



CITY COUNCIL REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
October 28, 2024

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

Call to Order:

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

Pledge of Allegiance.

Attendance:

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

Absent: None.

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

Mayor Comments:

- Mayor Stanton acknowledged the passing of former Saugatuck City Council member and Mayor Bill Hess, who served from 2012 to 2015 and contributed significantly to the Saugatuck-Douglas History Center, earning the Charles J. Lorenz Award in 2011. Donations in his memory can be made to the Saugatuck-Douglas History Center. The mayor also reminded the community of Veterans Day on November 11, with a ceremony at 10 a.m. in the park and an 8:30 a.m. breakfast at Saugatuck High School for veterans and their families, organized by the school and the American Legion.
- Halloween festivities were a success, highlighted by a kids' parade, costume contest, and trick-or-treating. Special thanks went to April Gundy and local businesses for their efforts. Additionally, a well-attended hike at the airport property was enjoyed by the Radar Hill Hiking Club, Riverwood Council, and Parks and Public Works Committee members. Participants explored local history and appreciated the scenic trails and autumn landscape.

City Manager Comments:

City Manager Cummins provided updates on the following community improvements:

- Benches Installed at Playground: The new benches requested for the playground have been installed, with positive feedback from the community. Pads were poured last week, and benches are now in use.
- Oval Beach Wi-Fi: Wi-Fi is now live at Oval Beach. Testing showed strong signal strength in the front lots and beach area. The northern back lot, where dunes obstruct the signal, is weaker, but this was anticipated. The Wi-Fi installation significantly enhances public safety, as it enables Wi-Fi calling for emergencies. Additionally, our dispatch center in Allen County now accepts text messages to 911, providing an alternative emergency communication option.

- Short-Term Rental Hotline: The short-term rental enforcement plan is now active. A 24/7 hotline for concerns related to short-term rentals was launched last Thursday. Information about the hotline will be shared with the community tomorrow through social media, email blasts, and other communication channels. Further educational efforts will be made as the season approaches.
- Paving Updates: Asphalt repairs are nearly complete. Tomorrow, engineers and contractors will conduct a walkthrough to ensure the work meets standards and identify any areas needing additional repairs. This year's paving work was more widespread, following last year's focus on East, West, Takken and Taylor roads.
- Saugatuck Harbor Natural Area: The Land Conservancy of West Michigan has provided updated management recommendations for the Saugatuck Harbor Natural Area. This update is part of the effort to revise the property's master plan, which is required to access endowment funds held at the Holland Community Foundation. A draft update of the master plan will be presented in the coming months for review and approval.

Agenda Changes: None.

Guest Speakers: None.

Public Comment on Agenda Item Only:

Chris Peterson, Pleasant St.: discussed concerns with recent changes to the proposal for the Outdoor Discovery Center.

Kelly Roche, Hoffman St.: highlighted the extensive process behind the Airport Property.

Barry Johnson, Main St.: suggested the council table item 16B.

Jon Vanderbeek, twp.: expressed optimism about the future of the Airport Property.

Mark Klungle, Water St.: raised concerns regarding the conservation easement.

Sherry Tedaldi, North St.: expressed concerns that the city is moving too fast on the Airport Property.

Consent Agenda:

- Regular Meeting Minutes- October 9, 2024.
- Special Meeting Minutes- October 17, 2024.
- Special Event - Veterans Day
- Appointment of Council Member Joe Clark as Council Representative to the Planning Commission.
- Temporarily Designate Scott Herbert to act as City Manager while City Manager is Out of the Country.
- Resolution 241028-A: Approval for On-Premises Tasting Room Permit for Noble Twist Tap House (246 Culver).

Motion by Baldwin, second by Anderson to approve the consent agenda. Via roll call vote, motion carried unanimously.

Staff Reports, Boards, Commissions & Committees:

The City Manager, Treasurer, City Clerk, Director of Planning & Zoning, Department of Public Works and Engineer submitted status reports of current activities since the last regular council meeting on October 9, 2024, for their respective departments.

- Sheriff Haas introduced Marin Kaminski, the new deputy assigned to the city and informed council of an incident downtown during the past weekend.

Fire District Administration Board, Dan Fox:

- Lieutenant Kyle Meyer, a high-responding officer who narrowly avoided injury when a battery exploded on the fire district's largest apparatus. Despite the loud explosion, Meyer was unharmed and serves as a model first responder.

- September incident data, with calls up by four from the previous month, totaling 85. The district is on track for a 20% year-over-year increase, straining resources. He noted fluctuations in response times, which vary based on incident locations, but assured that these are within acceptable limits according to Chief's standards. In 2024 so far, 45% of calls came from the township, 32% from Douglas, and 23% from Saugatuck.
- Fox emphasized the need to limit parade routes to Butler Street to reduce exposure risks, as fewer points to block off improve crowd safety. He suggested looking into various types of barriers, including Archer barriers used in Holland, which are highly effective but costly. Alternatives include polystyrene water-filled barriers, though these require filling and draining, adding strain on fire district resources.
- A successful cost recovery of over \$6,500 from incidents, including a complex truck rescue in Douglas, and ongoing collective bargaining discussions with the union.
- The recent acquisition of a TMA (Truck-Mounted Attenuator) truck, which will be equipped to protect responders on high-speed roadways. He recounted a recent, harrowing experience Chief Janet had during a car fire on I-196, where speeding vehicles came alarmingly close to responders, underscoring the dangers they face on such calls.

