



## Planning Commission

### Meeting Minutes Draft – DRAFT

September 8, 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 6:40 p.m. by Chair Manns.

Members Present: Chair Manns, Commissioners Baldwin, Bagierek, Gardner, LaChey, Manns

Members Absent: Commissioners Marineau, Raphael

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

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

#### 2. Approval of Agenda

*Motion by LaChey, supported by Baldwin, to move item 5C under New Business on the agenda to item 5B and move 5B down to 5C. Via voice vote, motion carried 5-0.*

*Motion by LaChey, supported by Baldwin, to approve the revised agenda for September 8, 2026. Via voice vote, motion carried 5-0.*

#### 3. Approval of Minutes

*Motion by Baldwin, supported by LaChey, to approve the July 16, 2026, minutes as presented. Via voice vote, motion carried 5-0.*

#### 4. Public Comment

Elaine Isely – commented on New Business Item 5A

Dale Harrison – commented on New Business Item 5A

#### 5. New Business

##### A. 1165/1169 Bridge St – Major Waterfront Construction Public Hearing:

##### Public Hearing

##### A. Hearing was called to order by Chair Manns on 9/8/26 at 6:48 p.m.

##### B. Summary by Zoning Director

Planning & Zoning Director Moore explained that the applicant is proposing a 175-foot boardwalk and dock structure that begins with a 25-foot boardwalk and dock structure that begins with a 25-foot segment across a wetland to the ordinary high-water mark, then continues 90 feet as an elevated dock, followed by approximately 60 feet of floating dock, for a total of 150 waterward of the ordinary high-water mark. The walking surface would

be 5 feet wide, with two mooring piles and a 30-foot finger pier. Moore noted that the applicant has already obtained EGLE approval, and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers approval plus an extension to construct in September which EGLE prefers to protect spring fish spawning and natural habitat. He explained that typically the Planning Commission would wait for the Zoning Board of Appeals (ZBA) to act on necessary variances before voting, but due to timing and EGLE's comments, staff felt it reasonable for the Commission to consider a conditional approval contingent on ZBA action. Finally, he highlighted that the proposed motion explicitly characterizes this as a residential-use dock only, to avoid any interpretation that the major waterfront construction approval could allow commercial use.

C. Presentation by the Applicant

The applicant, Rob Elhenicky (owner of 1165/1169 Bridge St) presented his proposal and intent. He emphasized the dock is for personal family use only, not commercial, and that he has no intention of subdividing the two lots; the combined property was specifically what attracted his family to Saugatuck. He described working closely with Kameron Jordan (a former state permitting official) and with EGLE and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to design a dock suited to the site's shallow water, with the structure located to avoid impeding navigation or raising agency concerns. He noted that a prior, smaller dock permit for the property (held by former owner Dale Harrison) expired in July 2026 and lacked Army Corps approval. Elhenicky stated that SHPO has approved the project and that the relevant tribal consultation process has been completed, with the formal letter in transit. He explained that the shallow conditions effectively limit the site to jet boats and jet skis – specifically his two Yamaha jet boats (21-foot center console and 25-foot pleasure craft) and two jet ski's. He repeated that the design aims to protect wetlands and allow water flow beneath the structure, and that he has proceeded deliberately and cooperatively to build a dock that minimally impacts the environment while allowing his family to access the Kalamazoo River and Lake Michigan.

D. Public comment regarding the application

1. Supporting Comments: None
2. Opposing comments:
  - Dale Harrison raised multiple concerns about the proposed dock at 1165/1169 Bridge Street. Drawing on his prior ownership, he stressed that the water levels in that area of the Kalamazoo River fluctuate by about six feet, causing the area to dry and limit or restrict access to the river. He referenced a 1967 aerial photo (and similarly low levels in the 1980s) showing the area as dry, to argue that the dock would not function in low-water periods. He described a triangular parcel he and his wife bought in 1979 as a wildlife sanctuary, stating he would not allow dredging through his property to create access for the dock and that his earlier, modest 75-foot canoe/kayak dock permit from the Corps was abandoned once he realized low water would still block access. He questioned how the ordinary high-water mark was being defined, saying that on this property it can vary by about six feet and should be tied to a specific elevation, as it was in his former permit.

Harrison also raised concerns about:

1. The absence of any dredging request in the current application even though in his view, it would be necessary for reliable access;
  2. The proposed dock height (suggesting it should be at least one foot above the high-water zone, which could put it ~7 feet above low water and require ladders);
  3. Potential lighting impacts;
  4. Whether a “floatable” or elevated dock, as described, would truly allow unimpeded movement of wildlife and water beneath it.
3. General Comments: None
  4. Repeat Comment Opportunity: None

E. Public comment portion closed by the Chair at 7:48p.m.

F. Commission Deliberation

The Commission discussed whether and under what conditions to support the Bridge Street dock. Members first clarified with Planning and Zoning Director Moore that any future dredging would itself require a new Major Waterfront Construction approval, ZBA review, and likely additional EGLE/Corps permits. They confirmed that if SHPO/Tribal review letter did not arrive, the project could not proceed under those agencies’ authority, and that the Commission could also make receipt of that letter an explicit condition. Commissioners then talked through possible safeguards: limiting the dock to residential use only, explicitly capping the number of boats/watercraft, prohibiting lighting on the dock, to residential use only, explicitly capping the number of boats/watercraft, prohibiting lighting on the dock, and tying any approval to successful ZBA variances because the proposal exceeds the 100-foot dock length limit and passes through wetlands, both contrary to the current ordinance.

