



Planning Commission

Meeting Minutes -Approved

March 19, 2026, at 6:30 P.M.

Saugatuck City Hall, 102 Butler St, Saugatuck, MI 49453

1. Call to Order / Roll Call

The meeting was called to order at 6:30 p.m. by Chair Manns.

Members Present: Baldwin, Bagierek, Gardner, Gaunt, LaChey, Manns, & Marineau

Members Absent: None

Staff Present: Planning & Zoning Director Moore, Deputy Clerk Williams, City Manager Cummins

Others Present: Trent Cunningham (Fahey Schultz Burzych Rhodes PLC), David Jirousek (Horizon Planning)

2. Approval of Agenda

Motion by LaChey, supported by Marineau, to amend the agenda to remove Item 5E – Planning Commission Learning Opportunity from the March 19, 2026, agenda. Via voice vote, motion carried unanimously.

Motion by Gardner, supported by Marineau, to approved the revised agenda for March 19, 2026. Via voice vote, motion carried unanimously.

3. Approval of Minutes

Motion by Baldwin, supported by Bagierek, to approve the January 15, 2026, minutes as presented. Via voice vote, Motion carried unanimously.

4. Public Comment

None

5. New Business

- A. 640 Water St – Public Hearing on PUD.

Public Hearing

- A. Hearing was called to order by Chair Manns on 3/19/26 at 6:50 p.m.

- B. Summary by Zoning Director

Moore explained that the 640 Water Street applicants are back before the Planning Commission mainly as an administrative formality so the PUD ordinance can be properly noticed under the Michigan Zoning Enabling Act. He notes that some architectural revisions were made after the Historic District Commission review, but none of those

changes affect the PUD deviations already approved. He states that, before a zoning permit can be issued, the applicant must submit a final site plan with full dimensional elevations and floor plans. Moore then recommended the Commission hold the public hearing and forward a positive recommendation to City Council, conditioned on finalizing the easement agreement to the city attorney's satisfaction, submitting and administratively approving final floor plans obtaining final Historic District Commission approval, and securing all necessary approvals from relevant city departments and officials before any permits are issued.

C. Presentation by the Applicant

None

D. Public comment regarding the application

1. Supporting Comments: None
2. Opposing comments: None
3. General Comments: None
4. Repeat Comment Opportunity: None

E. Public comment portion closed by the Chair at 6:53 p.m.

F. Commission Deliberation

The Commission's deliberation on the 640 Water PUD was uniformly positive. Commissioner Baldwin said he supported the project, liked both the original and revised designs, and thought handling PUDs over two meetings is a good practice so conditions can be considered carefully. Commissioner Gardner strongly praised the applicant and designer, appreciates the Historic District Commission – driven revisions and the visual materials showing how the new building fits among neighboring structures and the waterfront. He noted the project will be a visible, dramatic change but believes it complies with the zoning ordinance and meets community goals for waterfront visibility and public access, with the reduced half-story height helping the fit. Chair Manns agreed that the redesign looks very good.

G. Commission action

Motion by Gaunt, supported by LaChey, to approve the proposed ordinance, to amend the zoning ordinance and the zoning map of the City of Saugatuck by approving a planned unit development overlay and associated plan for 640 Water Street as offered by staff support. Via roll call vote, motion carried unanimously.

B. 510 Butler/120 Mary (Wickwood Inn) – Public Hearing for a Conditional Rezoning.

Public Hearing

A. Hearing was called to order by Chair Manns on 3/19/26 at 6:59 p.m.

B. Summary by Zoning Director

Moore summarized the conditional rezoning request for 510 Butler and 120 Mary (Wickwood Inn). He explained that the applicant previously pursued a special land use for alcohol service but withdrew it and now seeks to rezone both parcels from R-4 City Transitional Residential to C-2 Water Street East. He noted that 120 Mary was zoned Water Street East until a 2023 rezoning to allow first-floor short-term rentals; it has since been folded into the overall bed-and-breakfast operation, but the land combination is not yet complete and must be finalized before any rezoning is complete. Moore stressed that approving the rezoning would not approve the requested use change; the property would remain a bed and breakfast until a future special land use is granted. He outlined the applicant's proposed voluntary conditions, including a 27% lot coverage cap, maintaining the R-4 front yard setback, and prohibiting certain C-2 uses the applicant listed-conditions staff sees as appropriate because they run with the land and improve compatibility. He added that other proposed conditions (restaurant operations, public access, events, gift shop, 125-person cap) are better handled later through site plan and special land use review. Based on the rezoning criteria in §154.176, staff recommended approval of the conditional rezoning with those staff-suggested changes.

