



CITY COUNCIL WORKSHOP MEETING MINUTES

June 3, 2026

The City Council met for a Workshop Meeting at 4:00 p.m.

City Hall

102 Butler St., Saugatuck, MI 49453.

Call to Order:

The meeting was called to order by Mayor Anderson at 4:00 p.m.

Attendance:

Present: Mayor Anderson, Mayor Pro Tem Clark and Councilmembers, Dean, Gardner, Muncey and Peterson.

Absent: None.

Others Present: City Manager Cummins, Attorney Witte, Zoning Director Moore, Treasurer Bredeweg, and Clerk Wolters.

Agenda Changes:

Motion by Peterson, second by Muncey to add a discussion of sidewalk chalking as 7c on the agenda.

Council discussed adding the topic after the closed session.

Councilmember Peterson amended her motion:

Motion by Peterson, second by Muncey to add the discussion of sidewalk chalking as #10 on the agenda.

Via roll call vote, motion carried unanimously.

Public Comment on Agenda Items Only:

Glenna DeYoung, Jan Cohen, Fran Martin, John Thomas, Allen Swank, Jennifer Lamb, Julie Maguire, Joe Leonatti and Laura Durham provided public comment.

Approval of Minutes:

Regular City Council Meeting Minutes – May 26, 2026:

Motion by Muncey, second by Stanton to approve the regular city council meeting minutes from May 26, 2026. Via roll call vote, unanimously.

Guest Speaker: None.

Discussion Items:

Introduction of new Director of Public Works:

DPW Director Mark Ondersma introduced himself as the City's new Director of Public Works, highlighting 18 years of experience with the City of Hudsonville where he progressed from entry-level work to overseeing functions such as water and sewer operations, parks, equipment maintenance, capital improvement planning, and budgeting. He also described his 20 years of service in the Michigan Air National Guard with the Civil Engineer Squadron, noting that the unit's responsibilities—managing water, sewer, waterways, buildings, and housing—are very similar to running a municipality, though often more intensive on the facilities side. Mark shared that he is married with three children and said he would welcome council members to stop by.

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Special Land Use & Liquor License Request – 510 Bulter Street (Wickwood Inn):

Council reviewed a special land use and liquor license request for The Wickwood Inn (510 Butler Street), with Zoning Director Grayson Moore explaining that the applicant is seeking approval to sell liquor to overnight guests. Grayson noted that the Planning Commission has recommended approval, subject to conditions outlined in the packet, and that consultant was available for technical questions. Council clarified that the proposed liquor service would be limited to registered guests only, not the general public. In response to a question from Councilmember Chris Peterson, Grayson explained that this is a special land use because of the zoning district, not because the property is a bed and breakfast. Councilmember Gardner added that the Commission had held extensive discussions with the applicant, who was cooperative and amenable to the recommended conditions, and he characterized the outcome as positive for both the city and The Wickwood Inn.

Public Comments: None.

Closed Session:

Motion by Stanton, second by Muncey to move into a closed session for the following reasons:

- *Pursuant to MCL 15.268(a) to conduct an annual personnel evaluation of the City Manager; and*
- *Pursuant to MCL 15.268(e) to consult with the City Attorney regarding the ongoing lawsuits filed against the City by Dune Ridge, captioned Dune Ridge v. City of Saugatuck (Case No. 22-65713-CK) and Dune Ridge v City of Saugatuck (Case No. 21-64709-CZ) regarding trial or settlement strategy, which if discussed in an open meeting would have a detrimental financial effect.; and*
- *Pursuant to MCL 15.268(h) to consider material exempt from discussion or disclosure by state or federal statute.*

Via roll call vote, motion carried unanimously.

City Council moved into closed session at 4:34 p.m.

Motion by Gardner, second by Peterson to move into open session. Via roll call vote motion carried unanimously.

City Council moved into open session at 7:20 p.m.

Sidewalk Chalking:

Mayor Anderson informed that the Saugatuck City Council unanimously supports the First Amendment and the right to free speech. However, knowingly using permanent markings on City property crosses a line and may violate existing City ordinances.

Council Comments:

Councilmember Peterson explained how the chalking discussion request originated with her request to remove black, nearly permanent marks from sidewalks regardless of content, noted that idea of a volunteer cleanup generated strong public engagement on social media, and said that level of interest warranted a public discussion with elected officials; she concluded that council had drawn a line between free speech and near-permanent markings and would now prevent long-lasting chalk from remaining on sidewalks.

Councilmember Gardner voiced support for the mayor's statement affirming First Amendment protections while disallowing permanent markings on city property, acknowledged there were no simple answers, and said the chosen approach fit Saugatuck's circumstances; he also highlighted and praised the girls' varsity soccer team's first regional win.

Mayor Pro Tem Clark thanked attendees for presenting strong views in a professional, clear manner, said their input gave council the information needed, and praised colleagues for a good internal discussion grounded in

the U.S. Constitution and the First Amendment.

Councilmember Dean remarked that, despite public concern over divisiveness, the council itself works together well when they are face to face and truly listening, and he expressed pride in the body's frank, open, and respectful deliberation.

Councilmember Muncey stressed that, while social media can be distorted by "bad actors," he strongly values freedom of speech, clarified that when he calls the chalk "ugly" he is referring to the near-permanent look of the words rather than any particular political side, and said he would prefer more non-political imagery such as flowers and rainbows; he framed the divisiveness as community-level tension, especially for Butler Street business owners who had approached him with concerns, and said he was trying to respond to those local voices.

Councilmember Stanton said she appreciated that council reached a practical conclusion that both removes overly permanent markings and respects First Amendment rights, noted that the broader issue may continue, and expressed satisfaction that council was unanimous in deciding that permanent-like sidewalk markings will not be allowed going forward, while also congratulating the girls soccer regional and the boys track team district wins.

Mayor Anderson In her closing comments described it as a strong meeting marked by good discussion and collegiality among council members, and she pushed back on the broader "divisiveness" narrative as a distortion of how well the council works together. She emphasized that all council members swear an oath to the U.S. Constitution and said she personally takes that oath—especially the First Amendment—very seriously. Anderson reiterated that the council fully supports free speech, but that the city also has an obligation not to allow permanent markings on public sidewalks, and she expressed confidence that the council had found a solid middle ground that both defends constitutional rights and protects city property.

Adjournment:

*Motion by Muncey, second by Clark to adjourn the meeting. Upon voice vote, motion unanimously.
Mayor Anderson adjourned the meeting at 7:33 p.m.*

Respectfully Submitted

Jamie Wolters, City Clerk