



**CITY COUNCIL SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES
December 17, 2025**

The City Council met for a Special 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 and Councilmembers Dean, Gardner, Muncey, Peterson and Stanton.

Absent: Mayor Pro-Tem Clark.

Motion by Peterson, second by Dean to excuse councilmember Clark. Via voice vote, motion carried 6-0.

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

Agenda Changes: None.

Public Comment on Agenda Items Only:

Daniel DeFranco.

Action Items:

Regular City Council Meeting Minutes – December 8, 2025:

Motion by Stanton, second by Muncey to approve the regular city council meeting minutes from December 8, 2025. Via roll call vote, motion carried 6-0.

Closed Session City Council Minutes – December 8, 2025:

Motion by Peterson, second by Gardner to approve the closed session minutes from December 8 As presented. Via roll call vote, motion carried 6-0.

Resolution 251217-A Exercising the City of Saugatuck’s Right of First Refusal to Purchase Wastewater Treatment Plant Capacity from the City of the Village of Douglas:

Resolution 251217-A concerns the City of Saugatuck’s right of first refusal to purchase additional wastewater treatment plant capacity from the City of the Village of Douglas. The council was asked to vote on whether to exercise that contractual right in the face of a potential sale of unused capacity from Douglas to Saugatuck Township. Council discussed.

Motion by Dean, second by Peterson to approve resolution 251217-A exercising the City of Saugatuck’s right of first refusal to purchase wastewater plan capacity from the City of the Village of Douglas. Via roll call vote, motion carried 5-1. Yes-Anderson, Dean, Gardner, Peterson, Stanton. No-Muncey.

Discussion Items:**Request for Letter of Support – Allegan Conservation District MCMP Grant Application:**

City Manager Ryan Cummins introduced a request for a letter of support for the Allegan Conservation District's application to the Michigan Coastal Management Program grant. The goal of the grant is to support forest mortality mitigation and prevention planning relevant to invasive species and ecological health.

Brian Talsma (Allegan Conservation District) explained the project:

The district seeks the participation of local municipalities to allow inventory work on public properties if funded, starting in January 2027. The focus will be on identifying and planning for areas at risk from invasive species and future forest mortality, especially hemlocks (affected by woolly adelgid), red oaks (oak wilt), and American beech (various diseases). The plan is not to request specific permissions or commitments now, but to collaborate on inventory and planning should funding be granted. Treated areas and ongoing maintenance needs were discussed, as well as the importance of planning for long-term mitigation, replacement species, and erosion prevention.

Council members engaged with questions about project sites (e.g., Mount Baldhead, Talmadge Woods), urgency (ongoing spread of invasive species, need for repeated treatments), and historical lack of comprehensive forest management.

Special Event – Saugatuck Douglas Art Club Art Fairs:

The council reviewed a special event request from the Saugatuck-Douglas Art Club for their annual art fairs, which occur twice a year during the weekends of Fourth of July and Venetian. The notable changes to the 2025 planning are: the art fair held on Venetian Weekend would become a two-day event (rather than a single day) and include a full closure of Main Street (from Butler Street to Water Street) for both days and overnight, to facilitate setup, and teardown. Event organizer Annie Hayes explained the need for two days: higher-end artists are more willing to travel for a more substantial event. She confirmed support from the only Main Street business affected. City staff clarified that overnight security would be covered by the event organizer and would use Allegan County reserve deputies. Barricade responsibilities also fall to the organizer. Council members discussed impacts on traffic, parking, and local activity—some expressed initial reservations about extending the closure during busy festival weekends, but supported efforts to enhance the event's quality and the organizer's outreach to local businesses.

Council Feedback on Strategic Planning Meeting for Fiscal Year 2026/2027:

City Manager Ryan Cummins presented a proposed structure for the upcoming FY 26-27 strategic planning meeting. He recommended maintaining a focus on prioritization, sequencing, and refinement of current city initiatives rather than adding many new priorities, given the stable council membership and existing ongoing projects. Suggestions also included using the Saugatuck Yacht Club as a venue and inviting the longstanding facilitator due to their familiarity with council processes.

The council discussed whether to return to simple resident surveys that were used in past years. Some members saw value in maintaining historical survey data for year-over-year comparison, while others felt there was "survey fatigue" and little need for more feedback, since key priorities have remained consistent and previous surveys yielded sufficient information. Discussion about facilitators ended with consensus on using the same facilitator as previous years. Council members emphasized the need for greater realism about what can be accomplished, improved project management, and clear timelines and expectations. They also acknowledged the value of in-depth review and prioritization rather than team-building, given the council's cohesion. Dates for the January session were canvassed and staff was directed to confirm facilitator and venue availability then communicate the finalized date.

Public Comments:

Daniel DeFranco.

Council Comments:

Councilmember Stanton expressed that she has had conversations with the township manager and reiterated the city's intent to help meet the township's sewer capacity needs. She clarified the focus is on retaining the right of first refusal in the current contract and potentially in future agreements until satisfactory new terms are reached. She emphasized the importance of protecting what the city currently has and conveyed optimism that the issue could be worked out amicably.

Councilmember Dean wished everyone a Merry Christmas. He expressed gratitude for the relationships and dialogue among the tri-community partners and showed optimism that these positive relationships will produce a fair solution on the capacity and right of first refusal issues.

Councilmember Gardner thanked the township representatives for attending and acknowledged the difficult decisions faced by the council. He shared confidence in both the history of relationships built and in the ability of the city, township, and Douglas managers to find a resolution that serves all parties' needs. He maintained confidence in future progress.

Councilmember Peterson echoed Stanton's comments, affirming the council's responsibility first and foremost to Saugatuck. She expressed disappointment at characterizations suggesting exploitation or hostility, emphasizing that the city's goal remains to assist the township while safeguarding city interests.

Mayor Anderson thanked attendees for the open exchange and reaffirming her hope for fairness in serving all three communities. The goal is to continue transparent negotiations that account for each municipality's needs resulting in agreements that serve the common good and expressed confidence that a collaborative solution can be reached in the near future.

Adjournment:

Motion by Stanton, second by Peterson to adjourn the meeting. Upon voice vote, motion carried 6-0. Mayor Anderson adjourned the meeting at 5:21 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted

Jamie Wolters, City Clerk