



**CITY COUNCIL REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
November 25, 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 Anderson at 6:30 p.m.

Pledge of Allegiance.

Attendance:

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

Absent: None.

Others Present: City Manager Cummins, Attorney Jake Witte and Clerk Wolters.

Mayor Comments:

Mayor Anderson welcomed councilmember Peterson and expressed excitement about working together. She reminded everyone about the annual Christmas Tree Lighting event, scheduled for Friday at 7 PM, with an invitation extended to all Council members to participate. She commended the local middle and elementary schools for being recognized by *U.S. News & World Report* as among the top three in the state, highlighting it as a source of great pride for the community.

City Manager Comments:

City Manager Ryan Cummins congratulated the mayor on being selected for the position and Councilmember Peterson on her return. He was proud to hear the previous meeting council comments regarding the staff. Cummins shared his experience on his trip to India and Nepal, describing it as a refreshing and enlightening experience that offered appreciation for the community's resources. He noted the next workshop meeting agenda item will be discussion surrounding strategic planning. This includes reviewing the annual community survey, deciding on potential changes to survey questions, and considering whether to retain or modify the existing approach and facilitation. He thanked Scott Herbert for managing responsibilities during their absence, acknowledging the commendations Herbert received for his work and highlighting the staff's continued support.

Agenda Changes:

Motion by Stanton, second by Muncey to add the new Allegan County Commissioner as a guest speaker. Via voice vote, motion carried unanimously.

Guest Speakers:

Brian Lubbers, newly elected Allegan County Commissioner, District 3: Commissioner Lubbers congratulated newly elected and re-elected City Council members and expressed appreciation for the opportunity to attend their first meeting as a new group. As a newly elected Commissioner, he provided an update, noting that changes are underway for the upcoming year, including the addition of two new Commissioners and the departure of the current Chairman, Jim Story, which will result in new leadership and a new Vice Chairman. He is committed to maintaining open communication and encourages council members to reach out via call, text, or email for assistance and clarified plans to attend the council's second monthly meeting. He concluded by reiterating his willingness to provide support and thanked them for their time.

Public Comment on Agenda Item Only:

Steve Manns, Weirich Dr.:

- Congratulated Scott, Lauren, Gregory, and Holly, noting they would miss Holly on the Planning Commission but were confident in Joe Clark's continued role as the council representative.
- Discussed the appointment of a new commissioner, recommending Auston, citing his law background and long-term commitment to the community as key factors.
- Mentioned that the Planning Commission's November meeting was rescheduled to December 2nd at 6:30 PM, aligning with the council's meeting time, and invited others to attend.

Consent Agenda:

A. Regular Meeting Minutes - November 12, 2024.

B. Resolution 241125-A – Authorizing City Officers to Act as Signatories on Behalf of The City.

C. Board/Commission/Committee Appointment – Planning Commission.

D. Change Order – 2024 Asphalt Repairs.

Motion by Stanton, second by Gardner 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 November 12, 2024, for their respective departments.

Fire District Administration Board, Dan Fox:

Recap from the fire board meeting held on November 18:

- Continued increase in calls, particularly EMS calls (44 calls in total).
- Most frequent calls: helping people get back on their feet (falls).
- Breakdown of calls by jurisdiction:
 - Saugatuck City: 23%
 - Douglas: 31%
 - Township: 46%

- Fire district response times have improved, with a decrease in average response time from the previous month.
- Consistent positive trend in response times compared to past years along with significant increase in call volume.
- Contracted ambulance service stationed at the fire district, providing 8-hour shifts most days, available for calls.
- The ambulance service's performance has been better than the previous provider, with faster response times in some areas.
- 69% of billed services have been successfully collected, amounting to approximately \$45,000, this revenue helps offset taxpayer costs.
- The board approved a collective bargaining agreement for the fire district's eight full-time employees, the agreement is under legal review.
- Additional costs for parades beyond basic support will be billed to the city.
- The TMA truck, designed to protect firefighters during road emergencies, was used for the first time on November 21st during a car fire on I-196. The truck was acquired with 85% public donations, amounting to \$211,000, with no taxpayer cost for the majority of the purchase.

