CITY COUNCIL WORKSHOP MEETING MINUTES
October 21, 2026
The City Council met for a Workshop Meeting at 4:00 p.m.
City Hall
102 Butler St., Saugatuck, MI 49453.

Call to Order:
The meeting was called to order by Mayor Anderson at 4:00 p.m.

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

Motion by Peterson, second by Gardner, to excuse councilmembers Stanton and Muncey from today's meeting. Via voice vote, motion carried 5-0.

Staff Present: City Manager Cummins, Zoning Director Moore, DPW Director Ondersma, Treasurer Bredeweg, and Clerk Wolters.
Others Present: Attorney Witte, Engineer Moxey.

Agenda Changes: None.

Guest Speaker: None.

Public Comment on Agenda Items Only:
Kelly Roche

Approval of Minutes:
Motion by Dean, second by Clark to approve the regular city council minutes from October 13, 2026. Via roll call vote, motion carried 5-0.

Discussion Items:
<u>DWSRF Lead Service Line Replacement Funding – Bond Counsel and Financial Advisor Services</u>:
City Manager Cummins reported that the City of Saugatuck is eligible for $1.69 million in Michigan DWSRF funding to replace known lead service lines: a $169,000 grant and a loan of just over $1.5 million at 0% interest, repayable over 20-30 years. Bond counsel Roger Swets (Dickinson Wright PLLC) explained that the loan must be issued as a municipal bond, outlined the required resolutions and 45-day referendum period, and estimated closing around July or August 2027 if the City meets the state's milestones and bids are acceptable. Financial advisor Andy Campbell (Bendzinksi & Co.) would help with the financing structure and projections. Council discussed paying upfront versus financing, how to cover future unknown lead lines and repayments, and whether professional services needed competitive bids; staff said those services are exempt under the purchasing ordinance and eligible project costs are reimbursable through the funding.

DWSRF Lead Service Line Replacement Funding:

DPW Director Ondersma presented Fleis & VandenBrink's proposal for design, permitting, bidding, and construction administration for the lead service line replacement project. The number of known lines needing replacement has fallen from 135 to 127, and engineers will investigate some of the 370 unknown lines during design. They plan to prepare a flexible bid package and adjust the scope after bids to make the best use of the $1.69 million in funding. Because the work involves individual properties, the proposal includes extra construction oversight and contingency for site-specific needs, including landscaping restoration. Construction is anticipated to begin in fall 2027 and finish in 2028; unknown lines may require additional work later, ahead of the federal 2038 deadline.

Milfoil Treatment for 2027

Aquatic Doctors reported that the six-year milfoil treatment program showed good results in 2026 and expected to reduce Saugatuck's treatment area in 2027 if growing conditions remain typical. The provider said treated acreage and related costs offer the clearest way to track progress, since the treated plants dissipate and are difficult to measure directly; some areas will likely still need ongoing treatment. Douglas had already signed up for 2027, allowing the cities to share the permit fee. Council members discussed a multi-year contract to hold per-acre prices and reduce annual administrative work, while noting that treatment acreage could still decrease and the agreement allows termination if results are unsatisfactory. City Manager Cummins said he would check which contract term Douglas selected.

Request for Archery Deer Hunting

City Manager Cummins presented Ralph O'Donnell's request to allow experienced hunter Tony Schippa to bow hunt deer on O'Donnell's approximately 6.5-acre property at 70 Park Street during the hunting season. The proposed safety plan included ground-level hunting positions and restrictions on shots toward streets or structures; the Sheriff's Department had reviewed it without objections. Council discussed state hunting regulations, liability notifying neighbors, and making clear that permission would apply only to this property rather than establishing a citywide precedent. Members also raised whether setbacks or criteria should apply to future requests; staff said requests would be reviewed case by case. The Council expressed support, but the request was scheduled for a vote on Monday.

Special Event – The Cottage Anniversary Party:

Clerk Wolters presented the Boatworks Acquisitions application for a Cottage anniversary party on November 7th, from 4-10 p.m. An overflow tent would be placed directly in front of the Cottage, occupying half of Mary Street while leaving a traffic lane open and maintaining access to nearby businesses and parking lots. Fire, police, and DPW had reviewed the safety plan, including the tent's weighting and markers. The tent was planned to be set up on Friday at noon and removed Monday at 9 a.m.; Jamie said the site map would be corrected before the Monday vote.

