



CITY COUNCIL REGULAR MEETING May 26, 2026

The City Council met to have a Regular Council Meeting at City Hall at 6:30 p.m.
102 Butler St., Saugatuck, MI 49453.

Call to Order:

The meeting was called to order by Mayor Anderson at 6:30 p.m.

Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

Attendance:

Present: Mayor Anderson, Mayor Pro-Tem Clark and Councilmembers Dean, Gardner, Muncey (6:33 arrival), Peterson and Stanton.

Others Present: City Manager Cummins, Attorney Witte, Zoning Director Moore and Deputy Clerk Williams.

Mayor's Comments:

Mayor Anderson reflected on the community's Memorial Day commemoration held the previous day, describing it as a "beautiful" event. She specifically praised the high school band as "amazing" and noted how meaningful it was to see veterans taking part in the ceremony. Anderson emphasized that gatherings like this help the community appreciate those who have given their lives for the country's freedom.

City Manager Comments:

City Manager Ryan Cummins began by echoing the Mayor's Memorial Day reflections, sharing that he had spent the weekend in Philadelphia visiting historic sites related to the Declaration of Independence and the U.S. Constitution. He remarked on how moving it was to reflect on the sacrifices made at the nation's founding and since, stressing that those sacrifices must never be forgotten. He then shifted to a construction update, explaining that downtown work is largely complete except for some valve work delayed until the fall, and that progress on Maple Street has been strong, with a new water main installed from Blue Star to State Street in the past week. Cummins reminded everyone that a public hearing on the proposed budget for the next fiscal year is scheduled for the next regular meeting on June 8, noting that notices have been published and information is available on the city's website and in his community reports. He also announced that the new Director of Public Works, Mark Ondersma, started that day, describing him as being in a "fire hose" phase of onboarding, and said Mark is expected to attend the upcoming workshop meeting so council can meet him and hear from him directly.

Agenda Changes: None.

Guest Speakers:

Commissioner Brad Lubbers began by joining the earlier Memorial Day acknowledgments, thanking those who have served and continue to serve. He then reported that county equalization work is complete, with all local units' numbers submitted to the state and certified, noting roughly a 10% increase in SEV to about \$13.8 billion and a 7.6% year-over-year increase in taxable value. He explained that, as a result, rollback ratios will be sent to local units to automatically adjust millage rates. Lubbers relayed a Health Department update that this will be an especially bad tick season, warning residents to check themselves and their children carefully after being outdoors—even in places not usually associated with ticks—and noting some non-typical tick species are already appearing. He added that the Department of Justice has extended by one year the deadline for making municipal websites ADA accessible, acknowledging the financial and technical challenges smaller communities face. Lubbers also reported completion of new countywide aerial photography, funded 50% by most local units, for assessment and equalization purposes. He announced the upcoming Senior Expo on Thursday, June 20, at First Baptist Church of Allegan (8:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m.), highlighting that it will feature information on senior services, breakfast, music, programming, and available transportation for those who arrange it in advance.

Public Comment on Agenda Item Only: None.

Consent Agenda:

Motion by Dean, second by Clark to approve the consent agenda as presented. Via roll call vote, motion carried unanimously.

Approval of Accounts Payable:

Motion by, second by Stanton, second by Gardner to approve the accounts payable in the amount of \$194,447.43. Via roll call, motion carried unanimously.

Public Hearing: None.

Unfinished Business: None.

New Business:

Ordinance No.260526-A - To Amend the Zoning Ordinance and Zoning Map of the City of Saugatuck by Approving a Planned Unit Development Overlay and Associated Plan for 640 Water Street:

Motion by Dean, Second by Stanton to approve Plan Unit Development Ordinance Number 260526-A including the associated amendments to the City of Saugatuck zoning map, the consensual conceptual PUD plan dated May 8, 2026 for the property located at 640 Water Street, and to authorize the mayor to sign the easement agreement dated May 20, 2026 on behalf of the City Council.

