



Planning Commission
Meeting Minutes Draft – APPROVED

April 16, 2026, at 6:30 P.M.

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

1. Call to Order / Roll Call

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

Members Present: Baldwin, Bagierek, Gardner, LaChey, Manns, & Marineau

Members Absent: Gaunt

Staff Present: Planning & Zoning Director Moore, Deputy Clerk Williams

Others Present: Trent Cunningham (Fahey Schultz Burzych Rhodes PLC), David Jirousek (Horizon Planning)

2. Approval of Agenda

Motion by Marineau, supported by Gardner, to amend the agenda to add New Business “A” Election of a Vice-Chair. Via voice vote, motion carried 6-0.

Motion by Bagierek, supported by Baldwin, to approve the amended agenda for April 16, 2026. Via voice vote, motion carried 5-0-1, with Commissioner LaChey abstaining.

3. Approval of Minutes

Motion by Baldwin, supported by Marineau, to approve the March 19, 2026, minutes as presented. Via voice vote, motion carried 6-0.

4. Public Comment

- Holly Anderson

5. New Business

A. Election of a Vice Chair

Motion by Marineau, supported by Manns, to elect Commissioner Baldwin as Vice-Chair of the Planning Commission effective April 16, 2026. Upon roll call vote, motion carried 6-0.

B. 405 Park St – Public Hearing for a Special Land Use Request

Public Hearing

- A. Hearing was called to order by Chair Manns on 4/16/26 at 6:40 p.m.

B. Summary by Zoning Director

Moore explained that the applicant submitted a Special Land Use request to add a pool at 405 Par Street in the C-4 Resort District, where swimming pools and similar recreational facilities for motel/hotel guests require special land use approval. He noted there were no special land use standards flagged specific to the pool itself. Flagged concerns from the site plan were:

- A gazebo shown within the Special Flood Hazard Area and inside the 25-foot waterfront setback.
- A six-foot privacy fence also within the 25-foot waterfront setback.

Moore stated that staff's recommended motion excludes those gazebo and fence elements from this approval and indicates they can be managed later through administrative approvals.

C. Presentation by the Applicant

Dan Cook, the owner of Casa Lona Resort and Marina at 405 Park Street explained that the proposed pool will be located in the exact spot of a former historic pool that was removed about three years ago. The old pool was approximately twelve feet deep, had a diving board, and held about 34,000 gallons of water. By contrast, the new pool is designed to be significantly smaller and less intense, with a maximize depth of about five feet and a capacity of roughly 12,000 gallons. It will feature a large shallow "shelf" area about six inches deep where lounge chairs can be placed in the water, emphasizing a comfortable pool deck and relaxation space rather than a large deep swimming pool. The applicant also noted that they hired ACME Pool Construction, a firm with roughly 45 years of experience building pools in the area, and that they invested extra effort in engineering and design up front to ensure the project is well planned and appropriate for the site.

D. Public comment regarding the application

1. Supporting Comments: None
2. Opposing comments: None
3. General Comments: None
4. Repeat Comment Opportunity: None

E. Public comment portion closed by the Chair at 6:50 p.m.

F. Commission Deliberation

During deliberation on the 405 Park Street application, commissioners expressed broad support for the proposed pool, noting that a pool had previously existed on the site and that the current plan is consistent with that historic use and with typical resort-district amenities. They appreciated the applicant's investment in quality design and construction, and discussed how remaining items such as the privacy fence, gazebo, and fire pit within the Special Flood Hazard Area and twenty-five-foot waterfront setback could be handled through administrative review rather than as part of this approval.

