



**CITY COUNCIL REGULAR MEETING
February 23, 2026**

The City Council met to have a Regular Council Meeting at City Hall at 6:30 p.m.
102 Butler St., Saugatuck, MI 49453.

Call to Order:

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

Attendance:

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

*Motion by Peterson, second by Stanton to make accommodation for Russ Gardner joining by zoom.
Via roll call vote, motion carried unanimously.*

Others Present: City Manager Cummins, Planning & Zoning Director Moore, Attorney Witte, and Clerk Wolters.

Mayor's Comments:

Mayor Holly Anderson, recognized City Clerk Jamie Wolters' recent professional achievement, reading a letter from the Michigan Association of Municipal Clerks announcing Jamie's completion of the Level 1 Michigan Professional Municipal Clerk certification. She publicly congratulated her and remarked that Jamie is an asset to the city in many ways.

City Manager Comments:

City Manager Ryan Cummins began by thanking Mayor Anderson for recognizing Clerk Jamie Wolters' recent certification and emphasized how important continued education is for key staff. He stated that he would largely let his written report stand but highlighted a few points. Responding to a question raised at a recent workshop about how capital improvement projects are prioritized, he explained that the city's engineer had compiled the criteria used to rank and schedule those projects; that information was included in his report and would also be shared more broadly with the community. He then gave a brief project update on the Mt. Baldhead restroom, saying it was nearly complete, with doors installed and only finishing touches remaining.

Agenda Changes: None.

Guest Speakers:

Allegan County Sheriff's Office – Annual Report:

Undersheriff Larsen opened by giving historical context on the City of Saugatuck's contract with the Allegan County Sheriff's Office, which began in 2018 after the city evaluated several options and ultimately chose the sheriff's office in part because of an estimated annual savings of about \$200,000, now totaling over \$1.5 million. He stressed that these savings are tied to not having dedicated 24/7 city-only coverage; instead, Saugatuck receives targeted contracted patrol hours layered on top of the county's around-the-clock coverage. Those contracted hours are adjusted seasonally and scheduled based on call volumes, traffic patterns, and coordination with the city on festivals, parades, and holidays, shifting in summer as the population increases. Deputies commit to the contract for at least two years, which provides fresh

perspectives and new energy but also leads to perceived turnover even though only 12 deputies have served in the four contracted positions since inception. He proposed working with the council to create a more detailed “letter of understanding” or MOU—separate from the contract—with measurable objectives (such as specific numbers of business contacts, foot patrol percentages, or contact visits) so performance expectations are clear and the sheriff’s office can be held accountable. He closed by underscoring that communication with council and the community is key, acknowledged that the sheriff’s office could do more outreach, and introduced Sergeant Ben Haas to present the detailed annual report.

Sergeant Ben Haas presented the annual report for the Saugatuck contracted deputies, starting with staffing: four contract deputies currently serve the city, with Deputy Juan Garcia scheduled to replace Deputy Haskill in the spring. He reported that in 2025 the sheriff’s office handled 27,850 incidents countywide, of which 1,134 occurred within the City of Saugatuck; the four contract deputies conducted 371 traffic stops and logged 232 documented school contacts, noting they likely visit the school more often than is formally recorded. Reserved and special-event hours in the city totaled 739.25 hours, and deputies assisted with 11 specific events. Haas reported an overall average response time of about 11.5 minutes for calls in 2025, explaining that this figure is affected by how dispatch times calls (including when deputies are reassigned to a call while doing follow-up paperwork) and that he did substantial manual review to clean the data. He walked council through a set of maps showing the distribution of different call types—traffic violations and crashes, general assists, felonies, misdemeanors, and various non-criminal calls like welfare checks, alarms, animal complaints, and road hazards. Haas committed to (1) adding some form of response-time data to monthly reports (and, if possible, breaking out priority calls), (2) providing counts of mutual-aid responses between Saugatuck and neighboring areas, (3) exploring ways to separate “assist other agencies” data, and (4) ensuring that either he or the on-duty contract deputy regularly attends city council meetings when calls allow.