This approval is based on findings that the proposed PUD satisfies the intent and review standards of section 154.117 and all other applicable provisions of the zoning ordinance, as documented in the staff memorandum and planning commission recommendations, subject to the following condition:

- *compliance with the city engineer review letter dated February 5, 2026;*
- *compliance with the zoning review comments dated May 20, 2026;*
- *obtaining all required permits and approvals from applicable agencies; and*
- *recording of the affidavit required pursuant to section 154 dot 117(G)(9).*

Via roll call vote, motion carried unanimously.

Fire Department Budget for Fiscal Year 2026-2027:

Motion by Peterson, second by Gardner to approve the fire department budget for fiscal year 2026-2027 as presented. Via roll call vote, motion carried unanimously.

Staff Reports, Boards, Commissions & Committees:

Monthly department activity reports were provided by the City Manager along with the following board and committees:

Fire District Administration Board:

City of Saugatuck representative, Dan Fox reported that the Fire District Administrative Board met on May 18, with the next meeting scheduled for June 15. He highlighted a recent fire-safety education event at Douglas Elementary, where firefighters used a two-room trailer to demonstrate how quickly fires spread and to teach children to crawl low to escape rather than “stop, drop, and roll.” He noted the strong ongoing partnership between the district and local schools, including ice safety and 911 education. Fox updated council on the 415 Wiley project, explaining that progress is being made toward issuing the bond: the township has already passed the first required resolution and is expected to consider the second bond authorization at its June 10 meeting, after which bond counsel can proceed and funds can start flowing. Operationally, he reported that April call volume is down, with EMS remaining the core service and motor vehicle incidents significantly reduced—especially along the I-196 corridor—improving responder safety. He also showed trend data indicating that calls from Douglas Cove have dropped after targeted outreach and training there. Finally, he noted that the fire district again installed the Oval Beach swim buoys at no cost to the city (a service estimated at about \$8,000 if contracted out) and closed with a lighter note that the department handled two cat rescues in the past month.

Interurban Board:

Councilmember Gregory Muncey reported that the Interurban continues to see strong growth, with April ridership reaching 4,635 rides—the highest April on record and about 570 more than the same month last year. He said they anticipate a very busy tourist season, and the free parking shuttle will resume in June to help manage downtown congestion. Due to rising afternoon demand, Route 6 now starts 45 minutes earlier and runs until 6:00 p.m. Technology adoption is growing: in April, 26% of rides were booked through the new Interurban Transit app and Spare platform, despite the system launching only this year. Muncey highlighted the launch of free Senior Mondays, noting that 52 seniors used the service on the very first Monday—underscoring the system’s importance for older residents. He reported that the August millage renewal/increase is officially on the ballot, and staff have been attending millage workshops with the Friends of the Interurban to prepare public education materials. Financially, he said FY 2025 revenue of about \$1.38 million did not fully cover expenses of about \$1.57 million, due largely to health care costs running \$91,000 over budget and lower-than-expected state operating assistance. He updated council on capital grants: a \$250,000 building grant is now fully spent, and another grant for IT, office, and bus equipment should be fully expended by June. Staffing-wise, the Interurban has hired multiple seasonal and semi-part-time drivers (now totaling about 30 drivers), is not replacing a full-time position vacated and instead is splitting that workload between part-time positions to reduce benefit costs. Finally, he noted they are exploring new revenue, including bus-wrap advertising, and recently welcomed two new board members from Fennville.

Kalamazoo Lake Sewer & Water Authority (KLSWA):

Mayor Pro-Tem Clark reported that the Kalamazoo Lake Sewer & Water Authority board met the prior week. A key item was an engineering review of a proposed sanitary force main along Old Allegan Road to serve a potential new development at the corner of Blue Star Highway and Old Allegan. The board expressed concern that the proposed alignment crossed property Kal-Lake has purchased for potential future plant expansion, and they do not want the authority to bear future relocation costs if that property is developed for utility use. Engineers have been asked to explore alternative routes, which may be more expensive now but could avoid costly relocation later. Clark also updated council on staffing, noting that earlier staffing concerns at Kal-Lake have eased: a new staff member, Scott Herbert, has joined and is receiving positive reviews. The authority manager is now focused on hiring a finance lead, with several strong candidates already interviewed and a decision expected soon.