G. Commission action

Motion by LaChey, second by Marineau, to approve the special land use and associated site plan for the proposed pool at 405 Park Street, based on satisfaction of the special land use standards in Section 154.082 and the site plan requirements in Section 154.060 as documented in the April 10, 2026, staff report, with approval contingent on the following conditions:

- 1. All required approvals are obtained from applicable City departments and the Fire Department, if necessary.*
- 2. The pool complies with all applicable State Construction Code requirements, including those related to automatic pool covers and enclosed fencing, if required.*
- 3. Final approval is contingent upon administrative approval of:*
 - The proposed six-foot privacy fence located within the 25-foot waterfront setback, and*
 - The positioning of the proposed gazebo and fire pit within the Special Flood Hazard Area and the 25-foot waterfront setback.*

Upon roll call vote, motion carried 6-0.

C. 322 Culver – Public Hearing for a Special Land Use Request

Public Hearing

A. Hearing was called to order by Chair Manns on 4/16/26 at 6:55 p.m.

B. Summary by Zoning Director

Moore gave an overview of the special land use request for expanded outdoor dining at 322 Culver Street. He explained that the applicant is seeking approval for an expanded platform in the street right-of-way large enough to accommodate five tables, plus an additional two tables proposed in the sidewalk right-of-way. He noted that one of the affected parking spaces straddles the frontage of the applicant's business and the neighboring business, and he advised that the Planning Commission should decide whether a joint application across both tenant spaces can be considered; otherwise, the new platform must be limited to the applicant's own frontage. Moore also stated that staff need additional information before finalizing the review, specifically:

- The exact width of the applicant's tenant frontage on Culver Street (since current materials show the multi-tenant building frontage)
- The precise width and location of the proposed eight (8)' x thirty (30') platform relative to the tenant and building lines (noting that when it was first placed, it extended beyond the applicant's frontage, though they are now working on an agreement with the neighbor)
- The location and number of chairs on both the proposed platform and the sidewalk area that is currently described as "existing approved area."

C. Presentation by the Applicant

Jim Wohl, the owner of Scooters explained that he has owned the business for just under a year and is working hard to improve it while keeping it a vibrant part of downtown. He said he did not have enough time last summer (arriving at the end of May) to pursue outdoor dining, so he spent the winter designing a platform that would meet all city

requirements. He emphasized that he has coordinated with both neighboring restaurants tenants in the same building: they have already shifted their existing outdoor platform so that Scooters' proposed platform will now fit fully within Scooters' own frontage, and all three restaurants' tenants are on board with the agreement.

D. Public comment regarding the application

1. Supporting Comments: None
2. Opposing comments: None
3. General Comments: None
4. Repeat Comment Opportunity: None

E. Public comment portion closed by the Chair at 7:05 p.m.

F. Commission Deliberation

The Commission were generally supportive of the proposal. They praised the sturdy, well-designed platform, noting its safety features (solid construction, setback from traffic, no trip edge at the curb, reflectors, planters) and that the applicant had coordinated with neighboring tenants so each would have a distinct, non-shared platform area. They confirmed that any shared parking-space frontage could be addressed through agreements and administrative review and discussed that using one additional parking space for outdoor dining would have only a minor impact on overall parking capacity, consistent with current city policy on expanded dining. Some questions were raised about documenting the exact number and placement of tables and seats, and about ensuring all checklist items and department/fire approvals are satisfied, but commissioners felt these could be handled as conditions of approval. They concluded that the use is appropriate for the downtown context and meets the special land use standards.

G. Commission action

Motion by Marineau, supported by Baldwin, to approve the special land use, so long as the following conditions are provided:

1. *Provide light fixture details and information concerning the compliant placement of electrical cords.*
2. *Secure all other applicable approvals from City departments, the fire department, and applicable outside agencies.*
3. *Provide all Expanded Outdoor Dining Area checklist items in accordance with Section 154.092 (O)(2)b:*
 - a) *A revised/compliant site plan.*
 - b) *An executed Revocable License Agreement between the City and Applicant.*
 - c) *A one-time application fee and annual fee.*
 - d) *Certificate of Insurance, demonstrating general and product liability coverage in the amount of \$500,000 per person/\$500,000 per incident with the City listed as a named insured.*
 - e) *Certificate of umbrella insurance with policy limits of at least \$1,000,000, with the City listed as a named insured.*
 - f) *Health Department Food Service License (If applicable).*
 - g) *Attestation form from Applicant, indicating that the Outdoor Dining Area will be lit 24 hours per day by both electrical lighting and traffic reflectors.*

- h) *Written approval from the Fire Department for heating equipment (If Applicable).*
- i) *Attestation from applicant that all property taxes, including personal property taxes, are current.*

Via roll call vote, motion carried 6-0.