C. Presentation by the Applicant

Chris Khorey (for Wickwood Inn) explained that the owners want to modestly expand operations: serve breakfast, lunch, and dinner from the on-site restaurant, open limited food service and the gift shop to the public, and host events such as weddings and retreats—without changing the buildings' physical design. To enable this, they anticipate reclassification from a bed and breakfast to a motel/motor court, understanding that this is a multi-step process starting with a conditional rezoning from R-4 to C-2 Water Street East. He argued the property sits at a transition point between downtown commercial and residential areas and says using Mary Street as the zoning line is poor planning; instead, rezoning would make Mary a “uniter,” stepping from downtown zoning to C-2 to residential. To address intensity concerns, he detailed voluntary conditions: prohibiting certain C-2 uses (e.g., motion picture facilities, amusement/recreation services, recreational transport rentals, standalone parking), giving up expanded outdoor dining in the public right-of-way, capping lot coverage at 27% (just above existing coverage) while otherwise keeping R-4 dimensional and signage standards, and accepting that many operational details (events, restaurant access, etc.) can be handled later via special land use. He emphasized they are not seeking a 65% lot coverage or a drastic change in character; just more flexible ancillary uses consistent with a more active inn.

D. Public comment regarding the application

5. Supporting Comments: Ken Morris (Email)
6. Opposing comments: None
7. General Comments: None
8. Repeat Comment Opportunity: None

E. Public comment portion closed by the Chair at 7:28 p.m.

F. Commission Deliberation

The Commission had a lengthy deliberation on Wickwood Inn’s conditional rezoning. Several members (LaChey, Marineau, Gardner, Bagierek) express concern that Wickwood’s requests have come in piecemeal, evolving from accessory guest buildings to alcohol service and now to a broader motel/motor-court concept with public restaurant use and events, making it hard to evaluate the true scope and neighborhood impact. Commissioners question whether the motel/motor court label even fits the physical reality (multi-story buildings, no doors opening directly to parking), raise worries about parking, noise, and “commercial creep” deeper into the transitional residential area, and note that rezoning to C-2 would open the door to other commercial uses (e.g., hotel/inn, offices, restaurant) beyond what Wickwood is currently describing. There is also discomfort with the complex, applicant-drafted conditional rezoning language, and with acting before the City completes its Master Plan and future land-use work for edge/transition blocks like this. Staff and the city attorney clarify that any future use change (e.g., motel/motor court) would still need a special land use with full conditions, and suggest alternatives such as refining voluntary conditions, possibly using a PUD overlay, or revisiting bed-and-breakfast definitions.

G. Commission action

Motion by LaChey, supported by Bagierek, to table the application for a month. Via roll call vote, motion carried unanimously.

C. 510 Butler (Wickwood Inn) – Public Hearing of a Text Amendment to the Definition of Motel/Motor Courts.

Public Hearing

A. Hearing was called to order by Chair Manns on 3/19/2026 at 8:11 p.m.

B. Summary by Zoning Director

Grayson Moore explained that the separate text-amendment request concerns the motel/motor court special land use standards. Currently, motels/motor courts may have amusements and sports facilities “for the exclusive use of guests” as an accessory use. The applicant proposes changing that phrase to allow such facilities “for the primary use of guests” instead. Moore notes the key policy question is how this wording change might affect the intensity of the use but emphasizes these facilities would still have to remain accessory to the primary motel/motor-court use, not become a primary use themselves. He adds that the Commission should evaluate the amendment against the four-standard text-amendment review criteria laid out in the ordinance.

C. Presentation by the Applicant

Chris Khorey (for Wickwood Inn) noted that this motel/motor-court text amendment will likely be folded into whatever revised approach they bring back next. He explained their concern with the current word “exclusive” is practical: it’s difficult for both the City and Wickwood to guarantee that every user of on-site amusements or sports facilities is an overnight guest at all times. Replacing “exclusive” with “primary” use by guests would still keep those facilities accessory but provide some flexibility and reduce enforcement burdens.

D. Public comment regarding the application

1. Supporting Comments: None
2. Opposing comments: None
3. General Comments: None
4. Repeat Comment Opportunity: None

E. Public comment portion closed by the Chair at 8:15 p.m.

F. Commission Deliberation

The commissioners had a brief deliberation.

