



CITY COUNCIL WORKSHOP MEETING MINUTES

May 6, 2026

The City Council met for a Workshop 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, Mayor Pro Tem Clark and Councilmembers Dean, Gardner, Muncey, Peterson and Stanton.

Absent: None.

Others Present: City Manager Cummins, Attorney Witte, Attorney Cunningham, Zoning Director Moore, Treasurer Bredeweg, and Clerk Wolters.

Agenda Changes:

Motion by Dean, second by Muncey to add Mr. Tringali to the agenda to discuss 534 St. Joseph Street. Via roll call, Motion failed 1-0. No – Anderson. No other votes. Required a unanimous yes vote.

Motion by Dean, second by Muncey to add Mr. Tringali and Mr. Madava to the next workshop meeting agenda. Via roll call vote, motion carried unanimously.

Public Comment on Agenda Items Only: None.

Approval of Minutes:

Regular City Council Meeting Minutes – April 27, 2026:

Motion by Dean, second by Stanton to change the meeting minutes, the city manager's comments on "gate balls" that should be "gate valves" and in the mayor's comments to correct the spelling of Bobby Gunn's last name to Guant. Via roll call vote, motion carried 6.0. Abstain – Peterson.

Guest Speaker: None.

Discussion Items:

Conditional Rezoning Request – 510 Bulter Street:

Zoning Director Grayson Moore presented the conditional rezoning request for 510 Butler Street / Wickwood Inn and the associated combined parcel including 120 Mary. He explained that the owners are requesting rezoning from R4 City Center Transitional Residential to C2 Water Street East so they

can expand operations beyond what is allowed for a bed and breakfast establishment, while offering voluntary conditions to limit intensity. He noted both parcels are currently R4 and surrounded by a mix of Water Street East commercial zoning and other transitional residential properties; however, the Tri-Community Master Plan designates this area for medium- to high-density residential, so the request represents a deviation from the future land use map. Moore walked through the process: the Planning Commission held a public hearing on the January set of volunteered conditions (limiting principal uses, capping event attendance at 125 people, and keeping lot coverage at 27% instead of the 65% allowed in C2, plus using R4 dimensional standards) and then recommended denial, citing concerns that the intensity of use, number of event attendees, and parking demand could negatively affect nearby residential blocks and would extend commercial activity farther from Water Street before the master plan update is complete. He also described a later, more restrictive April conditions proposal (including reducing event size to 75 attendees, adding hours-of-operation limits, tighter controls on kitchen and dining expansion, and additional noise/operational constraints), but clarified that the applicant withdrew those April conditions at the Planning Commission meeting to avoid triggering a new public hearing and reverted back to the less restrictive January conditions. Because only the January conditions were formally before the Planning Commission, Moore emphasized that Council is being asked to act on those original, less restrictive conditions, and he summarized the Planning Commission's core concerns: compatibility with the surrounding residential neighborhood, evolving and uncertain scope of the proposal, enforcement and "runs with the land" issues if ownership changes, and the desire to address Butler Street's long-term use and intensity through the upcoming master planning and zoning text amendments, rather than through a piecemeal conditional rezoning.

Vice President Chris Khorey of McKenna explained that Wickwood is a small, historic, boutique inn that wants modest operational changes: the ability to serve alcohol, host some events with non-guests, and offer limited, reservation-only dining to the public during shoulder seasons, while remaining small-scale and preserving the residential character of the property. To do this, they are requesting a conditional rezoning from R4 to C2 Water Street East, combined with voluntary conditions that would bar high-intensity C2 uses (like theaters and amusement uses), cap lot coverage at 27% so buildings can't expand, and keep R4-style residential standards for setbacks, height, lighting, and signage. He acknowledged Planning Commission concerns about intensity and precedent and noted that the owners drafted more restrictive April conditions (such as cutting event size to 75, limiting hours, and freezing kitchen/dining size) but pulled them back only to avoid delaying the process into peak season; he said Wickwood still supports those tighter limits and would accept them later as part of a hotel/inn special land use if Council approves the rezoning.