Kalamazoo Lake Harbor Authority:

Councilmember Peterson reported that the Harbor Authority met on May 5, with the next meeting set for June 16. She reminded council that the three communities agreed to an economic impact study of the Kalamazoo Lake Harbor system. The first phase, now underway, focuses on clarifying goals, roles, expectations, and the overall purpose and value of the harbor to the tri-communities. A community/stakeholder survey has already been completed and summarized; it identified areas of alignment and sharpened expectations for the harbor's role. Interviews with a range of stakeholders will happen during the week of June 1. Peterson reported that the three communities have also adopted a mission statement for the Harbor Authority, emphasizing collaborative protection, maintenance, and enhancement of the harbor through strategic investment, regional partnership, stewardship, and environmental sustainability, with the goal of supporting recreation, tourism, economic vitality, waterfront access, and long-term community benefits. She also referenced a broader state maritime study that includes Saugatuck as a recreational harbor and offered to share that report's link.

Zoning Board of Appeals (ZBA):

Zoning Director Grayson Moore reported that the Zoning Board of Appeals met recently to consider a request at 810 Allegan. The applicant sought both a setback encroachment and a lot-coverage increase. The ZBA approved the variance allowing the existing house to encroach into the setback, consistent with a similar variance granted for the same structure in the past. However, the board denied the request for an increase in lot coverage, aiming to keep built intensity consistent with neighboring properties and maintain the character of that area.

Historic District Commission:

Councilmember Scott Dean reported on recent actions by the Historic District Commission. In addition to the previously discussed 640 Water Street PUD project (addressed earlier under new business and approved by council), the HDC approved exterior work for 525 Butler, some hardscaping improvements at 673 Lake, and exterior additions and renovations at 145 Grant. Grayson Moore also administratively approved a stair replacement at 721 Lake Street, as it fell within staff's delegated authority. Dean noted that, with regard to 640 Water Street, the HDC's earlier approval included some items to be resolved administratively, and Grayson confirmed those conditions have been satisfied. The next HDC meeting is scheduled for June 4 at 6 p.m.

Planning Commission:

Councilmember Russ Gardner reported that the Planning Commission met on Thursday, May 23. The commission approved a permit extension for 405 Park, granted because the applicant is still awaiting required state permits and expects to begin construction by September; under ordinance, a formal extension request was needed and was granted. The commission also heard a special land use request from Wickwood for the sale of alcoholic beverages. After about 15–20 minutes of discussion and the addition of several conditions, the Planning Commission approved the special land use; this recommendation will come to the City Council for final action at a future meeting. Gardner then summarized a substantive discussion on the master plan update, especially around mobility. The city consultant and staff have been preparing issue memos on priority topics, and this month's focus was on mobility and connectivity. The commission discussed concepts such as "complete streets" or "multimodal streets," which would not redesign every street immediately but would guide how streets are reconstructed or newly built to accommodate various modes—cars, bikes, and pedestrians—over time. Next month, the Planning Commission will review master-plan priorities related to housing and city assets. The next Planning Commission meeting is scheduled for June 18.

Parks & Public Works Committee (PPW):

Councilmember Lauren Stanton reported that the Parks, Public Works & Waterfront (PPW) Committee postponed its regular meeting for a week, with the next meeting now scheduled for June 2. She also highlighted the upcoming "Crazy for the Kazoo" river cleanup event on Saturday at Wade's Bayou from 10:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. Kayaks will be provided, but participants may bring their own kayaks, stand-up paddleboards, or small boats to help clean debris from the waterway.

