



**CITY COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES
October 17, 2024**

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

Call to Order:

The meeting was called to order by Mayor Stanton at 5:00 p.m.

Pledge of Allegiance.

Attendance:

Present: Mayor Stanton, Mayor Pro-Tem Baldwin and Councilmembers Anderson, Dean, Gardner, Muncey.

Absent: None.

Others Present: City Manager Cummins, Attorney Chris Patterson and Clerk Wolters.

Agenda Changes: None.

Guest Speakers: None.

Public Comment on Agenda Item Only:

Tim Straker, Culver Street: addressed what he would like to hear from the city council candidates and shared a few points regarding some candidates. Thanked the council for their commitment and leadership.

Ethan Barde, Lake Street: echoed sentiments from previous speaker, commented on his recent FOIA request and touched on decision making and transparency.

CJ Bagierek, Lake Street: encouraged the council to focus on ensuring that efforts lead to meaningful results for the community.

Dick Waskin, Bridge Street: shared a quote regarding the importance of consensus in decision-making, spoke on regarding council's lack of consensus-seeking, urged council to strive for collaboration and avoid an "us versus them" mentality. He questioned the timing of the meeting being so close to the election.

Councilmember Gardner requested that he be able to ask each candidate two questions.

The council discussed councilmember Gardner's request.

Motion by Gardner, second by Muncey to amend the procedure to include an opportunity to ask each of the applicants a couple of questions by council members after the conclusion of their individual presentations.

Via voice vote, motion failed 3-3. Yes, Holly, Russ, Gregory. No, Dean, Stanton, Baldwin.

Business Items:

The following applicants presented to the City Council, each providing a seven-minute background on their experiences and motivations for seeking the city council position:

- Joe Clark
- Dan Fox
- Mark Klungle
- Joe Leonatti
- Chris Peterson

The following applicant was unable to attend the interview:

- Sherry Tedaldi

Mayor Stanton opened up the floor for nominations:

- Councilmember Baldwin nominated Joe Clark to the vacant city council seat with term ending November 25 upon being sworn in.
- Councilmember Gardner nominated Chris Peterson for the vacancy.

Mayor Stanton closed the nomination process.

Motion by Baldwin, second by Dean to appoint Joe Clark to fill the vacant city council seat with the term Ending November 25 effective upon being sworn in. Via roll call vote, motion carried 4-0. Yes, Anderson, Baldwin and Stanton. No, none. Abstain, Gardner and Muncey.

Clerk Wolters administered the oath of office to new councilmember Clark.

Public Comment:

Bryan Hoffman, Grand Street: addressed concerns regarding legal costs for the city, the frivolous lawsuits being filed by individuals with real estate interests, transparency and toxic meetings.

Keith Charak, Main Street: raised concerns about one of the applicant's past.

Dan Fox, Elizabeth Street: hopes the council can embody the spirit of collaboration.

Dick Waskin, Bridge Street: appreciates his opportunity to share his thoughts, commented on Keith Charak's public comment and hopes the council can move toward greater consensus to avoid divisiveness.

Correspondence: None.

Council Comments:

Councilmember Anderson:

Emphasizes the importance of shared values and policy alignment among council members when making decisions, particularly regarding appointments. They argue that it's natural to support candidates who reflect the community's priorities and express a belief that personal connections and shared beliefs can enhance effective governance. The overall message advocates for selecting candidates who align with the council's and community's core issues.

Mayor Pro-Tem Baldwin:

Thanked all the candidates who participated and spoke; it's not an easy task, and she appreciated their involvement in the community. She hopes that not being selected doesn't discourage anyone from staying engaged. She expressed her gratitude to councilmember Clark for his willingness to serve and is confident he will be a wonderful addition to the council.

Councilmember Clark:

Expressed his gratitude to each of the members of the council for their service and for placing their trust in him. He is committed to earning trust and serving the city and its wonderful residents. While he acknowledges that there were many strong candidates, he didn't view that as a cloud over his appointment; rather, as an honor. He thanked the council once again for their support.

Councilmember Gardner:

He welcomed councilmember Clark and looks forward to serving with him. He addressed some concerns raised earlier. Recently, he received credible reports from community members claiming that a councilmember indicated Joe Clark had already been selected as the candidate. This kind of assurance is troubling and raises potential Open Meetings Act (OMA) violation concerns. It's important that discussions about council decisions remain transparent until the council convene at their table. He apologized to councilmember Clark if my comments seemed directed to him personally, but they were meant to address a procedural issue. It's crucial for city council to improve their processes moving forward.

Councilmember Dean:

He congratulated and welcomed Councilmember Clark to the council. Also, he reminded everyone that early voting starts on the 26th at the township hall, allowing residents of Saugatuck to cast their ballots early for about a week.

Councilmember Muncey:

He looks forward to serving alongside Joe Clark. He reminded everyone about the Make-A-Wish benefit this Saturday, October 19, at the Dunes Resort. The silent auction opens at 8 PM, and the drag show starts at 9:30. He prepared peanut butter and chocolate chip cookies, along with sloppy joes, to ensure everyone is well-fed. This event supports a local child from Allegan County, and it's a great cause, so I hope to see you all there. He thanked everyone.

Mayor Stanton:

The mayor addressed comments made by Ethan Barde regarding the number of messages received from community members, clarifying that he had indeed received numerous communications and shared evidence of them. She emphasized her accessibility as a business owner, which allows for frequent conversations about community issues. The mayor expressed her appreciation for councilmember Clark's and his calm demeanor, highlighting their positive collaboration on the short-term rental Task Force.

Adjournment:

Motion by Baldwin, second by Anderson to adjourn the meeting. Upon voice vote, motion carried unanimously. Mayor Stanton adjourned at 6:15 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted

Jamie Wolters, City Clerk