



CITY COUNCIL REGULAR MEETING MINUTES May 27, 2025

The City Council met to have a Regular Council Meeting at City Hall.
102 Butler St., Saugatuck, MI 49453.

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

Pledge of Allegiance.

Attendance:

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

Absent: Gardner.

Motion by Dean, second by Stanton to excuse Councilmember Gardner. Via voice vote, motion carried 6-0.

Others Present: City Manager Cummins, DPW Superintendent Herbert, Clerk Wolters and Attorney Witte.

Mayor's Comments:

Mayor Anderson expressed gratitude to everyone involved in the Memorial Day parade, noting how nice it was and how great it was to see so many people out enjoying the day. She also shared her excitement about the official opening of Saugatuck Wilds happening Thursday morning. After previewing the trails with the City Manager Cummins and DPW Superintendent Herbert, she described the area as beautiful and peaceful, calling it something truly special.

City Manager Comments:

1. Storm Response:

He commended the Fire Department and Public Works team for their quick and dedicated response to the recent severe weather and high winds. The entire DPW team responded overnight, clearing trees and blocked streets, with one staff member working straight through the night. The county declared a local state of emergency, and the city submitted expenses for potential reimbursement.

2. Saugatuck Wilds & Maple Street Open House:

Cummins echoed excitement about the Saugatuck Wilds ribbon-cutting on Thursday. He also announced a public open house on June 3 for the Maple Street project, where residents can review the proposed sidewalk and street plans, see which trees might be removed, and give feedback.

3. New CVB Wall Display:

He thanked the Convention and Visitors Bureau (CVB) for the new "drugstore wall" display downtown, which features guides, event info, and a QR code linking to up-to-date details—helpful for both locals and visitors.

4. **Billing Issue:**

Cummins acknowledged a recent billing date issue affecting some Kalamazoo Lake Sewer & Water Authority customers who received postcards instead of digital bills. The issue is being addressed, and more information will be shared soon.

5. **Election Audits:**

He praised Clerk Wolters and Deputy Clerk Williams and the election inspectors for their continued success during recent election audits, highlighting their adherence to proper processes and professionalism.

Agenda Changes: None.

Guest Speakers: None.

Public Comment on Agenda Item Only: None.

Consent Agenda:

- A. Approval of Workshop Meeting Minutes for May 21, 2025.
- B. Approval of Closed Session Minutes for May 21, 2025.
- C. Change Order #1 for Mt. Baldhead Restroom Replacement.
- D. Change Order #2 for 2024 Asphalt Repairs.

Motion by Stanton, second by Muncey to approve the consent agenda. Via roll call vote, motion carried 6-0.

Staff Reports, Boards, Commissions & Committees:

The City Manager, Treasurer, Clerk, Director of Planning & Zoning, Department of Public Works and Engineer submitted status reports on current activities since the last regular council meeting for their respective departments.

Fire District Administration:

Dan Fox's fire report covered several key points:

1. April call volumes were on par with previous months, with EMS calls making up 64% of total calls.
2. **The fire district's budget for 2025-2026 includes:**
 - Plans for a second fire station at 415 Wiley
 - One-time 0.4 mill increase for water/sewer improvements
 - Funding for two additional full-time firefighters/inspectors and a full-time administrative aid position
3. **Facility challenges at the current station:**
 - Physical capacity limitations
 - Two-inch water main needs upgrading to four inches
 - Second-floor sleeping rooms need sprinklers
4. **Call volume statistics show:**
 - 130% increase in calls over 20 years
 - 56% of EMS calls originate south of the Kalamazoo River
 - \$1.1 million raised through grants, cost recovery, and donations
5. Ongoing negotiations with Life EMS about service funding, with potential annual cost increase.

Interurban Board:

Councilmember Muncey's Interurban report highlighted:

1. Service expansion to Laketown Township and Fennville began in May
2. **Ridership statistics:**
 - 314 new riders from Laketown Township
 - Currently 600 more riders than usual for this time of year
3. **Upcoming developments:**
 - Plans to finalize building expansion
 - Considering repaving and improvements to accommodate growth
 - Slight increase in employee insurance premiums from 4.5% to 9%
4. **Parking recommendations:**
 - Encouraged people to use Interurban to address downtown parking issues
 - Mentioned parking options at the high school lot and Douglas
 - High school parking lot will start in the last week of June and continue through summer

Kalamazoo Lake Sewer & Water Authority:

Councilmember Clark's Kalamazoo Lake Sewer and Water Authority report covered:

1. **Wastewater Operations:**
 - April monthly operating report submitted
 - Hydrant flushing and flow testing completed in late April
 - 587 hydrants flushed, with 17 requiring mechanical repairs
2. **Power Outage Impact:**
 - Sewer pumping stations affected during recent power outage
 - Crews rotated portable generators
 - No reported residential sewer backups
3. **Water Sampling:**
 - Conducted on May 14 for EPA unregulated contaminant rule
 - Readings were well below any level of concern
4. **Upcoming Audit:**
 - Expecting fiscal year 2025 audit results at the June meeting

Kalamazoo Lake Harbor Authority:

Councilmember Peterson noted the next meeting will have Greg Weykamp, owner of Edgewater Resources at the meeting to discuss the new role of the Harbor Authority. There have been over 650 respondents to the no wake survey. City Manager Cummins will follow up with Douglas and Township on a hard cut off date for the survey.

Zoning Board of Appeals: None.

Historic District Commission: None.

Planning Commission:

Councilmember Clark's Planning Commission report focused on three main topics:

1. Master Plan:

- Douglas and the township are pursuing independent master plans
- Saugatuck will develop its own plan
 - Planning to solicit community input through:
 - Surveys
 - Pop-up events
 - At least one special meeting
 - Potential community input starting in July

2. Sign Regulations:

- Addressing Supreme Court requirements about content-neutral zoning
- Developing broad sign categories (e.g., yard signs)
- Creating generic regulations for sign size and duration
- Aiming to simplify regulations to avoid content discrimination

3. Zoning Map Simplification:

- Merging multiple zones with similar characteristics
- Reviewing zones to find common ground
- Goal is to consolidate zones without impacting property rights

Parks and Public Works Committee:

Councilmember Stanton's Parks and Public Works Committee report focused on three main council priorities:

1. Mount Bald Head Vegetation:

- Allegan Conservation District will evaluate vegetation
- Confirmed no active erosion
- Will provide recommendations for plantings

2. Invasive Species:

- Ongoing milfoil treatment
- Create a website landing page with recommendations
- Helping residents understand how to manage invasive plants

3. Wayfinding and Signage:

- Planning a city signage refresh and rebranding
- Discussing immediate signage needs for Saugatuck Harbor Natural Area
- Recommendations from West Michigan Land Conservancy about protecting pathways

Additional context:

- Committee members are researching projects without using staff time
- Focusing on educational initiatives and future planning
- Preparing recommendations for City Council review
- Emphasizing that final decisions remain with the City Council

Tri-Community Non-Motorized Trail Study Committee:

Scott Dean's Tri-Community discussion focused on the motorized trail project:

1. Meeting Highlights:

- Good attendance from municipalities with respectful dialogue
- MDOT representative participated via Zoom, Friends of Blue Star Trail also participated
- Recognized the tribe's role as a sovereign government

- Continuing ongoing discussions
- Project requires patience as all parties remain committed to the project
- Maintaining open communication while working through challenges

Water System Operations Contract Advisory Committee:

Councilmember Clark noted that they will be reviewing a new draft soon.

Wildlife Management Committee, Councilmember Dean:

Scott Dean's wildlife management discussion centered on deer population control:

1. Deer Population Assessment:

- Drone footage revealed over 103 deer in a small area near Christian Neighbors Church
- Large herd primarily on one side of the river
- Potential significant population issues

2. Tri-Community Approach:

- Meetings planned with lawyers, city manager, and county sheriff
- Discussing potential ordinances for wildlife management
- Differences in approach between Douglas and Saugatuck

3. Proposed Control Strategies:

- Considering lethal means to control deer population
- Potential coordinated culling effort with neighboring communities
- Targeting does to reduce reproduction
- Professional sharpshooters estimated at \$300 per animal

4. Rationale for Management:

- Prevent population self-correction through starvation
- Reduce disease transmission risks
- Address habitat changes that have eliminated natural predators

5. Potential Next Steps:

- Explore culling in isolated areas like old orchard behind Christian Neighbors Church
- Potentially share costs with Douglas and township
- Recognizing culling would need to be an annual activity

Approval of Accounts Payable:

Motion by Stanton, second by Clark to approve the accounts payable in the amount of \$72,459.71. Via roll call vote, motion carried 6-0.

Public Hearing: None.

Unfinished Business: None.

New Business:

Fire Department Budget for Fiscal Year 2025-2026:

Motion by Muncey, second by Stanton to adopt the Saugatuck Township Fire District Budget for the fiscal year 2025-2026. Via roll call vote, motion carried 6-0.