Tri-Community Non-Motorized Trail Study Committee:

Councilmember Dean gave a brief update on the community non-motorized trail project. He noted that progress has been delayed due to timing issues with the project archaeologist, who must complete work as part of the environmental and historic-resource review process. However, he said the delay is not yet considered a “deal breaker” for the project schedule. Cummins added that the archaeologist is awaiting formal approval of a detailed work plan from the state (MDOT), and MDOT had just that morning requested some additional clarifications, so staff and consultants are still actively working through that step.

Water System Operations Contract Advisory Committee:

Councilmember Gardner reported that the Water System Operations Contract Advisory Committee met on Friday, May 15, with representatives from all three tri-community partners, and that the next meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, June 3 at 12 p.m. Cummins noted the group is working with a joint consultant (AP) on a substantial set of recommended conditions and proposals related to water system operations and the municipal service franchise. These recommendations are detailed and lengthy, and member communities are still digesting them, he has already provided council with a separate written update outlining where that work stands and that the committee will continue working through the consultant’s recommendations at upcoming meetings.

Logo and Branding Advisory Committee:

Mayor Anderson briefly noted that the Logo and Branding Advisory Committee has its next meeting scheduled for June 9. No additional substantive report was given at this meeting.

Parking Improvements Task Force:

Councilmember Gregory Muncey provided an extensive update on the Parking Improvements Task Force, which last met on May 13. He reported that Walker Consultants completed the first round of parking occupancy counts on May 2, covering both downtown and surrounding neighborhoods. The data showed that in the central business district (CBD), off-street lots reached around 92% occupancy and on-street spaces around 86% in the late afternoon and evening, levels at which visitors typically perceive parking as “full.” In contrast, surrounding residential areas and “the hill” still had available capacity. Accessible spaces were being used but were not fully occupied. The task force also discussed future parking demand, with Walker reviewing known and proposed developments in Saugatuck, Douglas, and the township. Members raised concerns that the initial analysis may understate demand from tourism and new housing/campground developments, and encouraged incorporating data from the CVB (lodging occupancy, beach counts, visitation trends) and local employers to understand employee parking.

Muncey said enforcement is a major issue: the three-hour downtown limit is hard to enforce consistently, leading to reduced turnover. Walker suggested a seasonal enforcement and “ambassador” model that emphasizes education and visitor assistance while still encouraging compliance, which the task force generally supports—if paired with realistic employee parking options. Possible employee parking locations discussed included school lots and areas near the Saugatuck Center for the Arts. Ideas such as resident permits, employee permits, and “warning periods” before ticketing were also raised.

He reported ongoing exploration of remote parking and expanded shuttle service, noting that Interurban Director has been in active talks with Riverside Church, Dykstra Funeral Home, and the school district about potential satellite lots, and has drafted a basic template for access/parking agreements. The task force also examined, at Walker’s suggestion, a conceptual option to convert Butler Street to one-way with angled parking on one side and parallel on the other, which could add roughly 60 spaces. Members voiced concerns about pedestrian safety, vehicle maneuvering, and the impact of delivery trucks if traffic is constrained to single-lane one-way patterns both on Butler and Water.

The task force will conduct peak-season parking counts in mid-July to compare with the early-season data. Muncey also described a longer-range vision sketched by Alec Patelliner involving remote parking lots connected to downtown via trolley or shuttle, integrated with one-way traffic patterns, wayfinding, sponsorships, and

potentially a dedicated trolley lane in the future—but noted that such ideas are conceptual and would require substantial investment. In the near term, the group will continue refining enforcement strategies, identifying employee parking solutions (including stronger coordination with the schools for employee use of lots), and evaluating needs for additional accessible and short-term (15-minute) spaces in targeted locations like the drugstore. A public outreach/open-house style event is planned at a future Music in the Park night where Walker and task force members will share findings and gather input. The next task force meeting is scheduled for June 30.

Public Comment:

None.

Correspondence:

None.

