



CITY COUNCIL REGULAR MEETING MINUTES- *proposed* **January 27, 2024**

The City Council met to have a Regular Council Meeting at City Hall.
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.

Attendance:

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

Absent: Stanton.

Motion by Dean, second by Peterson to excuse Mayor Pro-Tem Stanton. Via voice vote, motion carried 6-0.

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

Mayor Comments:

Mayor Anderson expressed enthusiasm following the recent strategic planning session on Friday, highlighting the strong engagement and productive discussions between city officials and staff. She appreciated the collaborative effort in organizing the session and looks forward to receiving feedback from Maryland before revisiting and finalizing the established priorities. Mayor Anderson conveyed her satisfaction with the session's outcomes and extended her gratitude to everyone involved.

City Manager Comments:

City Manager Cummings expressed gratitude to the Council for dedicating a full day to engaging with staff and the facilitator to review past achievements and discuss priorities for the upcoming fiscal year. He looks forward to receiving Maryland's report, anticipated this week, and hopes to further discuss its findings during the next Council workshop. Additionally, he highlighted a recent update regarding short-term rental licenses, noting that a notice was published in the *Commercial Record* announcing the availability of two licenses in the Peninsula South Zoning District and two in the Peninsula North Riverside Zoning District. Cummings emphasized that the licensing process follows the policy approved in August and directed any inquiries to Director of Planning and Zoning, Luke Thompson.

Agenda Changes:

Motion by Gardner, second by Muncey to add commission member Bradd Lubbers as guest speaker this evening. Via voice voter, motion carried 6-0.

Guest Speakers:

Director Lisa Mize of the Saugatuck Douglas Convention Bureau provided an update on past and upcoming initiatives aimed at enhancing tourism and community engagement. She highlighted the bureau's extensive digital advertising efforts in 2024, including YouTube promotions, hosted video series, and a successful fall campaign in Chicago. The bureau also expanded its printed discovery guide production from 50,000 to 60,000 copies due to high demand.

Mize discussed efforts to promote year-round tourism, including winter photography campaigns and the launch of a strategic initiative to attract small to medium-sized meetings and conferences to the area. She noted increased website traffic, which grew by 15% in 2024, and emphasized the continued focus on digital advertising and email marketing in 2025.

Looking ahead, the bureau aims to strengthen off-peak tourism by working with a newly formed subcommittee and industry experts to assess local resources and opportunities. Plans for 2025 include renewed radio advertising on NPR in Chicago, ongoing guest and lodging partner surveys, and continued public outreach through local media. Additional goals include a 5% increase in lodging assessments, a 20% rise in website traffic, and expanded sponsorships and in-kind donations for community events.

Mize also announced the launch of the *Influencer Partnership Program*, designed to support lodging partners in leveraging influencer marketing. The program will provide financial and logistical assistance to bring social media influencers to the region, further promoting Saugatuck Douglas as a premier travel destination.

Allegan County District 3 Commissioner Brad Lubbers provided an update on recent developments within the county, beginning with the organizational meeting held on January 9, where Gale Dugan was elected Chairperson of the Board of Commissioners and Scott Beltman was elected Vice Chair. He acknowledged the efforts of county law enforcement and emergency personnel in managing road conditions during the recent severe winter weather, which led to multiple vehicle accidents along major highways, including US-31 and US-131. Lubbers commended their dedication to keeping roads clear and ensuring public safety. Additionally, he shared positive news regarding Jill Dunham, the County Broadband Initiative Director, who was recognized as one of 14 individuals nationwide by the White House Rural Innovators Initiative under the Biden-Harris Administration for her work in expanding broadband access. Regarding broadband expansion, Lubbers reported that the 123Net project is progressing as planned, with work already completed in areas to the north and east of Saugatuck and Douglas. The broadband infrastructure for these communities is scheduled for completion by December 31, 2025. He noted that Saugatuck and Douglas present additional complexities due to existing provider networks, which may lead to potential partnerships between 123Net and other service providers such as Comcast or Xfinity. Discussions on network access and possible agreements are ongoing.