Historic District Commission – Annual Report:

Historic District Commission Chair Tim Straker reported that in the past year the HDC reviewed 58 total applications, with roughly half involving contributing structures and half non-contributing structures. He emphasized that both types are important, because investment in non-contributing properties also strengthens the district’s overall quality. Tim highlighted that 30 of the 58 applications were approved at the staff level, noting he works closely with Zoning Director Moore. He added that most applications, whether staff-approved or brought to a meeting, are resolved within a single meeting, which is a deliberate goal of the commission. As a “PSA” for historic preservation, Straker reminded council that homes in historic districts typically appreciate 5–20% more than comparable homes outside such districts, due to their protected and distinctive character. He closed by thanking council members, several of whom have served or are serving on the HDC, for their work and support, and reiterated the commission’s focus on being both careful with the guidelines and user-friendly for property owners.

Planning Commission – Annual Report:

Planning Commission Chair Steve Mans reviewed the commission’s 2025 activity and priorities. The Planning Commission’s direct work included 3 special land uses, 8 site plan reviews, 6 short-term rental/ADU cases, 1 POD, and 2 ordinance projects forwarded to council. He highlighted the master plan as a major 2025–2026 priority: the commission built a 12–18 month schedule that included surveys, public meetings, and bringing results back to both the commission and council, with the goal of having a draft master plan by late summer 2026 and a final plan in Q4 2026. Another priority—consolidation and re-examination of zoning districts, especially commercial districts and their boundaries. Steve also described extensive work on the sign ordinance. He gave an update on ADUs, explaining that the ordinance was tightened in January 2025 and that most ADU special land use cases now come in very “clean,” raising the question of whether ADUs that fully meet ordinance standards should eventually be approved administratively rather than by the commission; however, they have postponed that change so as not to move the goalposts on applicants already in process. Finally, Steve previewed an upcoming case where the owners are seeking to move from a bed-and-breakfast framework (with accessory guest units) back to a more “inn”/Water Street East commercial zoning; he noted this application will force discussion about

appropriate commercial intensity and boundaries in residential-adjacent areas and will directly intersect with the future-land-use and zoning questions at the heart of the new master plan.

Zoning Board of Appeals – Annual Report:

Zoning Board of Appeals Chair Bob Kubasiak reported that the ZBA had only two formal applications and meetings over the past year. One case the board granted a variance to allow replacement of an existing pool fence because the fence style otherwise required by ordinance would not comply with state building code or legal requirements; the variance allowed the owner to complete compliant fencing. The second case sought a variance to allow the façade of an accessory building to sit closer to the public street right-of-way than the front door of the principal dwelling, contrary to ordinance; the ZBA denied that request, finding the design could reasonably be changed to meet the rules. Bob emphasized that while only two cases reached the ZBA, a substantial amount of work is done upfront by staff, who often tell applicants when something clearly cannot be approved or help them adjust plans before they ever file for a variance. He suggested it might be useful, though not essential, to track how many potential variance inquiries are resolved at the staff level, to give a fuller picture of zoning administration workload.

Public Comment on Agenda Item Only: None.

Consent Agenda:

- A. Approval of City Council Workshop Minutes from February 18, 2026.
- B. Approval of City Council Closed Session Minutes from February 18, 2026.
- C. Special Event - No Kings III.
- D. Special Event - Saugatuck Farmers Market - The Market at SCA.
- E. Special Event - Art in the Park.
- F. Updates to City Council Rules of Procedure – Agenda Order.
- G. Board and Commission Appointments.
 - Kathleen Quick – Board of Review – Regular – Term Ending 1/1/29.
 - David Isljamovski – Board of Review – Regular – Term Ending 1/1/29.

Motion by Peterson, second by Dean to approve the consent agenda as written. A, approval of city council workshop minutes, B, approval of city council closed session minutes, C, special event, no kings, D, special events, Saugatuck SCA farmers market, E, special event, Art in the Park, F, updates to city council rules of procedure, and G, board and commissions, appointments. Via roll call vote, motion carried unanimously..

Staff Reports, Boards, Commissions & Committees:

Reports provided by City Manager Cummins and the following board, commission and committee members.

Fire District Administration:

City of Saugatuck fire board representative Dan Fox reported on the most recent Saugatuck Township Fire District meeting, noting first that the district now has two new licensed EMTs. He described ongoing work with Life EMS on a new service contract and an initiative to evaluate using an outside contractor for commercial plan reviews, which could reduce costs for the district. Fox reported that the purchase agreement for 415 Wiley Road is with the district's attorneys and expected to be finalized soon. He then gave a detailed explanation of the district's cost-recovery program, using the recent I-196 semi crash and plastic pellet spill as an example. He stressed that cost recovery is typically pursued where there is clear responsibility or egregious violations and that the chief exercises judgment case-by-case.