6. Old Business

A. 510 Butler/120 Mary (Wickwood Inn) – Amended Conditional Rezoning Request

The commission's discussion on 510 Butler/120 Mary (Wickwood Inn) focused on whether it was appropriate to rezone the property from Commercial Transitional back to Water Street East with the applicant's proposed voluntary conditions. Commissioners acknowledged the applicant's desire to expand services (liquor license, more dining, small events, limited public access to the dining room), but raised concerns about intensity of use, event size, parking, enforcement of conditions that run with the land, and the broader precedent of extending Water Street-type commercial intensity onto Butler Street frontage before the city finishes its new master plan. They noted that the conditions package had changed significantly since March, that the proposal did not clearly fit existing "hotel/inn" definitions, and that future land-use and zoning questions on Butler are better managed in the upcoming master-planning and text-amendment work.

The applicant request the Commissioners return their conversation and deliberation to the previously reviewed proposal submitted for the March 19, 2026, Planning Commission meeting which proposed less stringent voluntary conditions and positioned the future use request to be classified as a "Motel and Motor Court." The Commission reiterated concerns about the intensity of use, increased event size, and expanding Water Street zoning farther east of Water Street. The Commission also expressed concerns about the applicants' request to approve an application that was significantly different from the amended application and therefore was not included in the packet to have further review in preparation for the current meeting.

Motion by Marineau to recommend denial of the proposed ordinance to amend the zoning ordinance and zoning map at the City of Saugatuck by recommending denial of the rezoning at 120 Mary Street and 510 Butler Street with voluntary conditions.

Commissioner LaChey proposed an amendment; that the motion be prefaced with the phrase "based upon the discussions and sentiments of various Planning Commissioners stated at this meeting."

Commissioner Baldwin proposed another amendment to "refer specifically to the factors in Section 154.176 (C)(1)b, of the zoning ordinance", which is what the commission has been discussing.

The amendments were not formally seconded prior to the motion being restated.

Motion by Marineau, supported by LaChey, to recommend denial of the proposed ordinance to amend the zoning map at the City of Saugatuck. I recommend denial of the rezoning of 120 Mary Street and 510 Butler Street with voluntary conditions, as offered by staff based on the findings related to 154.176 (C)(1)b of the zoning ordinance as outlined in the memo dated February 13, 2026, and as discussed by planning commissioners with reservations they had during the discussion at the April 16th and March 19th Planning Commission meetings. Motion carried 6-0.

B. Sign Ordinance Amendment

The Commission's discussion on the Sign Ordinance Amendment centered on how to manage changes City Council requested after the draft left Planning Commission. Attorney Trent Cunningham explained that he had revised the ordinance to reflect Council's direction and prepared a comparison table showing current vs. proposed rules. Commissioners clarified that their role at this stage was mainly to confirm they had no major objections to Council-driven edits, not to re-open the entire ordinance. They briefly reviewed key changes:

- Simplifying the mural definition and clarifying that murals should only need Historic District Commission approval when actually located in the historic district.
- Revising temporary and yard sign rules, including a carve-out tied to garage sales and removing the on-premises/off-premises distinction.
- Preserving more Planning Commission/Council oversight instead of delegating certain approvals fully to staff.

Motion by LaChey, supported by Bagierek, to approve the latest version of the sign ordinance, as presented to the Planning Commission for review, be recommended to City Council for approval. Upon voice vote, motion carried 6-0.