Commissioner Gardner expressed strong reservations, citing his lifelong familiarity with the site: historically, the property is essentially wetland, with water levels that sometimes leave the area flooded and at other times very shallow. He questioned whether a 150-foot dock extending into the wetlands – and beyond the ordinance’s length limit – was appropriate for a low-intensity waterfront zone, even if the state and federal agencies had issued permits. He worried this may depart from the city’s intent to avoid major construction in wetlands and could potentially undermine the zoning framework. Other commissioners, including Manns, Bagierek, and LaChey, acknowledged those environmental and precedent concerns but emphasized that:

- a) Docks are an allowed use for riparian residential properties if ordinance standards (and variances if necessary) are met;
- b) This design appears to avoid impeding navigation and water flow; and
- c) The applicant has sought all relevant approvals and worked within the process.

They noted that the ZBA, not the Planning Commission, is the body that will decide on the variance questions and discussed the Planning Commission’s role as deciding whether the project, if conditioned appropriately, is consistent with the site’s residential and

waterfront use. The deliberation centered on balancing property rights and access to the river against wetland protection, ordinance consistency, and long-term precedent.

G. Commission action

*Motion by LaChey, supported by Baldwin to conditionally approve the major waterfront construction project for a 175-foot dock, 1165 and 1169 Bridge Street, provided that the approval shall not become effective unless and until the Saugatuck Zoning Board of Appeals grants both of the following variances and with the following conditions to be stated:*

- 1. A 50-foot dimensional variance from Section 154.205 (D)(1) of the City's Zoning Ordinance to allow for the construction of a 150-foot residential use dock extending waterward of the ordinary high-water mark.*
- 2. A dimensional variance from Section 154.205 (G) of the City's Zoning Ordinance to allow for the construction of a 150-foot residential use dock extending waterward of the ordinary high-water mark that passes through areas classified as wetlands.*
- 3. No lighting on the dock, other than provided by the actual boats, the dock itself will have no lighting whatsoever.*
- 4. Receipt of approval and acceptance by the appropriate Tribes that are involved in this area.*
- 5. Limit of four watercraft will be allowed at any time with respect to this dock.*

*Upon roll call vote, motion carried 5-0.*

B. Comprehensive (Master) Plan Chapters 4-6 Draft Review & Discussion:

The Commission conducted a guided review of draft Master Plan Chapters 4–6 (Housing; Mobility & Connectivity; Natural Environment & Resiliency) with Planning consultant Jirousek and Planning & Zoning Director Moore. On housing (Ch. 4), they clarified terms like “missing middle housing” (e.g., duplexes, small multi-unit buildings) and discussed how to allow infill while preserving Saugatuck’s small-scale, historic character and avoiding “McMansion” re-builds. Commissioners linked the chapter to upcoming zoning ordinance work, including possibly using form-based code to regulate building form rather than just use, and acknowledged that many housing goals (especially workforce/affordable housing) will realistically depend on regional cooperation with Douglas and Saugatuck Township.

On mobility and connectivity (Ch. 5), they discussed Interurban transit (including the seasonal loop and its funding), updating references to Laketown Township and Holland service, and coordinating with the Blue Star Trail group on the current trail alignment. They emphasized Blue Star Highway’s dual role as the primary gateway and only east–west connection within the city, and tied this to parking, wayfinding, pedestrian connections, and recommendations from the Walker parking study.

On natural environment and resiliency (Ch. 6), commissioners asked that the plan more fully document and highlight the city’s preserved lands and conservation areas (e.g., Saugatuck Harbor Natural Area, Dune Ridge/dune grass conservancy areas, the new “Saugatuck Wilds”/former airport land, Peterson Preserve/Mill Pond, school campus open space), and include goals for maintaining Tree City USA status, promoting native plantings, and actively removing invasive species and reducing light pollution. Throughout, they agreed the current drafts are intentionally text-heavy first passes, to be tightened, illustrated, and given more “local flavor” in a

second draft, and set expectations to review Chapters 7–9 and then tackle future land use and the action plan in subsequent meetings.

C. 510 Butler – Zoning Ordinance Amendment “Boutique Inn” Discussion:

Public Hearing

A. Hearing was called to order by Chair Manns on 9/8/26 at 7:48 p.m.

B. Summary by Zoning Director

Planning & Zoning Director Moore explained that Wickwood has revised its proposed zoning text amendment for the new lodging use currently called “Boutique Inn”. The changes significantly narrow where the use would be allowed: it would apply only in the R-4 district, and only on R-4 lots that abut C-1 or C-2 zoned properties. In addition, the use would be allowed only as a special land use, meaning every proposal must come before the Planning Commission for review and approval, rather than being permitted by right.