Council Comments:

Councilmember Stanton remarked on the Memorial Day ceremony, noting that it was beautiful and very well attended. She highlighted the participation of veterans and the small parade, expressing appreciation for those who took part and helped honor their service.

Councilmember Muncey apologized for arriving late, explaining he had been at a Wishbone Alliance meeting. He reported that he will MC a fundraising event for Wishbone at Cut Above Center and encouraged people to support the organization by attending the event and visiting the Wishbone thrift store. He emphasized Wishbone's impact on animal welfare in Allegan County, noting that when they began working with the county shelter, the euthanasia rate was about 72%, but since Wishbone became established (around 2014–2015), the shelter now operates as no-kill, thanks in large part to Wishbone's efforts with spay/neuter programs, food assistance, and rehoming.

Councilmember Dean, speaking on behalf of American Legion Post 137, thanked the mayor, city staff, first responders, the high school band, April Gundy, and all volunteers for their support of the Memorial Day parade. He observed that with Vietnam veterans now averaging around 79–80 years old and World War II veterans around 98–100, it is increasingly important for the community to help carry on these ceremonies. He echoed Reverend Stoppel's message that it takes the whole community to remember and honor those who served, and he expressed deep gratitude for the strong local support shown at the event.

Councilmember Clark echoed others' appreciation for a successful holiday weekend and reiterated gratitude to veterans, stating that the community owes them more than it can ever repay. He welcomed Mark Ondersma, the new Director of Public Works, and said he looks forward to seeing him at upcoming workshops. Recognizing that Memorial Day marks the start of the city's busy season, he proactively thanked city staff, the Sheriff's Department, and first responders for the work they will do throughout the summer when demands and pressures are at their highest.

Councilmember Gardner reflected on the Memorial Day parade as a very emotional day for him personally, noting that this was the first year in many that his father—a longtime sergeant-at-arms for the local post—did not participate due to age and health, despite attempts to find a convertible so he could ride in the parade. He expressed appreciation for the cooperation between Post 137 and the Fire District to ensure a safe parade route and said it was heartening to see so many local residents and their dogs come downtown. Gardner also praised the completed Mary Street culvert replacement and resurfacing, reporting positive feedback from neighbors and calling it a significant improvement. He then announced the launch of the Saugatuck Free Wheelers weekly group bike ride, beginning Wednesday, June 10 at 6:00 p.m. from Blue Star Barns. The ride will be about 17 miles through the rolling hills and back through Douglas, is a "no one left behind" group ride, and will emphasize road safety and encouraging people to use bicycles instead of cars; he confirmed that e-bikes are welcome.

Councilmember Peterson began by noting that, as the wife of an 81-year-old Vietnam veteran, Memorial Day and the surrounding patriotic holidays (Memorial Day, Flag Day, and the nation's 250th anniversary) are personally very meaningful to her, and they highlight the importance of freedoms such as free speech. She then pivoted to express strong concern about sidewalk chalking in town, saying she dislikes it and finds it divisive regardless of which side is doing it. While acknowledging chalk is usually temporary, she pointed out that some chalked messages—particularly at the corner near the drugstore and across the street—have not washed away and have drawn multiple complaints from residents during the parade, as well as at least one letter to council. She stated that when chalk remains long-term it feels more like defacement, and she requested that DPW power-wash those persistent chalk markings off the sidewalks. Peterson added that some residents, and even she herself, have tried washing chalk off in the past, but she would prefer the city handle it promptly when it becomes semi-permanent.

Mayor Holly Anderson closed by saying it had been a great weekend and recognizing that this time of year is a transition period as the community moves into the busy season. She urged everyone—residents, visitors, and staff alike—to show grace and patience with one another as the city adjusts to the influx of people and increased activity. She then called for a motion to adjournment.

Adjournment:

Motion by Muncey, second by Dean to adjourn the meeting. Upon voice vote, motion carried unanimously. Mayor Anderson adjourned at 7:59 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted

Jamie Wolters, City Clerk