



CITY COUNCIL REGULAR MEETING April 27, 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.

Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

Attendance:

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

Absent: Peterson

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

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

Mayor's Comments:

Mayor Holly Anderson opened the meeting by calling it to order and then offering reflective comments on the nature of public service. Mayor Anderson recalled a passage she memorized in fifth grade from Thomas Paine's "The American Crisis," specifically the line, "These are the times that try men's souls," and the contrast between "the summer soldier and the sunshine patriot" and those who stand by their country in difficult moments. She framed this quote as a reminder of the duty and resilience required of public servants, noting that everyone present, including a candidate in the audience who would be speaking later, is there to serve the community. She concluded by emphasizing this sense of purpose as the reason they are gathered.

City Manager Comments:

City Manager Ryan Cummins began by updating the council on several ongoing projects and initiatives. He reported that work on Mary Street—including the gate ball valves and concrete boardwalk—is scheduled to begin on Wednesday, with contractors still on track to complete the project by the end of May, despite earlier weather-related delays. He noted that equipment has already been delivered to Public Works and that work on Maple Street will follow. He also mentioned that the city's logo and branding survey is live and encouraged participation, acknowledging some minor internet issues delaying a reminder. In addition, he announced an open house at City Hall for the Elizabeth Street project scheduled for the next day, with specific time windows and staff and engineers available for questions and feedback. Finally, he shared good news that the bathroom at Mount Baldhead is now open for the season, with only minor brick cleanup remaining, and he referenced positive comments received on social media about this improvement.

Agenda Changes: None.

Guest Speakers: None.

Public Comment on Agenda Item Only: None.

Consent Agenda:

- A. Approval of City Council Workshop Minutes – April 22, 2026.
- B. Special Event – Jazz for Justice.
- C. Palette Sign and Right of Way Signage – Saugatuck Douglas Garden Club.
- D. Schedule the Fiscal Year 2026/2027 Budget Hearing for June 8 at 6:30 p.m.

Motion by Stanton, second by Gardner to approve the consent agendas presented in the agenda packet. Via roll call vote, motion carried 6-0.

Approval of Accounts Payable:

Motion by Clark, second by Dean, to approve the accounts payable in the amount of \$151,905.39. Via roll call, motion carried 6-0.

Public Hearing: None.

Unfinished Business: None.

New Business:

Resolution No. 260427-A – A Resolution to Censure Planning Commissioner Christopher Bagierek:

Motion by Stanton, second by Dean to approve resolution 260427-A, a resolution to censure planning commissioner Christopher Bagierek. Via roll call vote, motion carried 4-2. Yes – Anderson, Clark, Dean, Stanton. No – Gardner, Muncey.

Staff Reports, Boards, Commissions & Committees:

Monthly department activity reports were provided by the City Manager and Police Sgt. along with the following board and committees:

Fire District Administration Board:

City of Saugatuck representative, Dan Fox reported on the fire district's April 20 meeting, focusing on recent and upcoming active-shooter training coordinated with the county sheriff, Douglas Police, local schools, and the Fire District, including a follow-up planning meeting at the school. He updated council on the 415 Wiley fire station project, noting that an agreement has essentially been finalized with Brivar Construction of Brighton, a firm experienced in building fire stations and highly recommended by local fire leadership. Brivar provided detailed cost estimates needed for bonding, and the district hopes to begin construction as early as June, with the new structure adjacent to the existing building in place by winter. Fox also described the rollout of color-coded hydrant rings that indicate hydrant flow rates, which help firefighters avoid connecting to low-flow hydrants in emergencies; he recommended Saugatuck adopt the same system. Finally, he reviewed March incident statistics: overall call volume is down 14.6% year-to-date, EMS remains the dominant call type, response times vary by call location, and there have been several notable highway incidents, including a suspected intentional wrong-way driver crash that fortunately did not injure the truck drivers involved.

