City Council Agenda Item Report

FROM: Ryan Cummins, City Manager

MEETING DATE: November 10, 2025

SUBJECT: Park Rules

DESCRIPTION:

Chapter 95 of the City Code establishes certain regulations related to parks and recreation such as injury to park property, intoxicating beverages, waste containers, ball games, and motorized vehicles. They can be viewed here:
https://codelibrary.amlegal.com/codes/saugatuck/latest/saugatuck_mi/0-0-0-2661

Several other ordinances also apply to conduct within City parks. In cases where there isn't an established ordinance, the City Code provides that:

> **§ 95.06 ADDITIONAL RULES.**
> The City Manager is hereby empowered to make such rules and regulations, subject to the approval of the City Council, pertaining to the conduct and use of parks and public grounds as are necessary to administer the same and to protect public property and the safety, health, morals and welfare of the public, and no person shall fail to comply with the rules and regulations.

Staff have observed that there are rules posted at Mt. Baldhead Park, Oval Beach and Saugatuck Harbor Natural Area. However, the rules are not formally approved by the City Council. There have also been additional questions about whether overnight sleeping is permitted in City parks.

Attached is a draft set of park rules that would make the posted rules more formal and enforceable. The draft also contains a general prohibition on overnight sleeping or camping in any park, natural area, beach, or associated parking area.

Workshop Discussion

At the October 21 workshop, City Council expressed interest in possibly extending the park closure time for Oval Beach, allowing dogs on the beach outside of the busier beach season, and having a formal closure time for the playground at Village Square.

The rules have been updated to:

- Only prohibit dogs at Oval Beach from Memorial Day weekend through September 30.
    - It is of note that the City Code requires dogs to be on a leash:
        - § 91.02 RUNNING AT LARGE.
          No person shall permit any domestic animal, or any goose, chicken or other fowl, to run or be at large upon public streets, lanes, alleys, vacant lots or other open or public places, nor upon any private premises other than the premises of the owner or custodian of the domestic animal or fowl, without the consent of the owner or occupant of the private premises; provided, however, that any such domestic animal may be led about outside the premises of the owner thereof on a suitable leash in the immediate control of a competent person.
    - The Sheriff's Office advised in the last few years they haven't had running dog issues at Oval Beach.
- Close the Village Square playground at 10:00p.
- Add rules to the Saugatuck Wilds list to reflect the posted rules which also include no hunting or trapping and leashed dogs being welcome.
    - While the City has ordinances requiring dogs to be leashed and prohibiting hunting in city parks, this property is in the Township, and our ordinances are not applicable in the Township. As a result, they should be specifically listed.

The draft shows Oval Beach continuing to close at 10:00p. The Public Works Superintendent provided the following insights, and staff recommends keeping the current closure time:

> Managing and staffing the beach has been one of our biggest challenges in recent years. Our Oval Beach Manager already works long hours, including holidays and weekends, to keep operations running smoothly. The Public Works team has been actively looking for ways to reduce that strain and support our staff. Extending hours would work against those efforts. Later hours also raise concerns about cash handling, increased alcohol/substance abuse, and safety for our younger employees working in the dark. In addition, clearing the park after closing can take time, often keeping staff on site well past their usual shift end, even when they're scheduled to return early the next morning. I hope these points will be considered when making a decision.

Tabled

At the October 27 regular meeting, City Council tabled this item until November 10. The Public Works Superintendent will be at the meeting to discuss closing procedures and answer questions about the staff recommendation.

BUDGET ACTION REQUIRED:
N/A

LEGAL REVIEW:
Legal has been consulted. Legal will be at your meeting to answer any questions.

SAMPLE MOTION:
Motion to approve the park rules as presented.

Policy/Procedure: Park Rules

Date Adopted or Implemented: 11-10-2025

Revision Date: N/A

Resolution Number (if applicable): N/A

CITY OF SAUGATUCK

Purpose
The purpose of this policy is to establish rules governing the use of City of Saugatuck parks and public recreation areas to ensure the safety, enjoyment, and preservation of public property for residents and visitors.

Authority
Pursuant to § 95.06 of the City Code, the City Manager may establish additional park rules and regulations, subject to City Council approval, as necessary to ensure the safety, health, and welfare of the public and the proper management of City park properties.

General Park Rules

- No overnight sleeping or camping in any park, natural area, beach, or associated public parking area.
- The City Manager may restrict access or close any park or portion thereof when necessary for maintenance, habitat preservation, construction, safety, or public welfare. Entry into restricted or closed areas is prohibited.

Additional Park Specific Rules

Mt. Baldhead Park

- Park closes at 10:00 p.m.
- Stay on stairs and trails
- No dogs

Oval Beach and Saugatuck Harbor Natural Area

- Open 8:00 a.m. – 10:00 p.m.
- No dogs
  - From Memorial Day Weekend – September 30
- No fires
- No personal grilling
- No smoking
- No nudity
- Stay off dune grass
- Stay on trails

Saugatuck Wilds Nature Preserve

- Stay on trails
- No horses, bicycles, or motorized traffic

- Do not pick plants without permission
- No hunting or trapping
- Do not remove, collect, or harass wildlife
- Leashed dogs welcome

Village Square

- Playground closes at 10:00 p.m.

Additional Park Regulation

These rules do not encompass all park related regulations. For example, other regulations such as possession or consumption of alcohol, skateboarding, injury to park property, noise, fireworks, trash deposits in waste containers, ball game restrictions, hawking/peddling, hunting, Oval Beach parking passes, and motorized vehicle location and operation are currently established in the City Code of Ordinances.

Enforcement

Violation of this policy or any applicable City ordinance may result in:

- Removal from the park or public grounds; and/or
- Additional penalties as provided under City ordinance or State law.

Temporary Waivers

The City Council may, by motion or resolution, temporarily waive park rules for a designated period or special event.