Proposed Sixth-Month Pilot Program – Modified Employee Work Schedules:

City Manager Cummins proposed a six-month pilot starting January 4, with full-time Public Works staff working Monday – Thursday 6:30 a.m. – 4 p.m. and Friday 6:30 – 10:30 a.m., and City Hall staff working Monday – Thursday 8 a.m. – 5:30 p.m. and Friday 8:30 a.m. - 12:30 p.m. The proposal keeps total work hours and pay unchanged; seasonal staff and on-call requirements would remain in place, though Friday snow operations could add costs. Council members were generally supportive, citing potential benefits for staff morale and retention, while discussing whether the pilot would capture summer demand and whether City Hall should stay open later on Fridays for beach passes. Councilmember Gardner asked staff to establish baseline measures for customer service, productivity, employee response, and operations so Council could assess results before deciding whether to continue or adjust the schedule.

Proposal for Conservation Services – Coghlin Park Rain Garden and Mason Street Turfgrass Restoration:
DPW Director Ondersma presented a proposal to replace turf grass with native plantings at the Coghlin Park rain garden and Mason Street hillside. The work is funded by donations from Friends of Saugatuck Parks and the Rotary Club, with no upfront cost to the city. Staff reviewed the sites and expected the plantings to reduce routine weed whipping once established; nearby residents also offered help with maintenance. Council discussed possible upkeep if the restoration does not thrive, and members expressed support for the proposal.

Oval Beach Season Recap:
Treasurer Bredeweg reported that Oval Beach sold more than 50,000 daily passes in 2026, an unusually high total, and generated about $887,000 in revenue, compared with roughly $884,000 in beach and parks expenditures; costs included the Mount Baldhead restroom work and other maintenance. The current concession operator, Saugataco, will not return so staff plan to debrief the operator and seek proposals for next season, while also considering food trucks or city-run concessions. Staff also discussed improvements to beach staffing, operations, traffic and communication about parking availability, shuttle access, and facility maintenance.

Revenue/Expenses through 1st Quarter:
Treasurer Bredeweg reported first-quarter revenue of about $3.37 million, nearly unchanged from the prior year and largely driven by property taxes, and expenditures of about $1.04 million. Spending reflected seasonal park and beach work, Maple Street construction, and a transfer of 70% of sidewalk costs from the General Fund to the Local Streets Fund. Council also discussed revenue from the Old Mill Pilot and Chain Ferry fees, which had not yet been recorded, and asked about election legal fees exceeding budget; Ryan said some costs were timing or accounting-related and he did not expect total legal expenses to increase. Early voting wages were also expected to be partly reimbursed by a grant.

Investment Update:
Bredeweg reported that a bank CD had matured and its interest was reinvested in another CD. Two Huntington CDs were moved into CDARS when they matured, and excess funds, including property tax revenue, were placed in MI CLASS at the end of September to earn interest while remaining accessible.

Fiscal Year 2026/2027 Priorities – Quarterly Update:
City Manager Cummins reviewed progress across the city's strategic priorities, including parking recommendations expected to return to Council for direction in December or January, a website contract targeted for November and the land-use master plan progressing toward completion in early spring. The new branding was ready for an initial rollout around November 5, and drafting had begun on the water and sewer agreement, with community approvals planned for February and March. He also highlighted progress on Maple Street, Elizabeth Street, Park Street, City Hall, lead-service-line replacement , and other infrastructure and parks projects, with a long-term capital funding analysis planned for Council in January. Some work, including the zoning-code update, would follow completion of the master plan; he emphasized that this substantial project work was being carried out alongside staff's daily operations.

Public Comments: None.

Council Comments:
Mayor Pro-Tem Clark and Councilmember Dean did not have comments.

Councilmember Gardner echoed the praise for city staff, thanked Nikki, Jamie, Mark, Grayson, and Ryan for their work, and commended the team's reporting and accomplishments.

Councilmember Peterson agreed with Gardner's comments and said the city staff make them look good.

Mayor Anderson praised the completed Maple Street work, especially the sidewalk, and said the business town hall generated candid feedback and useful suggestions. She thanked the participating business owners, Ryan, and city staff for their work.

Adjournment:

Motion by Gardner, second by Peterson to adjourn the meeting. Upon voice vote, motion carried 5-0. Mayor Anderson adjourned the meeting at 5:56 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

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Sara Williams, Deputy Clerk