Interurban Board, Councilmember Muncey:

- Ridership up by 11.82%, with Halloween carrying 11,165 riders for free (140 more than the prior year).
- All buses now have new E-pads, allowing drivers to communicate with passengers and other drivers. Positive feedback from drivers.
- New service to allow credit card transactions for bus rides, improving convenience for passengers.
- Approved budget of \$1,000,200 in revenues and \$1,225,000 in expenses (23% increase due to increased bus usage).
- Van Buren transportation requested to organize a "Two-Way Tuesday" event with trips to South Haven, Glen, Meijer and Walmart, potentially launching in 2025.

Kalamazoo Lake Sewer & Water Authority, Mark Bekken:

- Welcomed councilmember Clark, congratulated Anderson and Stanton on their new positions within the council and welcomed back Peterson.
- First year of participation in a EPA, DMR, QA study 44 and achieved 100% acceptability in the study's required parameters.
- Received the 2025 Wellhead Protection grant, funding research and protection activities for future well sites.
- Did not receive the Clean Water State Revolving Fund grant (highly competitive).
- 1 million gallon tank on Mount Ball Head inspected by drone, results expected in 4-6 weeks with no major issues expected until the next inspection cycle (2029-2031).
- Fluid leaks in two new stationary gas generators under warranty, currently being addressed.
- Two staff members took the S2 Eagle water distribution license exam. Continuing effort to license all field operators in water/sewer, with pay incentives for certifications.
- Pump failure at Lift Station 1 (Saugatuck) across from Peters Mill; \$46,000 repair approved. Backup pump in use at \$2,400/month cost. Replacement planned for 3 years out.
- Ongoing collaboration with Saugatuck Township on shared boundary water line issues, focusing on meter equivalent units for rate setting.
- Generator maintenance contract approved for 3 years.

- Approved \$45,950 repair for Lift Station 1 pump.
- Approved \$10,000 for CCTV sanitary sewer inspection project.

Kalamazoo Lake Harbor Authority: None.

Zoning Board of Appeals: Ryan Cummins noted that their meeting was canceled.

Historic District Commission, Councilmember Gardner: Next meeting is December 5, at 6pm.

Planning Commission, Councilmember Clark: Next meeting is December 2.

Parks & Public Works Committee, Mayor Pro-Tem Stanton: They are looking to reschedule the December 24 meeting.

Tri-Community Non-Motorized Trail Study Committee, Councilmember Dean: They met last week, and based on feedback from MDOT, they've been reviewing some revisions, particularly around the boardwalk area. As costs for the project are increasing, they are collaborating with the team at C2AE on a TIP amendment. This amendment will involve submitting a request for supplemental funding from MDOT to address the rising costs associated with the project. They will be actively pursuing this to ensure adequate funding for successful completion.

Water System Operations Contract Advisory Committee, Councilmember Gardner: There is a meeting scheduled for December 4th.

Wildlife Management Committee, Councilmember Dean:

The committee is currently developing a community survey to gather public input on deer management. The next meeting is scheduled for December 4 in Douglas at 6:00 PM. The meeting will feature a presentation by a DNR wildlife biologist, a local expert in southwest Michigan specializing in deer management in suburban and urban communities.

Approval of Accounts Payable:

Motion by Stanton, second by Clark to approve the accounts payable in the amount of \$258,537.55. Via roll call vote, motion carried unanimously.

Public Hearing: None.

Unfinished Business: None.

New Business:

Organization Meeting- Appointment of Council Members:

Motion by Dean, second by Stanton to appoint Lauren Stanton to the Parks and Public Works Committee, appoint Joe Clark to the Water and Sewer Systems Operations Contract Advisory Committee, reappoint Scott Dean to the Blue Star Trail Committee, and appoint Chris Peterson to the Harbor Authority. Via roll call vote, motion carried unanimously.

