Planning Commission

Meeting Minutes Draft – DRAFT

July 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, Raphael
Members Absent: None
Staff Present: Planning & Zoning Director Moore, Deputy Clerk Williams
Others Present: David Jirousek (Horizon Planning)

2. Approval of Agenda

Motion by LaChey, supported by Bagierek, to approve the agenda as presented for the July 16, 2026, meeting. Via voice vote, motion carried unanimously.

3. Approval of Minutes

Motion by Baldwin, supported by LaChey, to approve the June 18, 2026, minutes as presented. Via voice vote, motion carried unanimously.

4. Public Comment

None

5. New Business

A. <u>Planning Commission Survey Summary:</u>
The Planning Commission's discussion of the survey summary focused on how closely commissioners' responses aligned around key themes and where they diverged. Planning & Zoning Director Moore noted strong consensus on preserving existing neighborhood character while still allowing appropriate growth, and especially strong agreement on expanding walkability and non-motorized transportation. Commissioners were more divided, however, on "intensification" in and around downtown – some favoring "maintain current scale and intensity, "others supporting "moderate intensification where appropriate." In the discussion, they unpacked what those phrases mean in practice: small, context-sensitive projects and possible use of transition zones, but not high-rise or out-of-scale buildings. Several members also tied their survey answers to broader pressures from substantial new housing in Douglas and the township, emphasizing the need to balance Saugatuck's role as a commercial hub and resort community with protection of its small-town, historic character and quality of life for year-round residents.

B. <u>Comprehensive (Master) Plan Chapters 1-3 Draft Review & Discussion:</u>

During the review of the Comprehensive Master Plan Chapters 1-3, the Planning Commission focused on refining both content and structure. Commissioners agreed the overall direction was solid and appreciated having a narrative "first draft" that will later be made more visual and user-friendly. They asked for a richer history section that better reflects Saugatuck's evolution – from industry and agriculture to resort community – and more prominently acknowledges the LGBTQ+ community's historic and ongoing role. They made detailed map and text corrections to the "planning areas" (e.g. reclassifying parts of Mason and Griffith as mixed-use, recognizing bed-and-breakfasts and motor courts on South Riverfront, updating parking and sidewalk descriptions, and flagging conservation lands on the coastal dunes). The group also flagged anomalies (household and housing counts, poverty figures, vacant units, and renter-occupied trends) for verification and requested added explanation of population decline and housing dynamics. Finally, they supported the proposed chapter structure (clear goals, topic sections, and planning principles) and emphasized future priorities such as wayfinding, walkability, public engagement (including business and history stakeholders), and clarifying Saugatuck's role as the commercial hub within a growing tri-community region.

6. Old Business
None

7. Communication
None

8. Reports of Officers and Committees

A. Parking Improvements Task Force:
Commissioner Marineau reported that the Parking Improvements Task Force has two meetings left (July & August) and that their consultant has just completed the final parking inventory to capture habits and turnover, so data will be available soon. He explained the likely recommendations to City Council: avoid both paid parking and structured parking for now; instead, strengthen enforcement and create and "ambassador" program with uniformed personnel who can direct visitors to parking and enforce three-hour limits where applicable; expand remote parking and improve/expand Interurban operations, potentially through shared-parking agreements; and place a strong emphasis on improved signage and wayfinding. He notes that nothing "drastic" is expected to be proposed at this stage, but a larger packet of alternative ideas (such as one-way street concepts and raised parking) will be provided for Council's longer-term consideration.

9. Public Comments
None

10. Commissioner Comments
Raphael offered a brief positive comment, stating that he thought the comprehensive plan work was a good project, that the Planning Commission made good progress on the three chapters reviewed, and that he liked how it was going.

Gardner says his main focus has been on the Parking Improvement Task Force. He appreciates that the emerging recommendation is that Saugatuck does not have a parking capacity problem but a management problem, and that the task force is emphasizing better management rather than major new

DRAFT

infrastructure. He notes this aligns with his long-held position and says he looks forward to seeing the final report and conclusions.

Marineau thanked everyone for the strong discussion, then used the recent birth of his daughter, Daphne, as a reminder of the longer time horizon the master plan must address. He notes that while he grew up in Saugatuck and hadn't planned to return, there is a "magic" or "it factor" that draws people back, and he stresses that the Commission's work should protect that quality for the next generation as well as for current residents and visitors.

LaChey appreciates Auston's long-term perspective and thought the first three comprehensive plan chapters were very good and was impressed with the work. He adds that this kind of focused, month-after-month work on the comprehensive plan is exactly what the Planning Commission is supposed to be doing, and he's pleased that it's happening.

Baldwin shares Mark LaChey's view: the first three comprehensive plan chapters are strong, and staff did great work on them. He adds that it was a relief to have a meeting focused almost entirely on the comprehensive plan with no major other agenda items, noting they used all the available time and that any additional business would have undercut the depth of that review.

Bagierek agrees it was a very good, well-focused meeting on the master plan and specifically compliments Grayson's pre-meeting survey and question packet. He says that format worked well for this exercise, gave commissioners time to review and respond thoughtfully, and that he looks forward to seeing more of that approach in future chapters.

Manns echoed the other commissioner's comments, saying it was a good meeting, and he appreciated being able to devote the entire session to the master plan without needing a special meeting. He noted they used the full two hours productively and made substantial headway on the first three chapters. He also acknowledges and celebrates Saugatuck's "newest resident," Auston's newborn daughter Daphne, joking that the city's population has increased by one, and he congratulated Auston & Olivia.

11. Adjournment

Motion by Gardner, supported by Raphael, to adjourn the meeting at 8:25 p.m. Motion carried unanimously.

Submitted by:
Sara Williams
Deputy Clerk
City of Saugatuck

DRAFT