Interurban Board, Councilmember Muncey:

- The free Halloween shuttle service successfully transported 1,565 riders, helping parade-goers reach their destinations smoothly, especially during the late evening rush. At around 9:30 p.m., additional buses were called in to accommodate the crowd and keep things running on schedule.
- With the new fiscal year starting, service hours will be extended. From November through February, weekday operations will run from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m., with an extra hour added to each weekday, Monday through Friday. Additionally, there will be a \$3 fare for late-night rides between 7 p.m. and 11 p.m. during summer months, while regular daytime rides will remain at \$1.50. The summer schedule will feature extended hours: Friday and Saturday services will run until 11 p.m., while Sunday service will be open until 7 p.m., extending into early fall.
- Weekly trips to Holland are ongoing, departing Saugatuck at 9:15 a.m. every Tuesday, allowing residents access to services unavailable locally. Other services include prescription delivery for \$2 and takeout food delivery for \$3, offering a local alternative to food delivery apps.
- Future plans include potential partnerships with Allegan County Transportation and Van Buren's bus system to establish routes to South Haven and Fennville. This expansion would connect more local communities, with possible service beginning next year.

Kalamazoo Lake Sewer & Water Authority, Barry Johnson:

At the meeting on October 21, several updates and challenges regarding infrastructure, water safety, and staff were discussed. Here are the key takeaways:

- **Water Infrastructure and Safety:**
 - The city of Douglas has an iron removal plant for one of its wells and has received a discharge permit for the filter backwash.
 - A lead and copper sampling report for 2024 was submitted, showing that the water quality is statistically better than 2023, with no lead samples exceeding 4 parts per billion (ppb), which is well below the EPA's standards. This is particularly important given the city's lead service lines. The system's compliance is also ahead of the upcoming stricter standards set for next year.
 - Corrosion control efforts are noted to be effective, and the system is performing well in terms of water safety, with ongoing efforts to monitor and maintain compliance.

- **Aging Infrastructure:**
 - Working with old infrastructure, including 1950s technology at the wells and 1970s electrical systems. These systems are being updated to improve reliability and safety.
 - Implemented a radio-based SCADA system (Supervisory Control and Data Acquisition) to ensure that the system is protected from internet-based hacks.
 - There is a need for 11 to 13 security cameras to monitor critical facilities.
- **Equipment and Staffing:**
 - Successfully replaced an old generator at Clear Brook lift station, upgrading to a more reliable natural gas-powered system.
 - In the process of purchasing a new vector truck for hydro excavation, which is crucial for maintaining water and sewer systems. The purchase is supported by funds allocated in the Capital Improvement Fund, amounting to \$508,000.
 - Plans to expand its staff in response to the new sewer and water agreements that will increase responsibilities and liabilities.
- **Other Infrastructure Issues:**
 - A water leak was reported at 586 Mason Street, potentially caused by a contractor placing a dumpster on top of the water shutoff valve. The city is addressing this with the contractor involved.

Kalamazoo Lake Harbor Authority, City Manager Cummins:

A special meeting will be held soon. The authority is interested in hiring a consultant to help them through the next year and have support for their board to look at some dredging opportunities.

Zoning Board of Appeals: None.

Historic District Commission, Councilmember Gardner:

Next meeting is Thursday, November 7 at 6 p.m.

Planning Commission, Councilmember Anderson:

The meeting was canceled and will be rescheduled for early December.

Parks & Public Works Committee, Mayor Pro-Tem Baldwin:

All items were covered in the City Manager report.

Tri-Community Non-Motorized Trail Study Committee, Councilmember Dean:

They did not receive the grant for the proposed traffic signal.

Water System Operations Contract Advisory Committee, Councilmember Baldwin:

They are waiting to look at the redline agreement in the next three weeks.

Wildlife Management Committee

The first meeting is next month.

Approval of Accounts Payable:

Motion by Anderson, second by Baldwin to approve the accounts payable in the amount of \$1,941,333.32. Via roll call vote, motion carried unanimously.

Public Hearing: None.

Unfinished Business: None.

New Business:**Proposal from Bendzinski & Company Municipal Finance Advisors for Water and Sewer Rate Studies:**

Motion by Muncey, second by Baldwin to approve the proposal from Bendzinski & Company Municipal Finance Advisors in the amount of \$21,000 for water and sewer rate studies. Via roll call vote, motion carried unanimously.