Interurban Board:

Councilmember Muncey reported that January ridership hit an all-time high of 5,524 rides, nearly 2,000 more than the prior January, with growth not only from new service areas (Laketown about 350

rides, Fennville about 300 rides) but also increased use within Saugatuck, Douglas, and the township. Interurban has been working with AACOA/COA and Allegan County Transportation, providing connector rides (including to Grand Rapids). The new dispatch software and rider app are in place, with over 1,000 app downloads and about 18% of rides now booked through the app; riders have given drivers an overall rating of 94%, even as staff continue working out minor software “kinks.” The board amended its bylaws to formally include the City of Fennville so Fennville can seek grants and potentially place Interurban funding on its ballot. Muncey also reported two recent vehicle grants: a \$110,000 capital grant for a larger van and a \$111,830 low-emissions grant for another bus, which will eventually bring the fleet to about 10 buses, though delivery may be late in the year. Finally, he noted ongoing work to finish the facility expansion, with electrical and plumbing in, drywall and interior finishes still to go, and a \$12,000 budget set aside for new office and conference room furniture.

Kalamazoo Lake Sewer & Water Authority:

Mayor Pro Tem Clark reported that the Authority’s new Administrator, Bob Miller, started work that day and will initially focus on stabilizing staffing, getting into the field with operators to understand the system, and overseeing back-office functions. Because of recent turnover and system changes, they will skip one billing cycle out of caution, to avoid introducing new errors, and will re-run the next cycle only after they’re confident in the platform. Clark highlighted that Bob is a strategic thinker who is already looking at developing a formal asset management plan and system-wide capital improvement plan.

Kalamazoo Lake Harbor Authority:

Councilmember Peterson Kalamazoo Lake Harbor Authority noted that Ryan had circulated the 2016 harbor report, observing that if you read it then and now, the situation is largely the same. She said the Authority’s next meeting is March 24, where they plan to move forward with the economic impact study, which Chair Waskins has identified as a priority. City Manager Cummins added that the study is estimated at about \$7,200, and that he has shared this cost with Douglas and the township.

Zoning Board of Appeals: None.

Historic District Commission:

Councilmember Dean informed council that the next meeting is Thursday, March 5 at 6:00 p.m.

Planning Commission:

Councilmember Gardner noted the Planning Commission meeting was cancelled due to lack of quorum and the next meeting is scheduled for Thursday, March 19 at 6:30 p.m.

Parks & Public Works Committee:

Council member Stanton reported for the Parks and Public Works Committee that the committee is scheduled to meet the next morning at 10:00 a.m. She also attended the quarterly Kalamazoo River Greenway stakeholder meeting and highlighted that it is an active coalition including Saugatuck, Douglas, the township, Fennville, the school district, and ODC. The group has “hit the ground running” on public education and engagement, organizing a series of events from February through July, such as water-smart landscaping programs, a Dark Sky Expo, and multiple guided hikes. Stanton called special attention to the Kalamazoo River Cleanup at Wade’s Bayou on May 30 (10 a.m.–1 p.m.). She noted the Greenway partners are actively tracking grant opportunities and invited council and staff to share project ideas that might fit forthcoming grants, with the next stakeholder meeting set for May 12.

Tri-Community Non-Motorized Trail Study Committee: None.

Water Systems Operations Contract Advisory Committee:

Councilmember Joe Clark reported that the Water System Operations Contract Advisory Committee met

and all three municipalities clearly agreed in principle to pursue a full water/wastewater authority. They agreed to bring new KLV&SA Administrator Bob Miller into discussions once he's oriented. Andy will now take the three communities' term-sheet spreadsheets and propose "middle ground" recommendations on key differences to guide negotiations, starting with a plain-language deck rather than full legal documents. Finally, there was consensus that they must demonstrate financial due diligence to the public, so an independent rate study will be developed. The Authority (via Bob Miller and Fleis & VandenBrink) will assemble a system-wide wastewater capital improvement plan, since there is currently no unified CIP across the three systems.