Public Comment:

Joe Leonatti, Allegan St.: He encouraged everyone to exercise restraint and conduct themselves responsibly during the Christmas Parade coming up.

Correspondence: None.

Council Comments:Mayor Anderson:

Wished all a Happy Thanksgiving and cheered on the Lions.

Mayor Pro-Tem Stanton:

She welcomed Auston Marineau to the Planning Commission, expressing enthusiasm for his contributions to the team and she welcomed back Peterson. Mayor Pro-Tem Stanton shared excitement about joining the Parks and Public Works Committee, highlighting her passion for the work and appreciation for the team's hands-on approach to projects. Thanksgiving wishes were extended to all, with a special mention of the upcoming tree lighting ceremony, which is anticipated to be another enjoyable event.

Councilmember Clark:

He wished all a Happy Thanksgiving and gave a warm welcome to returning Councilmember Peterson. The holiday decorations around town were commended for their beauty and impact. Appreciation was extended to everyone involved in making the decorations a success. A welcome was also extended to Auston, the newest member of the Planning Committee. Additionally, a heartfelt acknowledgment was given to the town's first responders. A recent personal experience involving a medical emergency with a family member highlighted their swift and professional actions, which ensured a positive outcome.

Councilmember Dean:

He recognized and welcomed Chris Peterson back to the council. He wished all a Happy Thanksgiving. Everyone is blessed to live in this community, and he is grateful.

Councilmember Gardner:

Councilmember Gardner welcomed Peterson to the council and Auston to the Planning Commission, expressing enthusiasm about working with both. He detailed conversations with Mayor Holly Anderson on November 12 regarding council dynamics, the nomination process for mayor, and the need to update the city's ethics policy, which hasn't been revised since 2008. During the calls, the mayor made unsubstantiated claims about a past tax issue involving the speaker, later emailing a court records link. Gardner clarified that the case, from 2003 and 2006, was dismissed and irrelevant to his role. He raised concerns about the mayor's actions, calling them unbecoming, though not illegal, and stressed the importance of updating the ethics policy to prevent similar incidents. Gardner highlighted the need for a study committee to revise the policy, addressing areas such as social media guidelines and electronic communications. He urged the council to act, ensuring ethical governance and transparency. Gardner expressed gratitude for the opportunity to serve, extending holiday wishes, and noting his absence from the tree lighting due to prior commitments.

Councilmember Muncey:

He wished all a Happy Thanksgiving, encouraging them to enjoy the holiday weekend, and have fun around the table. Reminded all about the upcoming tree lighting event at Wicks Park, scheduled for 6:00 PM, with festivities beginning earlier at 5:00–5:30 PM. Santa Claus is expected to make an appearance, and children can visit with him before the official countdown. Milk Pond Realty will be

providing cookies and hot chocolate for attendees, adding to the festive atmosphere. The Saugatuck Christmas Carol will take place on December 13, 14, 15, 20, 21, and 22. This marks the 38th year of the beloved community production, featuring local volunteers and families who have participated over the decades. Residents were encouraged to attend and support the event. Tickets can be purchased at saugatuckchristmascarol@ludus.com and additional information can be found on their Facebook page.

Councilmember Peterson:

She reviewed past meeting minutes to understand why efforts to update the ethics policy haven't moved forward. Having such a policy would allow council to address issues constructively and avoid the division we see now. She stands with Gardner in advocating for an updated ethics policy to ensure accountability and transparency. She noted it is an honor to serve on the council, she looks forward to working with her peers. She will miss the tree lighting due to a trip to Chicago, it's always a wonderful event that shows the spirit of the community. She wished everyone in Saugatuck a Happy Thanksgiving.

Adjournment:

Motion by Stanton, second by Muncey to adjourn the meeting. Upon voice vote, motion carried unanimously. Mayor Anderson adjourned at 7:38 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted

Jamie Wolters, City Clerk