Remediation and Signage Proposal (Park Rules Policy Report):

The Saugatuck Harbor Natural Area discussion focused on the ODC proposal for trail remediation, habitat restoration, and a new signage/wayfinding system, framed by the existing park rules policy (including dog restrictions). The committee reviewed ODC's plan to close numerous informal and redundant trails, consolidate use onto a smaller, formalized trail network, and then restore closed areas using a hybrid approach of seed and native plant plugs (the recommended option, as it balances cost and likelihood of success). Members raised practical questions about beach access points (whether a single access from the beach is realistic given visitor behavior) and the placement and number of interpretive signs, "you are here" maps, boundary and "keep out/keep off dune" signs. They ties this to enforcement and education around park rules, especially where dogs are prohibited year-round vs. seasonally, and whether current bylaws and the Natural Area management plan are aligned. Because the committee wants to walk the site, verify trail alignment and access points on the ground, clarify endowment funding levels and costs, and get ODC's input on dogs in this sensitive habitat, they decided not to make a recommendation to City Council yet and will bring back a more informed recommendation at a future meeting.

C. AED Roadmap/Proposal for AED

The committee heard a presentation from Tony Schippa and Tode Christianson on the Saugatuck-Douglas "Heart Safe" Initiative and a proposed AED roadmap for the City. Their goal is to place 24/7 publicly accessible AEDs at key gathering spots, noting survival can reach 90% if CPR and defibrillation occur within the first minute. They have already purchased six AED units and outdoor cabinets with grant and private donations, at no cost to the City other than minor electrical usage, and will handle installation, monitoring, and ongoing maintenance (pads, batteries, monthly checks, alerts when a cabinet is opened). Proposed City locations include Wicks Park, Butler Street playground/public restrooms, the Saugatuck Information Booth, the

base and top of Mount Baldhead, and Coghlin Park, with interest in additional sites over time. DPW Director Ondersma strongly supports the AEDs but cautioned about placing them directly on facilities that are scheduled for near-term renovation or replacement, especially the Wicks Park and Village Square restrooms, and suggested alternative or temporary placements (e.g., a post near the restrooms, the new Baldhead restroom building, or possibly private facades like Wicks Park Bar & Grill). Committee members agreed AEDs are a high public-safety priority but, given upcoming construction and siting details, decided that over the next month they will work with DPW and the Heart Safe group to refine exact locations and then return with a concrete placement recommendation to Council, rather than voting specific sites immediately.

Motion by Roche, supported by Charak, to look at locations and come back next month with a recommendation to council at the next meeting. Via voice vote, motion carried 4-0.

D. Policy for Benches & Donor Form

The committee briefly reviewed the draft policy and donor form for benches, picnic tables, and similar park furnishings, but agreed they were not ready to make specific recommendations on bench/table types or locations. Committee member Charak noted there were no visual examples in the packet and offered to pull sample products and photos – likely from the vendor the City already uses – for benches, picnic tables, and game tables. The group agreed that for the next meeting Keith will circulate these options in advance, and each member will come prepared with a prioritized list of park locations where new furnishings are most needed. Committee member Roche added that members should also carefully review the donor form, and she supported the language that treats donations as unrestricted, allowing the City flexibility to use funds where they are most beneficial. Final policy and product recommendations were deferred to the next meeting.

E. Public Restrooms (Village Square Park & Wicks Park)

The committee received an update from DPW Director Ondersma on needed upgrades to the public restrooms at Village Square Park and Wick Park. At Wicks Park, the existing restroom building has recurring problems, including interior deterioration and repeated flooding from a nearby storm drain. Two paths are being explored:

1. A substantial renovation of the current structure (interior upgrades, ADA compliance, new water service, exterior touch-ups and fascia); or
2. Demolishing and replacing the building with a new, raised facility designed to avoid flooding and incorporate a replica of the current mural painted by a local artist, with historic district staff indicating they are comfortable replacing the building since the mural itself is a replica.

At Village Square, the plan is to fully refresh the interior, including new toilets replacing problematic waterless urinals with conventional fixtures, new mirrors, lighting, fans, and updated epoxy flooring, while ensuring ADA compliance, which may slightly alter the fixture layout. Committee members stressed coordinating these projects with public safety features (especially AED locations and possibly informational boards and bottle-fill stations) and noted that flooding at Wicks and general wear-and tear at both sited make restroom improvements a high community project.

F. Warming Station at Rose Garden

The committee discussed the proposal from the Visitors Bureau (presented by Ashley Siebelink), to install a gas-fired warming station and additional seating in the Rose Garden downtown as part of a larger shoulder-season initiative. The concept is to turn the Rose Garden into a more welcoming, multi-season gathering space, with a sculptural stone seating wall and a centrally located burner operated by a timer and emergency shut-off, designed in consultation with Chief Janik and a fire-protection contractor to meet safety and ADA requirements. The existing wrought-iron fence would be removed, making the garden more visually and physically accessible, while existing plantings would largely be preserved and enhanced in coordination with the current landscape contractor. Committee members supported the goal of more seating and extended use into the off-season but raised practical concerns about maintenance (trash, sticky spills, cigarette butts), gas costs, potential late-night behavior given nearby bars, and impacts on the Mize endowment and DPW workload. DPW Director Ondersma reported he had vetted the burner design, maintenance, and materials and was comfortable with the operational burden.

Motion by Thiel, supported by Charak, to move forward with the Rose Garden. Via voice vote, motion carried 4-0.

7. Public Comments

None

8. Correspondence

None.

9. Member Closing Comments

Thiel thanked everyone, she thought it was a good meeting.

Charak commented that he learned a lot about AEDs during the meeting and was grateful for that information, noting it would also be valuable for the public. He observed that the committee had

covered a great deal of material, said it was a great meeting, and remarked that the group is moving forward on many issues.

Roche thanked the committee and thought it was a great meeting.

Kimble agreed with Charak that the committee had covered a lot of ground, noted there are several follow-up tasks for members to complete before the next meeting, and reminded everyone they can check the recording if they need to confirm what they agreed to do.

10. Adjournment

Motion by Roche, supported by Charak, to adjourn the meeting. Via voice vote, motion carried 4-0.

Chair Kimble adjourned meeting at 11:30 a.m.

Respectfully submitted by:

Sara Williams, Deputy Clerk

City of Saugatuck