Front-End Loader Replacement:

Motion by Muncey, second by Clark to approve the purchase of one Caterpillar 938 Wheel-Loader from Michigan CAT in the amount of \$273,292.50, through the State's MiDEAL purchasing program. Via roll call vote, motion carried 6-0.

Updates to Personnel Policies Manual:

Motion by Muncey, second by Stanton to approve the updated personnel policies manual. Via roll call vote, motion carried 6-0.

Administrative/Project Coordinator Position:

Motion by Muncey, second by Stanton to approve the job description and addition of a full-time Administrative/Project Coordinator for the Department of Public Works. Via roll call vote, motion carried 6-0.

Temporary Signage at Holland/Blue Star:

Motion by Dean, second by Peterson to direct the City Manager to temporarily re-locate the Saugatuck sign along the river to Holland/Blue Star until new signage is designed and approved. Via voice vote, motion carried 6-0.

Public Comment:

Dan Fox thanked the council on behalf of the Saugatuck Township Fire Department for the fire budget discussion and noted that Douglas and Township adopted already.

Correspondence:

Renee Zita provided correspondence on the condition of the Mt. Baldhead steps.
Clerk Wolters provided notice of upcoming boards and committee openings.

Council Comments:

Councilmember Peterson enjoyed the good discussion. Councilmember Stanton relieved a lot of her concerns regarding PPW and will work with Stanton on any additional questions she may have.

Lauren Stanton's council comments covered:

Saugatuck Wilds Nature Preserve:

- Ribbon cutting ceremony on Thursday at 11am
- Trail conditions are muddy
- Advised wearing boots and being aware of ticks

Memorial Day Parade:

- Thanked volunteers for organizing the event
- Acknowledged local veterans who participated

Town Activity:

- Noted a busy weekend with sunshine
- Highlighted increased business activity as an unofficial summer kickoff

Kalamazoo Lake Water Levels:

- Reported extremely low water levels
- Mentioned boats getting stuck at the red dock
- Suggested the need for signage or markers to warn boaters about shallow areas
- Expressed concern about expensive towing for large boats stuck in low spots

Scott Dean's council comments focused on three main points:

Election and Staff Performance:

- Congratulated the city clerk on a safe and secure election that passed audit with flying colors

Storm Response Appreciation:

- Praised first responders and city staff, particularly DPW
- Specifically highlighted the courage of staff working at 2:30 AM during the storm with live power lines
- Commended the quick restoration of city streets and power
- Recognized Ryan Cummins and Scott Herbert for their leadership during the storm response

Detailed Acknowledgment of Staff Efforts:

- Emphasized the dedication and perseverance of city workers
- Noted the challenges of responding to emergency situations
- Expressed pride in how quickly the city recovered from the severe weather event

Gregory Muncey's council comments covered several topics:

Radio Show City Manager Ryan Cummins on 92.7 The Van

- Discussed storm recovery, park updates, and upcoming events
- Felt they could have done another half-hour segment

Garden Club Appreciation:

- Recognized the club's efforts in downtown beautification and highlighted the garden club's work as essentially volunteer-driven
- Mentioned helping raise funds and now being part of the city budget
- Noted 37 downtown pots were planted
- Gave a "pep talk" to kids about community service and volunteering

Pride Week Announcement:

- June 1st Kicks Off Pride Week
- Festivities primarily in Douglas
- Mentioned a big kickoff party in Dougals
- Encouraged people to check the website or tune into 92.7 for more information

Joe Clark's council comments focused on three main points:

Staff and City Performance:

- Praised staff for their efforts during the storm
- Noted the city was spotless after Memorial Day weekend
- Commended DPW team for their thorough cleanup and maintenance

Memorial Day Ceremony:

- Found the event moving and well-organized
- Impressed by the participation Councilmember Dean with a firearm
- Highlighted the ceremony's significance

School Music Program:

- Expressed amazement at the number of students in the music program
- Noted the impressive participation given the school's size
- Thanked those running the music department
- Emphasized the importance of music in grounding children

Mayor Holly Anderson's council comments were brief and focused on two main points:

Radio Show Appreciation:

- Praised City Manager Ryan Cummins for his interview on 92.7 The Van
- Noted the interview provided great information about the city

Team Effectiveness:

- Emphasized the importance of having challenging discussions
- Highlighted the value of listening and learning from each other
- Commended the council for being an effective team

Adjournment:

Motion by Stanton, second by Clark to adjourn the meeting. Upon voice vote, motion carried 6-0. Mayor Anderson adjourned at 8:04 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted

Jamie Wolters, City Clerk