C. Master Plan Discussion

The Master Plan discussion focused on a draft "character areas" analysis prepared by consultant David Jirousek as an early chapter of the new master plan. Jirousek explained that he mapped and described neighborhoods purely by their existing physical and functional character (building types, setbacks, uses, streets, walkability, public spaces), without regard to current zoning lines, to create a baseline for later future land use and zoning decisions. Commissioners generally agreed that the mapped areas felt accurate and useful, noting how it reveals differences between blocks that today may share a zoning district and highlights where future changes (e.g., expanding downtown character, adjusting commercial edges, or protecting residential areas) would have real impacts. They discussed using this framework later for questions like whether and where to add pocket parks/benches, how to manage pressure on Butler Street and waterfront areas, and how to respond to regional growth in Douglas and the township. The commission's consensus was to treat this as a working reference, give members time to study it in more detail, and then use it to structure upcoming topic-specific chapters (mobility/sidewalks, public spaces, environmental issues, etc.) before tackling the final future land use map.

7. Communication

None

8. Reports of Officers and Committees

A. Parking Improvements Task Force – Auston Marineau

Auston Marineau reported that the Parking Improvements Task Force reviewed survey results, set a plan for off-season and peak-season field data collection to track parking demand and turnover), and did a first "around-the-table check of members' views on options like a parking garage and paid parking. His sense was that no one is eager to pursue either of those yet, though all options remain on the table. He also noted that, so far, task force meetings have had little public attendance, even though the survey response was strong, and that much of the work is still at an early, exploratory "idea-testing" stage rather than forming concrete recommendations.

9. Public Comments

None

10. Commissioner Comments

- Gardner thanked everyone for a strong, thoughtful meeting and said he was proud to serve with the other commissioners, noting their expertise and the quality of discussion. He then raised a specific concern about a house at 415 Park Street, stating that neighbors have reported it has not been properly maintained for years and may pose a danger to adjacent properties. He formally requested that the zoning director investigate the condition of that property, offering to provide additional information to staff outside of the meeting. He closed by publicly thanking Bobbie Gaunt for her years of service on the Planning Commission and saying she will be missed.
- Marineau briefly commented that it was a good, substantive discussion, and said he appreciates being part of the commission, and joined others in thanking Commissioner Bobbie Gaunt for her service and noting that her perspective will be missed.
- LaChey said he agreed with earlier remarks about the quality of the meeting and felt the commissioner's work on several complex issues was commendable, highlighting how members listen to one another, coalesce, and show mutual respect. He then thanked Bobbie Gaunt for her service, calling her the "moral compass" of the commission and emphasizing how important that role is. Finally, he congratulated Deputy Clerk Williams, noting that she had just completed the requirements to become a full-fledged municipal clerk and that this was recognized at the last City Council meeting.
- Baldwin stated that he wanted to echo others' comments about Bobbie Gaunt, calling her departure a significant loss for the Planning Commission. He noted that she has likely served for many years and that her experience, voice, and perspective will be missed.
- Bagierek remarked that many different businesses have come before Planning Commission, all wanting to help keep Saugatuck great. He said the commission's role is to "keep them in the navigational buoys"-to guide projects within the rules. He acknowledged that the commission had just voted down one request but encouraged businesses not to give up and to keep trying to find proposals that fit within the regulations, adding that he is glad to see new businesses continuing to invest in town.
- Manns reiterated how much the commission will miss Bobbie Gaunt and thanked her for her years of service, saying she is welcome to reconsider and return before interviews for a replacement begin. He then reflected on the evening's work, noting that even when the commission denies a request, it does so for sound reasons while still trying to think about future changes that could benefit businesses within the city's framework. He emphasized that this balance is exactly what a Planning Commission is supposed to do and said it is an honor to work with this particular group, praising the quality of the commission and thanking members for their ongoing commitment.

11. Adjournment

Motion by Gardner, supported by Bagierek, to adjourn the meeting at 8:42 p.m. Motion carried 6-0.

Submitted by:

Sara Williams

Deputy Clerk

City of Saugatuck