Interurban Board:

Councilmember Gregory Muncey reported that the Interurban received a \$13,250 grant to support the 2026 parking shuttle, doubling last year's grant and allowing Friday–Sunday service from 1–9 p.m., with signage and QR codes at the high school to direct users to park-and-ride options when the shuttle is not operating. He highlighted ongoing strong ridership, with March setting another record at just under 4,900 riders, about 22% of trips now booked through the Interurban app, over 200 new riders added recently, nearly 3,000 app users, and

a 97% rider satisfaction rating. Capital projects funded by a \$250,000 grant and an additional grant have enabled building expansion, office tech upgrades, furniture, and bus equipment improvements. Service to Laketown Township is being discontinued because the dedicated funding and private donations covering that area have been fully exhausted. He also reported progress on adding Fennville to the Interurban Transportation Authority (administrative filings pending) and described an upcoming millage request targeted for the August 2026 ballot; if it fails, the authority would face significant service cuts and could not return to the ballot for 12–18 months. To meet growing demand, the fleet is expanding from 8 to 12 vehicles by early summer (four additional vans plus two larger buses funded by grants), with the large buses arriving later this year or next.

Kalamazoo Lake Sewer & Water Authority (KLSWA):

Mayor Pro-Tem Clark reported that at the most recent KLSWA meeting there was continued emphasis on hiring and back-office capacity. A new office administrative assistant has joined and is already easing workload pressures. The board's next staffing focus is recruiting a finance manager to handle increasingly complex billing and financial operations across the community; strong candidates are being evaluated by the new manager. Clark also updated council on the State Revolving Fund (SRF) loan: the state (EGLE) approved the loan but reduced the portion covering complete biosolids removal and certain capital work (like pond maintenance, parking lot, and HMA improvements), meaning these necessary projects will still proceed but require drawing from KLSWA fund balances to cover the unfunded share. Finally, he noted that township manager Daniel DeFranco is stepping down from the board and is expected to be replaced by Jon Helmrich at an upcoming meeting.

Kalamazoo Lake Harbor Authority: None.

Zoning Board of Appeals (ZBA): None.

Historic District Commission:

Councilmember Scott Dean reported the next meeting is scheduled for Thursday, May 7th at 6 p.m.

Planning Commission:

Councilmember Russ Gardner delivered a detailed Planning Commission update. He noted a change in officers: CJ Bagierek stepped down as vice chair and Craig Baldwin was unanimously elected as the new vice chair. The commission held a public hearing for a special land use request for the property at 405 Park, the special land use was unanimously approved. Another public hearing addressed a special land use request for expanded outdoor dining at Scooters, which also passed 6–0. In old business, a request from The Wickwood (a rezoning/conditional rezoning amendment) was denied 6–0. The commission discussed a sign ordinance amendment and voted 6–0 to forward it to council for consideration, and they reviewed ongoing work on the master plan, with emphasis on completing that process. Finally, Gardner noted the resignation of Planning Commissioner Bobbie Gaunt, recognizing her departure, and mentioned that staff provided an update on the Parking Improvements Task Force.

Parks & Public Works Committee (PPW):

Councilmember Lauren Stanton informed that the upcoming PPW meeting has been canceled, largely because staff are heavily engaged in recruiting a new DPW director. She and several others (Mayor Pro-Tem Clark, City Manager Cummins and DPW's Supervisor Kerridge) recently spent two days interviewing candidates, including from both local and out-of-state locations, and were impressed with the quality and interest level; second-round interviews are planned, and optimism is high about finding a strong fit. The Kalamazoo River Greenway is hosting an open house at the township office the following date from 5:30 p.m. – 7:30 p.m. to discuss the lower river trail.

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

Water System Operations Contract Advisory Committee:

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City Manager Ryan Cummins referenced a scheduled meeting on May 15 and confirmed there would be no additional updates until that date.

Logo and Branding Advisory Committee:

City Manager Ryan Cummins encouraged everyone, including council and the public, to complete the survey if they had not already, indicating that community input will be important as the city refines its logo, branding, and wayfinding strategy. This aligns with later discussion that improved, consistent signage and wayfinding will be a key piece of addressing perceived parking and navigation issues downtown.

