



CITY COUNCIL REGULAR MEETING MINUTES - *Proposed*
December 23, 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 reflected on what a successful year it had been. Highlights included hiring a new city manager and staff members, a new playground, completed infrastructure projects, good start to funding lead pipe replacements, advancing Maple Street planning, and supporting trails. She also noted accomplishments like the conservation easement at the airport property, expanded recycling, Wi-Fi at Oval Beach, and updated STR policies. Grateful for the progress made, she expressed optimism about building on this success in 2025, thanking the city council and staff for their efforts.

City Manager Comments:

City Manager Cummins reflected on the year's progress, noting how quickly December had arrived and acknowledging the upcoming transition into the next fiscal year's planning. Preparations for the budget will soon begin, with priorities set to be grouped and addressed. He mentioned the strategic planning community survey, which launched based on council feedback, and encouraged residents to participate, with paper copies available at City Hall. Notices will also be published in the local paper. On the financial front, he reported good news: the audit is nearly complete, with a draft under review, and the findings will be presented on January 8. He highlighted a \$400,000 addition to the fund balance, exceeding expectations. He also mentioned the wildlife management survey as another opportunity for community engagement. Reflecting on his nearly year-long tenure, he expressed gratitude for the council's support and collaboration, noting how much he's learned and enjoyed working with everyone. He closed by thanking them for a successful year and wishing them a Merry Christmas and happy holiday season.

Agenda Changes: Councilmember Peterson removed item 9c from the consent agenda and moved it to 14d under new business.

Guest Speakers: None.

Public Comment on Agenda Item Only:

Dan Fox, Elizabeth Street: Commented on Item 9c noting Jane Verplank’s significant contributions to the Fire District Board over the last 12 years.

Consent Agenda:

- A. Regular Meeting Minutes - November 25, 2024.
- B. Resolution No. 241223-A - Approving Contract Number 24-5489 between the Michigan Department of transportation and City of Saugatuck for Funding on the Maple Street Improvements. Project from the Transportation Economic Development Fund Category B Program for Planning of Access Improvements and Coastal Stabilization in the Park Street Corridor.
- C. Board Reappointment
 - i. Lynne Aspnes – Board of Review with term ending January 1, 2028.
 - ii. Jane Verplank – Fire District Board with term ending January 14, 2031.

Motion by Stanton, second by Dean 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, Engineer and Police submitted status reports of current activities since the last regular council meeting on December 23, 2024, for their respective departments.

Fire District Administration Board, Dan Fox:

Dan Fox, the council representative to the Fire District Administrative Board, provided an update on the board’s November 16 meeting. He shared data on the district’s performance, highlighting that incidents were at an all-time high, with emergency medical calls making up 61% of all service requests. Saugatuck accounted for 23% of total calls, aligning with its demographics. He presented a chart showing record-breaking call volumes across several months in the past year, reflecting a dramatic increase in demand over the past decade. He also reported on ambulance response times under the new Life EMS contract, noting improvements compared to the previous provider. A new chart on cardiac arrest incidents was introduced, detailing the use of critical equipment like the LUCAS device, which provides automated CPR, and the i-gel device, used to secure airways during emergencies. Saugatuck Fire Department staff members Sergeant Riley Capel and Kevin Stevens demonstrated these devices in front of the City Council, emphasizing their importance in rapid response situations. He announced that the fire board will add First Monday workshop meetings in the coming year to address major topics without overloading regular meetings. He also noted the completion of the fire district’s annual financial audit, describing it as thorough and well-conducted. Fox recounted a significant emergency incident where firefighters aided a woman in severe respiratory distress outside a restaurant. During the response, a fire officer faced hostility from an adjacent

property owner over easement concerns. Following the incident, standing orders were implemented to automatically dispatch law enforcement to future calls at the location. He raised serious concerns about safety during local parades, referencing alarming footage of near accidents involving children and large vehicles. Fox emphasized the danger of inadequate barricades and uncontrolled pedestrian behavior, calling for immediate safety measures akin to those in neighboring towns. He highlighted the reluctance of some fire personnel to participate in parades due to these risks. Fox also discussed highway safety, sharing an example of a fire truck (from another jurisdiction) damaged in a recent highway incident. He detailed the financial and operational challenges of repairing or replacing vehicles, stressing the importance of safety measures to prevent such occurrences.