C. Presentation by the Applicant

The applicant’s consultant, Chris Khorey summarized how the Wickwood’s proposed “Boutique Inn” text amendment had been scaled back since earlier in the summer. He noted that the use has been removed from all commercial districts and would no longer be permitted by right anywhere; instead, it would be allowed only as a special use in the R-4 district, and only on R-4 parcels that abut commercial zoning. He explained that the proposed event capacity has been reduced from six times the number of guest rooms to four times the number of guest rooms, which effectively caps event attendance at double the number of overnight guests, since each room may hold two adults. The limit on non-guest dining remained: total dining seating capacity would be two times the number of guest rooms (not in addition to guest dining).

D. Public comment regarding the application

5. Supporting Comments: None
6. Opposing comments: None
7. General Comments: None
8. Repeat Comment Opportunity: None

E. Public comment portion closed by the Chair at 8:06 p.m.

F. Commission Deliberation

The Commission weighed whether the revised 510 Butler/Wickwood “Boutique Inn” text amendment was acceptable and what further limits were needed. Commissioners first clarified details with the applicant: that the on-site manager’s unit was intended as a true dwelling (so a manager could have a partner or family) and not as an extra rentable guest room; that restaurant hours would still restrict early-morning service to overnight guests only; and that the proposed use would always require special land use review. Several commissioners said the applicant had made good-faith reductions—narrowing the geography to certain R-4 edge parcels, removing all by-right permissions, and significantly

cutting event size. Commissioner Baldwin remained concerned about scale and parking, arguing that event capacity should be reduced further to three times the number of sleeping rooms (roughly 48 people at full build-out) and that, because the operation is closer to an inn than a traditional B&B, its off-street parking standard should match that of an inn (one space per sleeping unit plus one for the manager) rather than the more lenient ratio. Commissioner Gardner questioned using the term “Boutique Inn”, noting it is essentially a marketing phrase and not a standard regulatory category, and said he would prefer to frame the use as an “Enhanced Bed and Breakfast” built on existing B&B rules. The City Attorney confirmed the city can define and name the use however it wishes, and that spot-zoning concerns are minimal because the amendment would apply to a cluster of R-4 parcels, not just Wickwood. After further discussion, a majority of commissioners coalesced around four expectations for a revised draft: (1) lower event capacity (3× rooms); (2) stricter parking consistent with inn standards; (3) clear prohibition on renting out the manager’s unit; and (4) renaming the use to something akin to “Enhanced Bed & Breakfast”, while still keeping it limited to select R-4 parcels abutting commercial zoning and subject to special land use review.

**G. Commission action**

*Motion by LaChey, supported by Bagierek to table consideration of the proposed zoning text amendment to establish a new lodging use, currently referred to as “Boutique Inn”, permitting the R4 Residential Transitional Zoning District to allow of the applicant to address the following:*

- 1. Aligning the parking requirements with those of an inn rather than a bed and breakfast;*
- 2. Limit the capacity for event quests to three times the number of sleeping rooms rather than four;*
- 3. Clarifying that the residential space for use by the resident manager that the amendments were simply meant to allow that resident manager to have family in the room rather than allow that room to be rented; and*
- 4. Consideration of changing the name from “Boutique Inn” to “Enhanced Bed & Breakfast”.*

*Upon roll call vote, motion carried 5-0.*

**6. Old Business**

None

**7. Communication**

None

**8. Reports of Officers and Committees**

A. Parking Improvements Task Force: None

**9. Public Comments**

None

**10. Commissioner Comments**

**Gardner** had no public comment.

**LaChey** commented that he is very impressed with how the City is proceeding with the Master Plan work and reiterated his appreciation for the quality and progress of the effort.

**Baldwin** echoed the positive remarks about the Master Plan, saying he had initially been concerned about the project's pace but that those worries have eased and he is now very pleased with the visible progress being made.

**Bagierek** agreed with the positive comments about the Master Plan and added that he is pleased with the City's new logo, stating he thinks it turned out well and will "age" nicely over time despite earlier concerns.

**Manns** thanked everyone for their flexibility in reconvening after the earlier lack of quorum, noting that having all five members present allowed the Commission to act on the Bridge Street dock request in time for the Zoning Board of Appeals to benefit from their discussion. He reiterated his satisfaction with the Master Plan progress and then highlighted the upcoming Mount Baldhead race that weekend, mentioning there would be around 750 runners and encouraging support. He concluded by saying he looked forward to seeing everyone at the next regular meeting the following Thursday.

#### **11. Adjournment**

Motion by LaChey, supported by Baldwin, to adjourn the meeting at 8:20 p.m. Motion carried 5-0.

Submitted by:  
Sara Williams  
Deputy Clerk  
City of Saugatuck