Parking Improvements Task Force:

Councilmember Gregory Muncey gave a report on the Parking Improvements Task Force's April 7 meeting. He stated that the city has 1,802 total parking spaces (about 1,436 on-street and 366 off-street, including the high school and public lots), a number higher than many expected. A recent survey of over 600 respondents, mostly residents and local stakeholders, found that most people can usually find parking within five minutes, are generally willing to walk a block or two, and are strongly opposed to paid on-street parking. Feedback from about ten stakeholder groups (property managers, event organizers, marinas, arts groups, etc.) closely matched these findings: parking problems are largely seasonal and location-specific, concentrated downtown at peak times. The task force reviewed a conceptual parking structure, with cost estimates between \$7–10 million plus ongoing maintenance; the group and public sentiment lean strongly against a structure due to high cost, limited added capacity, and negative impacts on community character. Similarly, the task force is not currently favoring paid parking. Instead, they see higher-impact, lower-cost steps: better enforcement, improved turnover downtown, clearer and more consistent signage/wayfinding, a dedicated parking information presence on the city website, and strategies for employee parking (including use of remote lots and shuttles, potentially coordinated with Douglas). Data collection by consultants is planned the week of May 2 and again during peak season in July to observe real-world parking behavior. Task force members will work on draft recommendations before the next meeting (May 13), and Task force member Wendy Colsen, has volunteered to survey local businesses to quantify employee parking demand. Muncey emphasized that the core issue appears to be management and communication—not raw parking capacity—and that any final set of recommendations will likely focus on optimizing existing assets rather than large new construction.

Public Comment:

Heidi Wolf provided comment.

Correspondence:

City Clerk Wolters provided notice.

Phil Huffman and Bobbie Guant provided correspondence.

Council Comments:

Councilmember Lauren Stanton thanked the Department of Public Works (DPW) for the successful spring junk cleanup day, noting how many residents took advantage of it and how items often get repurposed by neighbors. She also observed how busy town had been over the weekend and wished fellow business owners good luck as the busy season approaches.

Councilmember Gregory Muncey echoed excitement for the upcoming season, remarking on how busy the restaurants and town had already been. He encouraged people to visit Holland for Tulip Time. He offered condolences to the White family on the passing of longtime resident Betty White, and shared details of her visitation and interment so the community could pay their respects.

Councilmember Scott Dean stated he had nothing further to add for council comments that evening.

Councilmember Joe Clark praised the interview process for the new DPW director, complimenting Ryan and staff on well-prepared questions and a strong slate of candidates. He also commended the DPW for their work at Oval Beach, including moving sand to get the beach ready for the season.

Councilmember Russ Gardner asked a clarifying question about a budget hearing date but then turned to comments, expressing enthusiasm about the planned Mt. Baldhead bathrooms and mentioning resident Vic Bella's long advocacy for them. He also joined in recognizing the passing of Betty Ann White, recalling her as a longtime neighbor known for bringing blueberry pie to the neighborhood block party and noting that her loss is another small piece of the community gone.

Councilmember Holly Anderson used her mayor's comments to recognize and thank Planning Commissioner Bobby ~~Gunn~~ Gaunt for her service. She described Councilmember ~~Gunn~~ Gaunt as a model planning commissioner—always prepared, thoughtful, and faithful to her citizen planner responsibilities—who inspired her own service. Councilmember Anderson said she was heartbroken about ~~Gunn~~ Gaunt's resignation but deeply respected her principled and kind approach and her decision to step down on principle. After comments concluded, she entertained and approved a motion to adjourn.

Adjournment:

*Motion by Muncey, second by Dean to adjourn the meeting. Upon voice vote, motion carried 6-0.
Mayor Anderson adjourned at 7:26 p.m.*

Respectfully Submitted

Jamie Wolters, City Clerk