Interurban Board, Councilmember Muncey:

In November, they carried 4,069 passengers, which is 193 more than the previous November, continuing a trend of growth. The service offers free rides on New Year's Eve between 6 p.m. and 1 a.m. for people heading home safely. The fiscal year 2024 audit is set to be completed in January, and a copy will be provided to the city. A new initiative is in progress to offer a weekly ride to South Haven similar to what they currently provide to Holland. This service will provide an affordable transportation option for individuals needing medical appointments, grocery shopping, or other essential errands. A catchy name is being considered for the route. The team is also working on a shuttle service to Fennville, though it's still in development. They have been expanding its hours and seeking new ways to serve more areas. The team has had a successful year, with Becky's leadership bringing fresh ideas and energy to the service. She treated the board to dinner as a thank you, which was appreciated by all, though not everyone could attend. Overall, there's excitement about continuing this progress into the next year.

Kalamazoo Lake Sewer & Water Authority:

City Manager Cummins noted Mark Bekken indicated he did not have any additional information to add to the report sent to the council provided by KLSWA.

Kalamazoo Lake Harbor Authority, Councilmember Peterson:

She will be attending the next scheduled meeting and noted the meetings will be quarterly.

Zoning Board of Appeals:

None.

Historic District Commission, Councilmember Gardner:

He informed the council that the next meeting scheduled is on Thursday January 2.

Planning Commission, Councilmember Clark:

The water preservation district planning work is continuing on potentially allowing B&B businesses to allow accessory structures to be incorporated into existing building footprints. At their next meeting, the commission will discuss recommendations around accessory dwelling units (ADUs) and short-term rentals (STRs), particularly addressing the issue of applications for STR permits falling below the minimum size threshold. A consensus has been reached on what the guidelines for ADUs should look like, which will be shared with the Council soon. They are also working on next year's goals and priorities. They're seeking input from the Council during the upcoming strategy session on what they would like the planning commission to focus on in the next year. Ideas being considered include consolidating zones to simplify planning processes and updating the city's master plan. There is

ongoing discussion regarding the city's master plan and its alignment with a broader tri-community plan. Additionally, a new vice-chair, CJ Bageriek, has been unanimously voted for the role, and the committee congratulated them for stepping up.

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

The Public Works and Planning (PPW) committee is also waiting for direction from the City Council before proceeding with their strategic planning for the next year. They plan to wait until the Council has their strategic planning session, as they take their guidance from the Council. Additionally, the committee will be electing a new chair and vice-chair at their next meeting in January, as stipulated by their bylaws.

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

In the Manager's report, it was noted that the Blue Star Trail project may experience delays due to the cultural significance of the area to the tribe. The designation of the area as a tribal cultural property requires more due diligence on projects, as seen with past developments like Mount Baldhead and North Shore. Working closely with the tribal government is essential, and this collaboration is contributing to delays. Despite these challenges, the project remains committed, and everyone is dedicated to moving forward. Sensitive areas are being reviewed, and the project group will meet again in January to continue working through these concerns. The funding is still in place, and the goal is to ensure that all parties are comfortable, and the best project is delivered.

Water System Operations Contract Advisory Committee, Councilmember Gardner:

Next meeting is January 7, at 2:30 p.m.

Wildlife Management Committee, Councilmember Dean:

The next meeting will be on February 5, as there will be no meeting in January. The community wildlife survey will continue to collect responses until January 31, and the community is encouraged to complete it. In February, the group hopes to have a representative from the fire department present. There has been a productive conversation with Mr. Fox, and the fire department has shown interest in assisting with collecting baseline data on the local deer population. They plan to use the fire department's drone and thermal imaging equipment to gather data for the tri-community's deer issue. This will be a potential project to address the situation.

Approval of Accounts Payable:

Motion by Dean, second by Peterson to approve the accounts payable in the amount of \$353,955.44. Via roll call vote, motion carried unanimously.

Public Hearing: None.

Unfinished Business: None.