During discussion of 510 Butler Street (Wickwood Inn), Council members generally praised the property's quality and its value to the community but expressed significant caution about changing the zoning. Several members, including emphasized the importance of respecting the Planning Commission's unanimous recommendation of denial, noting that the proposal could be precedent-setting in a sensitive transitional area between downtown commercial and residential neighborhoods. Concerns echoed the Planning Commission's: whether expanding commercial intensity farther up Butler is compatible with surrounding homes and short-term rentals; increased parking and traffic impacts from larger events; enforcement challenges for conditions that "run with the land" if the property is sold; and potential fairness/competitive issues if one inn is effectively allowed to operate more like a hotel or event venue while other B&Bs are still tightly constrained. Council members questioned how the proposed voluntary conditions would work in practice, whether they

might invite similar requests from other properties (e.g., other inns seeking events and alcohol service), and how this fits with the ongoing master plan update, which they prefer to use for setting long-term policy on Butler Street rather than handling major changes parcel by parcel. At the same time, Council acknowledged staff's view that a more restricted set of conditions—closer to the unreviewed April proposal—might eventually be compatible, and they encouraged the applicant to keep working through the Planning Commission, possibly via revised conditions or broader zoning text changes (such as adjusting the bed-and-breakfast category or creating a “boutique inn” type) that would apply more consistently citywide.

Zoning Ordinance Amendment to Update Signage Regulations to Regulate Signs in a Content-Neutral Manner:

City Attorney Trent Cunningham presented the revised sign ordinance amendments as the product of prior Council direction and extensive Planning Commission work. He explained that the draft is intended to (1) bring the code into compliance with constitutional requirements by removing content-based regulations, and (2) simplify and reduce unnecessary permitting.

Council's discussion focused heavily on sandwich board (A-frame) signs. Members questioned whether a permit should really be required when a business places a sandwich board on its own private property, as opposed to in the public right-of-way. They noted that many downtown businesses currently use sandwich boards (often for hours and specials), and that, in practice, many may be unaware a permit is required under the existing ordinance. There was concern about creating a sudden wave of new permitting and about fairness and enforcement. At the same time they emphasized public-safety needs: maintaining the required five-foot unobstructed sidewalk clearance during peak season and avoiding trip hazards or crowding. Cummins and Moore described the current, largely education-first enforcement approach, acknowledged gaps in past permitting, and outlined a plan to pair any new requirements with better communication—such as including sign information in the annual business license renewal and using the existing business-license database for outreach. By the end of the discussion, there was clear consensus on Council to revise the draft so that no permit is required for sandwich board signs located entirely on private property, while retaining permit and review requirements when a sandwich board is placed in the right-of-way. Cunningham confirmed he would make that change before the ordinance returns to Council for action.

Public Comments: None.

Council Comments:

Councilmember Stanton raised a final question about the sign ordinance, asking whether any existing business signs that might not conform to the new standards would be “grandfathered” in. She also expressed appreciation for City Manager Cummins's communication with the business community, specifically praising the recent letter that went out to local businesses.

Councilmember Muncey echoed thanks to City Manager Cummins for sending a clear, well-toned message to business owners and for acknowledging that communication can always be improved. He then highlighted the upcoming Mother's Day weekend and promoted the Mother's Day Marketplace at Back to the Fuchsia Flower Shop across from the post office, inviting people to stop by Friday–Sunday for hanging baskets, plants, and floral arrangements.

Councilmember Dean joined in commending City Manager Cummins for the quality of his outreach email to businesses. He thanked the Clerks for successfully administering the recent election and recognized Mayor Anderson for volunteering at the polls. He also thanked staff for paying for the Memorial Day wreath that will be used at the park's remembrance ceremony.

Councilmember Clark wished everyone a Happy Mother's Day, reiterated his appreciation for Cummins's business-outreach letter, and said the tone and content were very well received. He closed by saying he looked forward to seeing everyone at the next regular council meeting.

Councilmember Gardner reported that at least one business owner had personally thanked him for the city's improved communication, citing Cummins's letter as an example. He echoed praise for the communication effort and extended Mother's Day greetings as well.

Councilmember Peterson said she agreed with the comments already made and noted that two different people had contacted her specifically to praise Cummins's message as the best-toned communication they had received from the city. She added, in reference to Mother's Day, that the holiday should involve "chocolate and flowers."

Mayor Anderson added thanks to Clerk Wolters, Deputy Clerk Williams, and all the election inspectors for their work on the recent election, saying it was impressive to watch the election team in action. She briefly revisited an earlier procedural decision, explaining that she chose not to add a substantive short-term rental discussion to the agenda at the last minute because significant items like that should not be taken up without clear public notice.

Adjournment:

Motion by Muncey, second by Dean to adjourn the meeting. Upon voice vote, motion carried unanimously. Mayor Anderson adjourned the meeting at 5:42 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted

Jamie Wolters, City Clerk