



Parks and Public Works Committee

Meeting Minutes - DRAFT

June 23, 2026, at 10:00 A.M.

Saugatuck City Hall, 102 Butler St, Saugatuck, MI 49453

1. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 10:00 by Chair Kimble.

2. Roll Call

Members Present: Charak, Hoffman, Kimble, Thiel.

Members Absent: Roche, Stanton (online)

Staff Present: DPW Superintendent Ondersma, DPW Project Manager Gibson, Deputy Clerk Williams

Others Present: None

3. Approval of Agenda

Motion by Charak, supported by Hoffman, to amend the agenda for the June 23, 2026, meeting to add "Park Benches" as Discussion Item 6c. Via voice vote, motion carried 4-0.

4. Approval of Minutes

Motion by Thiel, supported by Charak, to approve the minutes for the June 2, 2026, regular minutes as presented. Motion carried 4-0.

5. Public Comment on Agenda Items

None.

6. Discussion

A. DPW Administrative Update:

Department of Public Works Superintendent Ondersma reported that additional painting has been completed on the Chain Ferry and surrounding sea wall area, with work scheduled around weather and patron use. Maple Street Construction is ongoing, with recent service tie-ins completed and a temporary boil water notice in effect for some residents, expected to be lifted by Thursday pending test results. At Oval Beach, heavy use on Saturday, June 13th, required

staff to turn cars away for the first time in a year, but staff directed visitors to alternate parking and transit options via the Interurban. At Peterson Preserve, conditions are improved, a heavily used trash can was relocated from between two benches to a more appropriate spot near the road and dog bag dispenser. The DPW's seasonal staff is now fully staffed, with only a few remaining hires needed for beach operations – particularly beach patrollers, which has been challenging because they must be at least 18. Finally, DPW staff recently walked and cleared trails at the Saugatuck Wilds Nature Preserve, removing downed trees and branches.

B. Saugatuck Harbor Natural Area Trail Assessment Report:

The committee's discussion of the Saugatuck Harbor Natural Area Trail Assessment Report focused on fixing a confusing and damaging trail network by simplifying it and protecting sensitive habitat. The committee reviewed the ODC's map showing a tangle of user-made "social trails" and a much simpler recommended system, and there was clear support for moving toward the cleaner layout. They emphasized closing extra trails with signage and natural barriers (like native plantings), and make sure official trails are clearly way marked and reflected on the city's website. A significant part of the conversation was about dogs in the natural area: members cited the master plan language that bans dogs in the interior and along the Oxbow Lagoon shoreline because of wildlife and erosion impacts, while allowing leashed dogs on the beach only between Labor Day and Memorial Day. They talked about clearer signs and possible enforcement, but also the need to gauge how big the problem really is. The committee agreed to walk the site themselves and to wait for an implementation proposal from ODC (covering trail closures and signage), which they expect to pay for using the existing endowment for that property.

C. Park Benches:

The benches and tables discussion centered on standardizing park furniture and expanding opportunities for memorial benches and potential game tables. Committee member Charak reported on Barco Products' "Uptown Memorial Bench," available in multiple lengths and color combinations, with simple, two-line inscriptions and optional surface-mount hardware for installation on concrete pads. The committee agreed it would be best for the city to standardize bench design, color, and size – similar to its approach to trash cans – and likely require donors to cover both the bench and pad costs so the program would not burden the city budget. They noted the existence of a waiting list for memorial benches, which staff (via Scott Herbert) will locate and review, and acknowledged that some older, non-commercial benches may eventually be replaced. For picnic tables and game tables, Charak and others discussed moving away from wood toward more durable, possibly recycled materials products, with the idea of embedding chess/checker boards into some picnic tables. They also plan to draw on prior game table research already done by Committee member Roche for Village

Square Park and to bring back more specific product and design recommendations at a future meeting.

7. Public Comments

None

8. Correspondence

None.

9. Member Closing Comments

Charak: He added a brief community reminder that fireworks will be on July 3rd and the parade on July 4th.

Hoffman: He simply expressed thanks, without adding any further discussion or remarks.

Thiel: She said that she didn't have any additional remarks and simply noted it was a great meeting and thanked everyone for their participation.

Kimble: She thanked everyone for their participation and specifically acknowledged Charak for researching benches and DPW Project Manager Gibson for helping start that effort, saying she is excited about the progress being made. She noted positive feedback on the relocated trash can at Peterson Preserve from gardening volunteers and the garden club, tying it to a broader effort to beautify the parks. She expressed appreciation for the committee's support.

10. Adjournment

Motion by Charak supported by Thiel, to adjourn the meeting. Via voice vote, motion carried 4-0. Chair Kimble adjourned meeting at 10:33 a.m.

Respectfully submitted by:

Sara Williams, Deputy Clerk

City of Saugatuck