New Business:

Ordinance No. 241223-A - To amend Title XV, Chapter 154, of the Code of the City of Saugatuck to amend section 154.038 C-2 Downtown Waterfront Preservation District to eliminate first-floor apartments as permitted and special land uses and to amend section 154.113 (E) to: clarify and revise Planned Unit Development (PUD) modifications for the C-2 Downtown Waterfront Preservation District concerning qualifying public access and allowable departures; include a

restriction on PUD height increase requests, and to require a mechanism or legal instrument that memorializes public access preserved as part of a PUD approval:

Motion by Stanton, second by Muncey to approve Ordinance No. 212323-A an ordinance to amend Title XV, Chapter 154, of the Code of the City of Saugatuck to amend section 154.038 C-2 Downtown Waterfront Preservation District to eliminate first-floor apartments as permitted and special land uses and to amend section 154.113 (E) to: clarify and revise Planned Unit Development (PUD) modifications for the C-2 Downtown Waterfront Preservation District concerning qualifying public access and allowable departures; include a restriction on PUD height increase requests, and to require a mechanism or legal instrument that memorializes public access preserved as part of a PUD approval. Via roll call vote, motion carried unanimously.

Staff Wage Scale Inflation Adjustments:

Motion by Stanton, second Clark approve a 2.5% inflation adjustment to the staff step and wage scale and a one-time lump sum payment of .5%, effective the first full payroll in January 2025. Via roll call vote, motion carried unanimously.

Council Review and Approval of City Manager Performance Evaluation Criteria:

Motion by Peterson, second by Stanton to approve the City Manager performance evaluation criteria. Via roll call vote, motion carried unanimously.

Resolution 241223-B Resolution No.241223-B - Approving Submission of a Water Resources Division Grant Application for Planning of Access Improvements and Coastal Stabilization in the Park Street Corridor:

Motion by Stanton, second by Clark to approve Resolution No. 241223-B, approving submission of a Water Resources Division Grant. Via roll call vote, motion carried unanimously.

Public Comment: None.

Correspondence: None.

Council Comments:

Councilmember Clark expressed gratitude to the council, staff, and committees for their hard work throughout the year. Despite facing challenges and friction throughout the year and in years past, he hoped that the holiday season would allow everyone to set aside these stresses and enjoy time with family and friends. Clark also thanked the council for supporting the planning board's recommended motion, acknowledging the dedication involved in ensuring the city stays on solid footing. He wished everyone Happy Holidays, Merry Christmas, and a Happy New Year.

Councilmember Muncey expressed gratitude for the wonderful staff who contributed to the community's success. He wished everyone a joyful Christmas holiday and New Year season while encouraging support for downtown businesses for last-minute gifts, noting that many will close early. Muncey also mentioned looking forward to fireworks at Coral Gables and the upcoming strategic planning meeting, appreciating the extra time given to the survey. He expressed excitement about working with fellow council members and emphasized how fortunate he feels to live in their town. Muncey shared that in the past, the Christmas Carol production had donated \$10,000 to Christian Neighbors, and this year, through ticket sales and a couple of private donations, the amount raised had reached \$24,000 and assured the community that the event would continue in the future, emphasizing that the tradition was here to stay.

Councilmember Dean wished all a Merry Christmas and Happy New Year.

Mayor Pro-Tem Stanton echoed Anderson's sentiments, expressing pride in the productive year and the accomplishments made, especially in tackling long-standing items. She acknowledged that healthy disagreements helped improve outcomes for the community. She is looking forward to the New Year and wished everyone a Merry Christmas.

Councilmember Gardner shared the conclusion of the Christmas Carol performances, which raised an incredible \$24,000 for Christian Neighbors through ticket sales and donations. He highlighted the efforts of Steve and Janice Williford, noting Steve's 38 years of involvement, and expressed pride in the longstanding tradition that has become a vital part of the town. Additionally, they wished everyone a Merry Christmas and Happy New Year. Lastly, he proposed adding a discussion at the upcoming strategic planning session about evaluating the purpose and effectiveness of non-statutory boards and commissions, suggesting it be a regular topic for consideration.

Councilmember Peterson expressed gratitude to the staff, noting that it had been amazing working with them since joining. She appreciated the collaborative efforts and the back-and-forth discussion on different topics. She humorously concluded that she looks forward to seeing everyone in the next year.

Mayor Anderson acknowledged the staff's hard work, especially the successful implementation of early voting, which was a significant effort for the clerk and deputy clerk. She congratulated those reappointed to boards and CJ for becoming the vice chair of planning. Mayor expressed gratitude for working with everyone, wished everyone a Merry Christmas, and looked forward to seeing them in January.

Adjournment:

Motion by Stanton, second by Peterson to adjourn the meeting. Upon voice vote, motion carried unanimously. Mayor Anderson adjourned at 7:49 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted

Jamie Wolters, City Clerk