G. Commission action

Motion by Bagierek, supported by Gardner, to table the application until next month's meeting. Via roll call vote, motion carried unanimously.

D. 2025 Annual Activity Report

Grayson Moore walked through the 2025 Annual Activity Report. He noted that code enforcement cases have increased steadily over the past few years, while zoning permit activity has fluctuated, though 2025 was busier than 2024. He highlights that a significant amount of staff and Commission time went into work on short-term rentals, and he has included in the packet the most recent STR ordinance update that City Council approved, along with his explanatory memo summarizing the key adjustments. Moore emphasized this item is informational only and that no action is required from the Planning Commission.

6. Old Business

A. Master Plan Update

David Jirousek outlined the next phase of the Master Plan update. He explains that current work is mostly "behind the scenes": analyzing public engagement (survey data and open house input), doing a character analysis of the city block-by-block (walkability, building orientation, land-use mix, general design), preparing demographic analysis, and building the base mapping. He emphasizes the character analysis will be especially important for future decisions about transition areas (such as between commercial and residential) and will directly inform the future land use map. Jirousek says he hopes to bring initial results on character and demographics to the Commission next month, followed by three or four meetings focused on topic-specific chapters (e.g., land use, mobility, etc.), likely running through the summer. The goal is to have a reviewable draft of the Master Plan by late summer, potentially accompanied by another public open house before people leave for the season.

7. Communication

Tamara Bodine-Wilson

Ken Morris

8. Reports of Officers and Committees

A. Parking Improvements Task Force – Auston Marineau

Auston Marineau reported that the Parking Improvements Task Force has held three meetings so

far, with the next set for April 7. To date they've mainly done baseline work: identifying all available parking in the greater downtown area and planning upcoming field work. The more substantive phase begins May 2, with additional work in July, when they'll conduct car counts, observe parking patterns, and measure turnover on Butler Street. He notes they have discussed a range of possible strategies—such as remote lots with shuttles, expanding transit/Harbor Transit service, and better handling of employee parking—but no specific policy direction has been chosen yet. He adds that a recent public survey drew strong participation (already over 500 responses by February), with a clear theme that respondents are strongly opposed to paid parking.

9. Public Comments

None

10. Commissioner Comments

- Gardner thanked Chair Manns for tactfully stepping in and redirecting him when he began making a statement to the applicants instead of asking a question, expressing appreciation for Mann's grace in handling it.
- Baldwin commented that the Commission had another strong, thoughtful discussion about the Wickwood matter. He acknowledges there is still substantial work ahead but says he looks forward to continuing it, appreciates that the Commission is proceeding cautiously, and is glad they decided to delay (table) the decision to see how the proposal can evolve.
- Marineau agreed with Craig Baldwin's remarks about Wickwood and adds that, as they consider next steps, the City should re-examine its bed-and-breakfast regulations. He notes that B&Bs are seeing a resurgence and their business model has evolved, suggesting the City's current ordinance may be outdated in how it defines and regulates them. He encourages a fresh review of the bed-and-breakfast standards to see if updates or improvements are needed.
- LaChey said his impression—though he admits it may be mistaken—is that staff, including consultants and the attorney, often focus on finding ways to fit a business proposal into the community, rather than giving equal weight to the interests of homeowners and residents. He points out that the staff reports on the Wickwood items included several suggested motions to approve but no example motions to deny, which he sees as a perception issue. He urges staff to be clear with applicants when a proposal may simply be inappropriate—especially where commercial uses press up against residential areas—rather than trying to “massage” it into compliance. LaChey emphasizes that, as a full-time resident, he considers himself responsible for representing both local businesses and residents (full- and part-time) in these decisions.
- Bagierek said that he appreciated the good discussion, feels the commission made the right call on Wickwood by giving the applicants some direction and then moving on, and expresses appreciation for the meeting and optimism about continuing the work at next month's meeting.
- Manns closed by reiterating his strong respect for the Commission members and how well prepared and thoughtful they are, saying each meeting is productive and benefits from diverse questions and perspectives. He acknowledges differing views about staff's role but emphasizes that staff's job is to present options and pathways so the Planning Commission can decide whether to approve or deny proposals, rather than staff telling applicants “no” at the outset. He stresses that the Commission strives to act fairly and in the best interests of both business owners and city residents, then thanks everyone and concludes his remarks.

11. Adjournment

Motion by Gardner, supported by Gaunt, to adjourn the meeting at 8:36 p.m. Motion carried unanimously.

Submitted by:

Sara Williams

Deputy Clerk

City of Saugatuck