



CITY COUNCIL REGULAR MEETING MINUTES- *proposed* **April 14, 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 Dean, Gardner and Muncey.

Absent: Clark, Peterson

Motion by Stanton, second by Muncey to excuse Councilmember Clark and Councilmember Peterson. Via voice vote, motion carried 5-0.

Others Present: City Manager Cummins, Zoning Director Thompson, Treasurer Bredeweg, DPW Superintendent Herbert, Clerk Wolters, Attorney Witte and Engineer Moxey.

Mayor Comments:

Mayor Anderson welcomed everyone and acknowledged that Councilmember Peterson might join online and is welcome to make public comments. She reflected on the recent gas outage, describing it as an incredible experience of teamwork and problem-solving. She praised how quickly city staff, especially City Manager Ryan and Fennville Town Administrator Katie Beemer, responded to the crisis. She expressed deep appreciation for the collaboration among municipalities, utility companies, and first responders. Mayor Anderson also highlighted the outstanding contributions of Lisa Mize, who managed communications on social media and local news, effectively advocating for local businesses during the outage. She noted how everyone brought their best selves to the situation, despite occasional tension, and emphasized the sense of unity and professionalism across the tri-communities. She closed by welcoming back those who were away on spring break.

City Manager Comments:

City Manager Cummins reflected on the whirlwind of the past few days, tying the recent gas outage response to a timely crisis management session he and Fennville Administrator Katie Beemer attended at the Michigan Municipal League's capital conference. That session emphasized the importance of direct communication in emergencies, prompting them to exchange phone numbers—which proved crucial when the outage hit.

Cummins detailed how the response unfolded, starting with a tip from Council Member Clark about residents without gas. He had just received a press release about a significant break and evacuations, which was quickly confirmed when Katie called. From there, multiple levels of government sprang into action. The county partially activated its Emergency Operations Center, helping coordinate updates and resource sharing. He praised the utility companies for their swift and massive response—bringing in 200 crew members from across the Midwest and even Pittsburgh. They mobilized like an “army,” going door to door to shut off meters safely before restoring service. A command center was set up in Fennville, and their efforts were captured on social media. Cummins also recognized the local fire departments and the community-led pancake breakfast hosted by the township fire departments, Ganges, and Fennville, which helped build camaraderie and support for the workers. He emphasized the community's patience, understanding, and spirit of cooperation, which he said truly revealed the character of the tri-community during a crisis. Cummins noted that this outage was larger than others many of the utility workers had experienced and stressed the importance of learning from the situation. While there were things that could have gone better, a debrief will help improve future responses. Crews will remain available, including on weekends, to restore service to second homes or seasonal properties as people return.

Agenda Changes:

Motion by Dean, second by Stanton to add Commissioner Lubbers as guest speaker for tonight's meeting. Via voice vote, motion carried 5-0.

Guest Speakers:

County Commissioner Brad Lubbers echoed the appreciation shared by others, highlighting not just the residents, but also the local businesses that generously donated food to utility workers during the gas outage — unprompted and greatly appreciated. He noted that while such emergencies are never welcome, from a county emergency management perspective, they are valuable learning experiences. This event serves as a practical reminder of the importance of preparation, especially with Palisades Nuclear Plant planning to reopen soon — making future drills and readiness even more critical. On a lighter note, he shared that Saugatuck was named the 9th best small town in the Midwest by USA Today, alongside other Michigan destinations like Grand Haven (7th) and Mackinac Island (10th), further cementing Saugatuck's appeal as a tourist destination. In county personnel news, Jennifer Tein, formerly Douglas' Treasurer and a previous member of the county clerk's office, will become the Assistant County Treasurer, replacing the retiring Sally Brooks. Lubbers also shared two more sobering updates - During the outage, an elderly woman went missing and was later found deceased in a nearby lake, a tragic event during an already difficult time. The county health department received notice that its remaining federal COVID-19 relief funds have been cut, effective immediately. While the financial impact is small relative to the overall health department budget, it signals the beginning of potential future cuts, which may force the county to consider difficult decisions about funding, scaling back, or cutting certain programs. He closed by expressing readiness to take those challenges on as they come.

Public Comment on Agenda Item Only:

Klesyk Krzystof commented on item #14A.

Councilmember Peterson commented on item #14A.

Kate Quick commented on item #14A.