Parking Improvements Task Force Committee:

Councilmember Muncey reported that the Parking Improvements Task Force met on February 17 and introduced John Dorsett of Walker Consultants as the new project manager. He said Walker and staff have updated the parking inventory map based on local input and that the online parking survey is open through February 27, already drawing over 500 responses. Walker will conduct field data collection in two phases: an "off-season" snapshot in late April/early May (around Tulip Time) and a peak-season snapshot the week of July 13, when staff will be on the street counting use and durations in selected areas. The task force will continue meeting through August 18, at which point Walker will deliver recommendations; plans include at least one public engagement event (likely during Music in the Park) to share information and gather feedback.

Approval of Accounts Payable:

Motion by Stanton, second by Peterson, to approve the accounts payable in the amount of \$1,372,478.16. Via roll call, motion carried unanimously.

Public Hearing: None.

Unfinished Business: None.

New Business:

Resolution No. 260223-A Temporary Polling Location Change from City Hall to the Woman's Club:

Motion by Muncey, second by Dean to approve Resolution 260223-A a temporary polling location change from City Hall to Saugatuck Woman's Club. Via roll call vote, motion carried unanimously.

Public Comment:

Tim Slais

Correspondence: None.

Council Comments:

Council Member Chris Peterson thanked the various board and committee chairs for their hard work and clear annual reports. She specifically praised the Allegan County Sheriff's Office, saying the facts and data in their report provide important backing when council receives questions. Peterson also mentioned about not letting the discussion on the proposed fire pit project get too far along without council input, emphasizing she supports the idea but wants to make sure council sees options rather than a single, finalized proposal when it returns for formal consideration.

Council Member Russ Gardner echoed appreciation for all guest speakers, with special thanks to Sergeant Haas and Undersheriff Larsen, and said he is very interested in pursuing the memorandum of understanding (MOU) the sheriff's office suggested, to address expectations not spelled out in the contract. He also thanked City Manager Ryan Cummins for following up on the millage rate entry error but asked for

more detail from the assessor on how the issue was discovered and what process changes will be implemented so that a high-visibility error like this does not recur.

Council Member Joe Clark thanked the law enforcement representatives and all the board and commission chairs for their detailed reports and service, saying he continues to be impressed by how many talented people support the community. He offered special thanks to the deputies for keeping the community safe. Clark also congratulated Clerk Jamie Wolters on earning her MiPMC Level 1 certification, noting the difficulty of the clerk's role and thanking her for all the support she provides to council and the city.

Council Member Scott Dean joined in thanking the Allegan County Sheriff's Office and all presenters for their reports. He called out clerks in general as having one of the hardest jobs in the country, describing Wolters work as courageous and inspiring. Scott also thanked the sheriff's representatives for staying through the entire meeting, not just their presentation segment.

Council Member Gregory Muncey reiterated appreciation for all committee members and chairs. He especially praised the Saugatuck deputies and the thoroughness of their report, including the data and response-time figures. Muncey then highlighted the passing of long-time community member Don Beery, recalling his decades of involvement within the community. He announced Don's celebration of life at Spectators on Sunday, March 1, at 1 p.m.

Council Member Lauren Stanton said she agreed with the earlier comments and then focused on the Boys and Girls Club, sharing that she had recently spoken on behalf of City Council for a video the club is producing to support fundraising and outreach. She reflected that, coming from a small town, she used to think Boys & Girls Clubs were only for big cities, and emphasized how fortunate Saugatuck is to have one locally. Lauren noted that more than 200 kids participate and that their families and the broader community benefit from the club's presence, and she thanked Rotary and other donors who support the club's work.

Mayor Holly Anderson wrapped up by again thanking everyone, and she added a specific anecdote about Deputy Marklevitz, who recently helped a friend of hers whose car was stuck in the snow: he stopped on his own initiative, checked on them, and coordinated a tow, which she described as an "awesome" example of service. Anderson said this kind of personal interaction shows that the community really does know its deputies now, addressing some of the nostalgia about the old local department, and that the personal touch means a lot.

Adjournment:

Motion by Peterson, second by Dean to adjourn the meeting. Upon voice vote, motion carried unanimously. Mayor Anderson adjourned at 8:25 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted

Jamie Wolters, City Clerk