Conservation Easement between the City and Outdoor Discovery Center for Eastern Portion of Old Airport Property:

Motion by Baldwin, second by Muncey to approve the Conservation Easement between the City of Saugatuck and ODC Network. Via roll call vote, motion carried unanimously.

Development Due Diligence Agreement with Saugatuck Township for Old Landfill Property:

Motion by Baldwin, second by Muncey to approve the Development Due Diligence Agreement with Saugatuck Township for the Old Landfill Property. Via roll call vote, motion carried unanimously.

Public Comment:

Chris Peterson, Pleasant St.: shared concerns whether the conservation easement is tied only to a portion of the property and if it impacts the broader project goals such as trailhead, parking lots and public accessibility.

Ken Butler, Saugatuck parks & rec.: he thanked the council for approving the landfill property agreement.

Joe Leonatti, Allegan St.: raised concerns about the ethical standards and accountability for council members and how their behavior reflects on the reputation of the city as a whole.

Jon Vanderbeek, twp.: expressed gratitude for the city council's decision to move forward with the airport property.

Mark Klungle, Water St.: concerned about the selection process for the city council vacancy, he addressed comments

Correspondence:

- A. John Thomas
- B. Board Vacancy Notice – Planning Commission

Council Comments:**Councilmember Anderson:**

- Expressed gratitude to Jon Vanderbeek for his efforts in conserving the airport property and to Ken Butler for his persistence in advocating for the running trails, recognizing both as valuable contributions to the community. She acknowledged the city staff for getting Granicus up and running, and expressed anticipation about the new short-term rental section on the website.
- She shared how disheartening it is to see accusations made without evidence or factual support, especially on social media. They emphasized the importance of truth and understanding before making such claims. The speaker clarified a misunderstanding about their relationship with Councilmember Clark, explaining that they never described him as a friend, but rather held him in high regard. She read quotes from a news article, in which she praised Joe for being thoughtful, fair, analytical, and down-to-earth, and mentioned working with him on the short-term rental task force. The speaker also pointed out that different people have different views on what makes someone qualified for office, and that this is natural in a democracy.

Mayor Pro-Tem Baldwin:

- Expressed gratitude to both the council and the public for their support regarding the airport property project. She specifically thanked those who contributed to finding donors and helping bring the project to [102 Butler St. ★ PO Box 86 ★ \(269\) 857-2603 ★ \[www.SaugatuckCity.com\]\(http://www.SaugatuckCity.com\)](mailto:102ButlerSt@saugatuckcity.com)

fruition. Baldwin emphasized the collaborative effort required to get the project across the finish line, noting the importance of this accomplishment for the city.

- Acknowledged the hard work and dedication involved, particularly in the face of criticism, and expressed her appreciation for everyone who voted in favor of the project. Baldwin highlighted the value of the property and the opportunity it provides, expressing satisfaction in seeing it finally move forward. She thanked everyone who participated in making it a success.

Councilmember Clark: None.

Councilmember Gardner:

- Expressed his deep appreciation for Bill Hess, noting a personal connection with him over the years. He shared a touching story about Bill's long relationship with his partner, Mike, and highlighted Bill's integrity and dedication to the community.
- Regarding the airport property, he clarified that he is not opposed to trails but remains concerned about the long-term financial implications for the city, as the property will now be tied up in perpetuity.
- Congratulated Erin Wilkinson and the team in the city of Douglas for hosting a wonderful Halloween parade.
- He called for a review of the city's ethics policy, particularly in relation to social media use by elected officials, appointed officials, and city employees. He said that the city is falling behind in this area and suggested creating specific guidelines to ensure elected and appointed officials are up to date with the use of social media.

Councilmember Dean:

- He extended his heartfelt condolence to the family of Bill Hess. Bill was a valued collaborator, particularly on the historic markers seen around town, and his contributions to the community are greatly appreciated. It's an honor to follow in the footsteps of leaders like Bill, who voted in 2008 to conserve Talmage Woods. He was proud to cast his vote to conserve the old-growth forest on the eastern edge of the property, preserving this historic piece of our natural landscape for future generations. This is truly one of the most rewarding aspects of public service.

Councilmember Muncey:

- Halloween hours for trick-or-treating in Douglas and Saugatuck are from 5:00 PM to 8:00 PM, with additional details available on Birdie Holley's site for the local neighborhood times.
- For the Saugatuck School Board election, due to a late filing, the candidates are not listed on the ballot. Voters will need to write in the names of the candidates running for the five open positions: Frank Morro III, Lisa Greenwood, James Woods, Mary Ihle, and Amanda Frank.
- Took the opportunity to wish good luck to fellow candidates and shared appreciation for serving on the council, despite differences in opinion, and expressed excitement for the election being over next Tuesday.

Adjournment:

Motion by Muncey, second by Gardner to adjourn the meeting. Upon voice vote, motion carried unanimously. Mayor Stanton adjourned at 8:11 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted

Jamie Wolters, City Clerk